

Theme: Faith in Exile

Title: Eternal Perspective – I Peter 1:3-9

Aim: We live as exiles by looking by faith toward God & home.

Intro: I enjoy reading books of history, especially war history. I realize that those who have experienced war usually don't want to read such books, while those who haven't often wonder how they would do under those circumstances & so are interested in reading about it. Nonetheless, I have read of those who survived war & being prisoners of war by thinking of & fighting toward going home. Home for them represented hope. They endured hell on earth by looking toward home & family. However, theirs was not a sure hope – could have been killed or otherwise died from sickness & mistreatment, never seeing their families again. Yet, if they focused on those possibilities, they would never make it - it was hope that kept them going. I think that is the message of Peter to the “elect exiles of the Dispersion” in I Peter 1 (& essentially the whole epistle) – hope in the midst of difficulty & even despair. The only difference is that the hope of those exiles & our hope in Christ is a living hope, sure & secure hope. Theme: Faith in exile. If we are in Christ, we are exiles in a world that's not our home, placed here & dispersed throughout the world by God, for His kingdom purposes. How do we live in exile? How do we live in this world? It is by faith in the One who gives us hope. It is by having an eternal perspective. I Peter 1:3-9 [READ]. I submit to you that you could preach this sermon, probably better than I will, because Peter preached this sermon. It lays out for us as we read thru the passage. Imagine yourselves as the exiles to whom Peter wrote & see yourselves as you truly are: Christian exiles. We're just going to “walk” thru this text to mine out of it the truths we need to understand in order to successfully live as exiles in this world, at this time. **Verse 3:** “Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” Peter wanted to immediately focus their/our attention on God. Remember that in vs2 Peter already referred to God as God the Father – your Father if you are in Christ. Now he reminds them that the One who is our benefactor, who is the foundation & provider of our hope, is “the

God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This effectively links those who are followers of Christ to His Father, who, again, is our Father. It is God the Father who “so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Peter continues: “According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again...” That phrase “caused us” is begotten. God has begotten us – all who believe/receive Christ. We are born again – born from above, born of God – thru faith in Christ. Therefore we are members of God’s eternal family. And we’re born again “to a living hope.” Living hope is hope for now & for the future. Living hope cannot be dashed. God is w/us now & promises us eternity. This living hope is provided for us, made possible by the living Lord Jesus – “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,...” The resurrection of Christ is the centerpiece of our faith. If Christ has not been raised, said Paul, then we are w/out hope. But because He lives, we have the guarantee of eternal life ourselves, even if we die. Those who believe will be raised as Christ was raised! That’s just 1 verse! **Verse 4**: Because we are born again children of God, we have an inheritance. “To an inheritance” – we who are exiles in this world have the promised inheritance of the kingdom of God & eternal life. In reality, God is our inheritance. We will have unhindered communion w/Almighty, eternal God forever, beginning when Jesus comes again. Of course we have God’s presence now thru His Holy Spirit who is working w/in us, but the world & the limitations of this life drag us down & sometimes God seems far, tho He is not. Then His presence will be fully known always. And look, in Christ our inheritance is/will be “imperishable” – cannot be destroyed; “undefiled” – cannot be sullied or polluted; & “unfading” – will not dissipate or be disappointing or limited. This inheritance is “kept in heaven for you...” I.E., it is secure. As Paul wrote, “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil.3:20) & our lives are “hidden w/Christ in God” (Col.3:3). If we are in Christ by faith, our relationship w/God & eternity w/Him is untouchable & unshakeable, just as Jesus is. **Verse 5**: Our inheritance is kept in heaven “for you” – all who are in Christ – “who by God’s

power” – God who is omnipotent & infinitely sovereign & thus unstoppable, as is His eternal plan of redemption – we “are being guarded” – protected, kept, secured. Then note the intriguing thought that we are being guarded by God “through faith” – our faith in Christ. Our faith is the key which unlocks the wonders of salvation, the entrance into eternity, the blessedness of life w/God – “a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Remember that faith is a gift of God (Eph.2:8 – ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...”***). But faith must be exercised & faith must not be forsaken. How closely linked are the preservation of God (His guarding, keeping us) & the perseverance of the saints (our holding on to Him), which is what Peter was exhorting us to do: persevere. The “last time” refers to the end of this current age when Jesus will return & receive His saints & judge the world & usher in His eternal kingdom on the earth made new. Peter was saying: “Hold on, Jesus is coming!” If he believed that was true then, how much closer we are now. **Verse 6:** We can & should rejoice – take joy (a choice not a feeling), even “though now for a little while...” Now, in this present life, now in this time of exile; “for a little while...” This life, tho difficult as it is, is temporary & brief. Paul wrote in **Rom.8:18** ***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing w/the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*** That’s essentially what Peter was saying. Compared to eternity, our struggles in this world are brief – “for a little while.” Yes, they seem deep & dark & unending, but set your focus on God & the inheritance that awaits us in Christ. But listen: you must receive Christ by faith! Also interesting, Peter said these “various trials” which grieve us now, are perhaps “necessary” – allowed by God for His purposes in this world & in our personal lives. **Verse 7:** “So that the tested genuineness of your faith...” The trials of this life, our struggle as exiles in this world not our home, are necessary in order to test the genuineness of our faith. Do you believe what you say you believe? Do you really believe Jesus is not only Savior but also Lord, to whom we owe our allegiance? As we look to God in the midst of our struggles as

exiles & trust in Him, our faith is proven & purified & becomes a witness to the world. Our faith is “more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire.” And our steadfast faith in Christ will “be found to result in praise & glory & honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” When Jesus comes again, He will present us to the Father & God the Father will display to the angels of heaven & all of us “*the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*” (Eph.2:7). He will display the fruition of our faith to the glory of His name, which we will share for eternity. God will be eternally praised & glorified & honored by the work He has done in us, by His eternal salvation provided for us, His children. He will get us there! Trust Him now in the midst of various trials. **Verse 8:** “Though you have not seen Him you love Him.” None of those exiles had ever seen Jesus as Peter had, but still they loved Him. Nor have we visibly seen Jesus or God the Father but we can see what He’s done for us. We can sense His love for us, demonstrated through the gift of His Son Jesus, who died for us even while we were still sinners (Rom.5:8). So, as His beloved children, we “love Him” because He 1st loved us (I John 4:19). Even tho our love is sometimes weak, we do love Him, especially when we consider who He is & what He’s done for us. “Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him...” Those dispersed exiles couldn’t see God the Father nor Jesus the Son; nor can we see God but we as they could see thru the eyes of faith. It really is true in regards to our relationship w/God & salvation thru the work of Christ in His death & resurrection that instead of seeing being believing, rather, believing is seeing. God has made Himself known thru creation & His Word & the gift of His Son Jesus who reveals Him to us. As God the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the truths of the gospel, we believe in & embrace Christ by faith, then the eyes of our hearts are further opened so that we want to follow Jesus & are filled w/hope. That leads us to “rejoice w/joy that is inexpressible & filled w/glory” as we experience God’s nearness & love in a deeper sense & are filled w/sure hope for the future w/Christ. Then we realize what the songwriter wrote: “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Life's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase. So bravely run the race 'til we see Christ." **Verse 9**: It all comes back around. Our faith in Christ, our focus on God in the midst of our trials, our love for Him, our perseverance in faith obtains "the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." That is the most important matter of all life & eternity. That is the most important matter for our children & all our loved ones. No matter how hard life is here, in exile, we have sure hope in Christ. As we suffer w/Him here, we will reign w/Him there. The important thing is to maintain our focus on what is most important. We want good things here & often we are blessed to have so much, but how much more important to have God here & now so that we will have Him eternally. Do you know Jesus? Bro/sis, hold on to Christ. Hold fast in trial. It will be worth it. It certainly will take faith – faith in exile.