

You should always smile as God's exile: 1 Peter

Written by Stephen McAlpine, Pastor, Providence Church Midland, WA.

In the midst of scorn and shame for following Jesus, our hope is secure in God, full of joy, and will one day be realised.



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Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: ESV

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| 1 | <p>Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,</p> <p>To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.</p> | 1 Peter 1:1-2 | <p>Two realities exist for us. We are “exiles”, unwanted and homeless, scattered throughout the world. Yet we are “elect”, God’s chosen and loved ones, who, like Israel, have been sprinkled with covenant blood and called to obey their King. The Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit, have combined to help us live well in a world that turns against God’s people. And in the turmoil what do we possess? Grace from God and peace with God. It’s daunting, but exciting.</p> <p>How does knowing that God has lovingly chosen you help you deal with the reality of being an exile?</p> | <p>Father God, thank you for the power of your Spirit helping me obey your Son in a world that does not recognise you. Amen.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.</p> | 1 Peter 1:3-5 | <p>Everyone has hope. But only God’s people have living hope—hope that goes beyond death because Jesus came back from the grave! Our hope isn’t a cash payout or winning LOTTO, or even real estate, but a perfect, indestructible Promised Land inheritance. And that’s worth waiting for isn’t it? Even if other hopes are dashed, our true inheritance is in God’s safe hands. What do we do now? We wait in eager anticipation for the day God reveals salvation with a cosmic “Taa-dah!”</p> <p>Where are your hopes? Do they differ to the hopes of those around you? Won’t it be worth the wait for God’s inheritance?</p> | <p>Father God, thank you that our inheritance is not under risk, but is secure in you. Help us to live lives that demonstrate that our hope is worth waiting for. Amen.</p> |

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| 3 | In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you may have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. | 1 Peter 1:6-7 | <p>“A little while”. Flippant words, it would seem, when being scorned for Jesus is our lot. But in light of what God has for us, long years being faithful to Jesus will seem exactly that—a little while. And in the meantime? Stiff upper lip? Stoicism? No! Rejoicing! The very crucible we find ourselves in is proving the quality of our faith. Now it seems worthless—especially in the eyes of a world that values gold. But then? In a little while? It will be deemed priceless on the day that Jesus is revealed.</p> <p>What sorts of things do you think are worth waiting for? What earthly treasure might we hold onto now, that would mean missing out on heavenly treasure then?</p> | Heavenly Father, give us eyes to see that the trials of this age will seem as nothing when Jesus is revealed and our faith is seen by all as precious. Amen. |
| 4 | As you come to him, a living stone rejected by people but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. | 1 Peter 2:4-5 | <p>Jesus was the rock thrown on the rubble pile, considered by Israel's leaders as of no value for building God's future. Worthless to humans maybe, but so precious to God. So too with us. Though rejected like Jesus, we too are being gathered by God to complete his building. The call is “Come to him”. The call is not to waver in the face of rejection. God is sweeping us up into his plans to bless the world through his Messiah. So come to the rejected One, and gather with those he has made alive.</p> <p>Gathered stones make God's building. Why is gathering with other Christians so important for us?</p> | Father God, thank you that Jesus faced rejection by humans so that we could be accepted by you. Help us remember daily that you have made us what we once were not—worshippers of the true God. Amen. |

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| 5 | But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. | 1 Peter 2:9-10 | <p>God makes us what we are not. Downtrodden people are lifted up. Wayward strangers are gathered as a nation. Rebellious people are set apart for God. And God makes us for him. We now do what Israel failed to do, announcing God's greatness to a watching world in word and deed. And if we missed it, the writer repeats it: Nobodies have become somebodies, the condemned have been forgiven. Now that's worth proclaiming!</p> <p>God's plan for us is to announce his plan for the world. Will you live your life as an opportunity to proclaim King Jesus to a watching world?</p> | Father God, thank you for your gracious love in calling us to be what we are not, so that we can proclaim to people who you are. Give us boldness to share your gospel. Amen. |
| 6 | Beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. | 1 Peter 2:11-12 | <p>We face two battles. First, a battle inside. As spiritual exiles we fight the internal war against sin that would drag us away. And there's a battle outside. Living a godly life isn't going to get you kudos, especially when others scorn your goodness for showing up their badness. Fighting a battle on two fronts is not easy. But it's not impossible. And it's not futile. One day God will "visit", and sin will be vanquished, while those who malign us now, will then realise God's ways were right all along.</p> <p>Are you fighting the internal battle against sin? Are you fighting the external battle by doing good? Which battle is most troubling today?</p> | Heavenly Father, thank you that your Son our Saviour fought the battle against sin on our behalf, and took the cruel taunts of others for our sakes. Help us to live in the light of his cross. Amen. |
| 7 | Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. | 1 Peter 2:13-15 | <p>God is our Governor. Jesus is our President. Yet we are to live obediently to our governments. But they are so frustrating! They don't do what we want, and often do the exact opposite! The key is to remember they are not the ultimate authority. It is "for the Lord's sake". Caesar is not Lord, Jesus is. Should the government call us to do bad, then we will reject that call, whilst living godly lives that stand out as a beacon in a dark world.</p> <p>When the government does not do what we want will we get angry or frustrated? Or will we do what Jesus said, and pray for our enemies?</p> | Heavenly Father, help us to remember that you are the true Sovereign. Forgive us for neglecting your reign, and give us courage to both live with Jesus as Lord, and to pray for our governments. Amen. |

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| 8 | For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. | 1 Peter 2:21-23 | <p>It is so painful when someone maligns us or hurts us. There is confusion, shock, anger, depression all mixed together. If that's you, consider Jesus. He went through exactly the same in order to show us what to do. Not simply to refuse to retaliate, but to trust ourselves to the one true Judge, who sees and knows our plight. In the short term that's hard to do, but one day it will all be worth it when the just Judge hears our case. In the meantime love and pray for those who revile you.</p> <p>Are you hurting? Has a friendship been broken? How does Jesus' example help you to deal with the pain? How does knowing God judges justly encourage you?</p> | Father God, thank you that the Lord Jesus gave us an example to follow. Forgive us for retaliating when we should not, and strengthen us to trust that the good Judge knows and understands our plight. Amen. |
| 9 | He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. | 1 Peter 2:24-25 | <p>We're not simply victims of the sin of others. Others are not simply our enemies. We are perpetrators too. We were God's enemies. And our sin cost Jesus his life. Now that he has borne the cost of that sin, our lives are going to be different. We're going to live before those who we feel have wronged us as those who hold out forgiveness and mercy. Left to our own devices we'd wander off into all sorts of messes, but Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us to green pastures.</p> <p>How does knowing that our sin cost Jesus his life draw us away from destructive sin to healthy lives of righteousness?</p> | Heavenly Father, thank you that your Son died in our place so that we might live for you and not for ourselves. Help us to offer mercy to those we don't think deserve it today. Amen. |
| 10 | Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing. | 1 Peter 3:8-9 | <p>Christian, you are in a winning situation. Your inheritance is labelled "blessing". So it makes sense now to live with that in mind, especially with other Christians and even with those who scorn your faith. Tender hearts and humble minds may not get us very far up the corporate ladder or win us an argument. But in Jesus we are free to bless and serve others, knowing that we are losing nothing and gaining everything.</p> <p>Does your life reflect a value system opposite to the world? What about your Christian community? What would it mean today for you to bless those whom you don't particularly want to?</p> | Father God, please give us a sense of all the good you have for us here and now, and in the future. Forgive us repaying evil for evil and remind us of our calling. Amen. |

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| 11 | Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. | 1 Peter 3:13-14 | <p>Suffering means blessing? Surely not! Yet with Jesus, everything is turned on its head. With Jesus, even evil turns out for good. How do we know? Because it did for Jesus! They harmed him: God raised him. He suffered at human hands: He is glorified at God's right hand. That's our hope too. Facing scorn or abuse for Jesus, or simply saying no to sin daily may seem like a grind. Until we see how it turned out for Jesus. It's a "heads I win, tails you lose" scenario.</p> <p>What difference will it make to you today to know that whatever difficulties you face, in Jesus everything will one day be put right?</p> | Father God, thank you for your righteous Son, who endured suffering and scorn. Thank you that, like him, you will one day vindicate your people. Amen. |
| 12 | The end of all things is at hand: therefore be self controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. | 1 Peter 4:7-9 | <p>The end is nigh! But don't head for the hills. Head to prayer. Head to God's people and serve them in love and hospitality. The idea of Jesus' return is not meant to scare us, but to encourage us to live the kind of lives that will be the norm in the new kingdom. This world is about lack of self-control and partying. It's about hatred and strife and selfishness. God calls us to the opposite of all that now, because his new world will be the opposite of that then.</p> <p>The hope of God's new age should spur us to godly living now. How is that hope transforming you today? How should it transform God's community when it meets?</p> | Heavenly Father, we long for the day that your Son returns. Help us to not be scared of that day, but to long for it and live for it in the here and now. Till he comes. Amen. |

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| 13 | Beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. | 1 Peter 4:12-13 | <p>The story of the Bible is "suffer now, glory later". All God's servants experienced that and Jesus was the ultimate example. So don't be surprised when it happens to us! But here's the sweet bit, suffering for loving God shouldn't make us grumble, but rejoice. Why? Because one day glory will come and everything will change. The key is to have patience. The key is to not give in and seek glory in this life, ease and contentment in the here and now, praise from the world now. No, the praise we look for comes from God, and arrives when he arrives. In the meantime—look up!</p> <p>How might you be tempted towards "glory now"? What trouble in this world might make you give up, lose patience, and seek comfort and security now?</p> | Heavenly Father, we recognise that so often we seek ease and comfort in this age rather than true comfort from you in the new age. Give us your Holy Spirit who comforts us now with the hope of what you have in store for us. Amen. |
| 14 | Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. | 1 Peter 5:8-10 | <p>It's personal. You're not paranoid, someone is out to get you; the devil! God's people, however, don't need to run, but resist. Our resistance isn't a spell or incantation, but a firm faith and knowledge that the rejection of Jesus and his people is common throughout the world. And notice that it says again "in a little while". Suffering is here and now, but passing. Glory is there and then, but permanent. Surely it's worth the wait. And Jesus won't send someone else to pick us up, dust us down and set us on our feet, he's going to do that himself! Jesus: 1 - devil: nil.</p> <p>How are you resisting the devil through your faith today? How does it help to know that your experience is common to Christians all around the world?</p> | Father God, we long for the day that Jesus is declared Champion, publicly and finally. Until that day give us strength and joy from your Spirit to resist the opposition we face from both the devil and those who do not love Jesus or his people. Amen. |