

Together We Endure: The Letter of 1 Peter #2

“The Exile Commands” // 1 Peter 1:13–21

We’re in a series called *Together We Endure*. It’s a study through 1 Peter, so grab your Bible and turn there if you haven’t yet. If someone there in your living room doesn’t have their Bible, just look at them, shake your head in disgust and say, “Just because Pastor can’t see you doesn’t mean you shouldn’t have your Bible.”

Let’s talk about the theme “*Together We Endure*” for just a minute. 1 Peter was written to a church going through an especially difficult time--persecution had scattered them to the regions all around the world. The Apostle Peter explains how to endure in such situations--and a key component of the fact is they do that *together*. The people to whom Peter was writing weren’t physically together, but they were united by a hope that bound them together, even when they were isolated. That’s true of us, too.

We may not be scattered around the world, but many of us are going through a difficult time of isolation. And btw, perhaps your difficulties started long before the lockdown. You’ve got a bad marriage. Your job is just not going well. You have health problems. Something you’re struggling with that just won’t go away. And your problem just makes you feel isolated. Alone.

Together We Endure. We want to come together and press into this common hope. Recently one of the coaches at the gym where I work out, CrossFit United, used this illustration: When a herd of cows senses a storm coming, they run away from it, scattering as they go. Of course, the storm always catches up with them, and it is especially hard on them because they are now alone. Buffalo, by contrast, when they sense a storm coming, instinctively do the opposite: They huddle together and actually walk into the storm. I’m sure their cow cousins think they are crazy, but this gives them three advantages: First, it shortens the storm for them, because they are literally walking through it. Second, they find additional protection from being huddled together. Third, the fur is thicker on their frontsides than their backsides, which gives them extra protection for warmth.¹ Now, I’m not sure how that illustration is supposed to motivate me to do more burpees, but I know it illustrates what we’re going after in 1 Peter. *Together We Endure. We’re not going to run away from these problems, we’re going to press into them, and we’re going to do it together.* All of the Christian’s armor is designed to protect you when you engage the battle, not run away from it.

Last week we introduced the book by explaining the key identity in 1 Peter. Do you remember it?

I’ll give you a hint. It’s one of these 4: **a. believer. b. exile. c. beloved son or daughter. d. stupid sheep.** Which one was it? Write your answer in the comments or tell someone you’re sitting next to. Ten seconds - go.

The correct answer rhymes with TEXTILE. “Exile.”

Peter calls the people to whom he is writing “exiles.” An exile is someone from one place temporarily taking up residence in another. An exile is not an immigrant--an immigrant wants to make their new place of

¹ Yes, buffalo really do this:

<https://www.nps.gov/wica/learn/nature/bison-buffalo-bison-bison.htm>

residence their PERMANENT home. An exile isn't like that. They may have to live in this new place for a while, but their heart still belongs to their home country.

An exile is also not a tourist. A tourist just passes through this new country with little concern about the people around them except bemused curiosity. Peter says we shouldn't be like tourists, either. We are exiles--we temporarily take up residence in a place that is not our permanent home--caring for it, investing in it, but never losing our longing for home.

What we saw last week was this: If you live as an exile, do you know what that means you'll be? Different. You know how exile is spelled in Greek? W-E-I-R-D. You're different. How can you not be? You are from a different place. Speak a different native language. Hold a different set of values. I said this last week--let me say it again, sensitively but seriously: If you've been spending time with lost people and they can't tell that you're not from around here--maybe you're not. **If someone tells me they grew up in Eastern NC**, but they never say "y'all," they don't care about college basketball a lick, and they think barbecue is gross--I would probably say, "I doubt that you're actually from Eastern NC. Either that or it's been so long that you've completely forgotten your roots."

If someone would describe you and the word "different" doesn't come out of their mouths, you have a legitimate reason to doubt your salvation.

OK, let me use these 9 verses to give you the 6 commands of an EXILE:

1. Get Dressed

¹³ Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded...

- "With your minds ready for action." The old KJV I first memorized this verse in translated this verse as: "Gird up your loins for action," which is literally what the words say in Greek.
- Gird up your loins. IOW, dress for battle. You ever shown up somewhere dressed totally wrongly? When the last Star Wars came out, my family had one extra ticket so we invited one of our single student leaders to go with us. I told him that the one catch was that we were all dressing up like Star Wars characters so he had to also. Which of course we weren't, so he showed up at the restaurant in full costume and we're all in regular clothes. He walks up to the table and is like, "Hey, where are your costumes?" And I said, "Gotcha!"
- That's all fun and games but showing up somewhere dressed wrongly can really hurt you! Imagine if a friend asks you to come over and help him do some construction and you show up thinking he's invited you to a dinner party. You have on your loafers and sweater vest and you need work boots and jeans. The worst would be to show up for battle dressed for leisure. Your opponent is suited up with all kinds of gear and weaponry, and your loins are girded about with a towel and your feet are shod with flip-flops. You wouldn't just feel silly in a moment like that. You'd be putting yourself in mortal danger.
- Yet this is exactly what many Christians do when it comes to spiritual things, Peter says. They don't take the battle seriously. They are lazy in their approach to Scripture. They rarely pray and plead for God's strength. They don't take temptation seriously--they have no accountability and flirt with it often. They treat sin and compromise in their lives lightly. The bad thing with most sin is not the action in itself, but that you give Satan a foothold into your life.
- BTW, I'm talking to somebody out there right now that is entertaining a sin: you're in compromise--you're looking at porn; you're in a relationship that your godly friends are worried about; you're starting a

relationship that is wrong, or you're doing something unethical, or whatever--and you have given a foothold to the devil and he is going to destroy you with it. I'm telling you from the HS, don't play around!

- Some Christian parents don't take seriously the battle that is going on for their kids' hearts. I don't care if they are in public school, private school, or homeschool, God holds you responsible for the shaping of their hearts. And to protect them from the lies the enemy is trying to seduce them with. Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8 that a Satan walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Listen, if I knew there was some kind of predator on the loose in my neighborhood and I let my kids go out completely unsupervised, how would I not be considered a delinquent parent? Listen: a far more dangerous enemy than any sexual predator is hunting your child--Satan--and he's using the winsome lies of the culture to destroy them. Wake up and get dressed! Clothe your mind in Scripture and bathe your heart in prayer!

2. Lift Your Eyes

...and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

- We spent a lot of time talking about this last week, but Peter is urging us to set our hope exclusively on what God has promised to us as our internal inheritance. And what is that? That we will know Christ, be like Christ, and one day get to be with Christ in a place where there is no more crying, no more pain, and all sad things come untrue.
- He says "set your hope *completely* on those promises." Don't cut it or water it down with anything. How do Christians water it down? They set their hope, their happiness, on other things God needs to provide for them to be happy. I'm glad to know Christ, be like Christ, and the promise to be with him one day, but I really also need you to provide me with... good health. Good kids. A great marriage. Lots of money.
- And then, when God doesn't come through on one of those things, we accuse God of letting us down.
- **Let me ask:** What do you feel like God has to provide for you in order to fulfill his promise to you?

In fact, before I even teach any further on this, take one minute and answer this question for yourself. Tell it to someone. Write it down. Whatever. Figure out what that thing is:

What has to happen in your life for you to feel like God loves you and is keeping his promise to you?

- Okay, now that you know what it is, listen: There are a lot of things I want God to provide for me--I hope he gives me health, success in my job; I even ask him to give me prosperity financially. And he's a good Father, so I anticipate he may give me a lot of those things. But my HOPE is in knowing Christ, being like Christ and being with Christ, and so if in God's plan I do without some of those things, or I suffer, I will be satisfied. My hope is in who God is for me, and what he is doing in me.
- Christians love Romans 8:28: "And we know that God has promised to work all things together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose..." And WHAT IS that PURPOSE? Paul says, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..." To know Christ. To be like Christ. That's HOW they are working together for good. Lots of Christians memorize Rom 8:28, "all things work together for good, to those who are called according to his purpose" but they don't go on to memorize the next verse after that one which tells you what that good purpose is: to know Christ and be conformed to his image.
- So, yes, pray and ask God to bless you and take care of you now. But put your HOPE in knowing Christ, being like Christ, and being with Christ. And if in a particular season that is all that he gives you, be satisfied with that.

3. Don't Look Back

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.

- Before you came to Christ, your life aspirations came out of a wrong way of looking at the world. Peter says “**Desires of your former ignorance**.” Wrong desires that grew out wrong ways of looking at the world. You thought making lots of money would make you happy. And then you saw that the people with the most money didn’t seem to be the happiest. Examples
 - Maybe you thought romance was the key: The Hip-Hop star **Drake** said in an interview: There was a point where I felt like I needed to keep the company of a different woman every night. I was trying to fill a void. But in those moment after sex, I’d know it wasn’t working. Those quiet moments are the realest moments a man will ever have in his life... the next day I’d convince myself to do it again. But during that time, I knew it wasn’t working. Or the movie star **Matt Dillon** recently said, “Most Hollywood people are relationship junkies.” You get a high off of a relationship like a drug, then crash off of it, and so you go from one ‘hit’ to the next.”
 - Or maybe you thought being liked by others was the key. I’m reminded of what **Katy Perry** posted out last year on Instagram: “100 million digital singles and still insecure.”
 - Maybe you thought you’d find it by being the best. Like everyone else, I’m watching the Michael Jordan documentary. Here is a guy who is literally the best there ever was, and it didn’t lead him to happiness, but to emptiness, and an unsettledness.
 - You assumed that life with you in charge would make you happy, but something woke you up to the fact that it just wasn’t true.
- Or maybe you just considered the cross. If Jesus Christ is true, then the way of rebellion against God leads only to death. Real life is found only from the resurrection. And so you turned your back on your self-willed way of living and surrendered to Christ. You showed that by being baptized, declaring that you were being buried to your old way of living and raised to new life in Christ.
- But Peter is recognizing that it is so easy to fall back into those old ways of living. You sense some unhappiness or discontent. And it’s easy to think, “I just need more money. A different living situation. To get vengeance on someone.”
- Peter said, “You’ve recognized that doesn’t work! Don’t go back there. Those old desires come out of ignorance.
- About 10 years ago I developed an acid reflux problem that kept me up throughout the night with a really upset stomach. I didn’t know it was acid reflux and I just assumed I had an upset stomach and was eating too much meat or spicy food before bed. I didn’t want to stop eating meat or spicy food--because what kind of life would that be, I just thought I needed to eat something right before bed to settle my stomach, and popcorn and yogurt felt right, so I just ate that. Every night. It made sense to me. It’s what my stomach seemed to want. I did that for a few months! Of course, eating those things wasn’t really helping the problem, it was just making me gain weight. Later the doctor told me what the real problem was and gave me a prescription for it and that cured it immediately.
- Now, at night, if I feel like I have an upset stomach, I shouldn’t go back to the popcorn and yogurt. I know better. You had desires that came from wrong ways of dealing with the emptiness in your heart. Don’t go back to your old way of ignorance. Don’t assume. I just need more money. I just need out of this marriage. I just need to get married. I just need to get even with this person. If you are unhappy, press into the hope of knowing Christ, being like Christ, and being with him one day.

Let’s take a minute and confess this to God:

"God, forgive me for continually running back to _____." Write it down or call it out.

4. Be weird

¹⁵ But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; ¹⁶ for it is written, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44–45).

Holiness. That’s a strange word for most Americans. And not very attractive, either. The word conjures up images of something that is sterile, boring. Bright, white, colorless light. Or sanctimonious, pious, prudish religiosity that is no fun.

But think of “holiness” as “wholeness.” (**Holiness = wholeness**), which is where we get the English word, btw. Holiness is wholly perfect goodness; wholly perfect justice; wholly perfect integrity and love! We are attracted to that, right? Perfect justice. Perfect beauty. Perfect love. Who wants a government that is partially unjust? No girl wants to marry a guy that is only partially truthful, partially faithfully, partially loving?

God is pure goodness; so things like injustice and impurity and deception are repulsive to him. **Habakkuk 1:13** says he is of such pure eyes that you cannot behold evil. This doesn’t mean evil is invisible to him; it means he can’t look at it with neutral emotion. Think about watching something you find repulsive. Torture; injustice; you see something presented--a movie or documentary on cruelty or abuse, the damages of marital infidelity or racial injustice and just stay neutral. You react viscerally. That’s what God is like with all unholiness.

The Hebrew word for holy (kodesh) means literally “cut away.” You are cut away from the world--separate. Totally different. You are going to seem weird to everyone around you now because you are literally cut from a different cloth.

Again I’ll say, if you DON’T seem weird to everyone around you, isn’t it possible you are more like the world than you are God? Isn’t it possible you’re not actually born again, still a member of the world’s family and not God’s?

Let me ask. **Financially are you out of sync with this world?**

- I’ve explained this before: If you are doing with your money what God says to do, you are going to be at least three steps behind the people who make the same amount of money as you. Let me explain: The average person in the Triangle carries about \$15,000 in credit card debt. God tells us, as much as possible, to live without debt. So if we are following his counsel, we’re not spending above our income for the latest TV’s or nicest cars or to go on vacation. God also tells you to give away at least the first 10% to him, which the world does not do. And he tells you to save wisely (10%), which most don’t do. That puts you 3 steps behind everyone else who makes the same amount as you. THAT IS NOTICEABLE. You drive different cars. Go on different vacations. Live in different level houses. Wear different clothes. If your spending habits don’t differ from everyone around you in big ways, again, you may be more like the world than you realize. You have reason to question if you really are a citizen of heaven.
- In Leviticus, where Peter is quoting from with this command to be holy, God commanded the Israelites to leave the edges of their fields unharvested. They were only to harvest the middle of the field and leave the edges easily accessible for the poor, so the poor could glean from those sections and eat. No one else in the ancient world did that. Farmers would, like most business owners today, try to wring out every last cent of profit from their yield. That’s just smart business. But God wanted Israel to be different, so that foreigners would walk past Israelite fields and say, “Why didn’t you harvest the edges?” And they could say, “It’s because we serve a God who cares for the poor and shares with them so we do also.” Listen: to be wealthy is not to be sinful, but you need to have edges. You have bigger fields, so you can harvest more, but you should also have bigger edges also.

Are you sexually out of sync with the world? I've always loved Augustine's words. Christians more most of sync with the world in their relationship with 3 things: money, power and sex. The world is stingy with its money but promiscuous with its sex. Christians, by contrast, are promiscuous with their money and power but stingy with their sex, the exact opposite of the world. And we do that because we know sex represents a love like God's love, where you give yourself entirely to someone, so we do that in sex. And we know that our resources are to be used like Jesus', which means they are poured out to bless and help others, so we are crazy generous with our money.

Are you out of sync with the world in how you handle your anger or frustration? How do people in the world handle anger? They rage, and go for vengeance. Or they avoid conflict, harbor grudges and gossip. What did Christ do? He never sought vengeance. He confronted--selflessly and patiently--then forgave and moved on. And he kept no record of wrongs.

Be holy! Be separate in how you act, showing you have a different hope and a different judge and a different perspective on life than everyone around you!

5. Stand Amazed²

¹⁷ If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence (many translations say fear, which is what the Greek says here) during your time living as strangers.

Literally what he is saying is "live in fear," which sounds like the opposite of what we usually say the gospel message is. "Perfect love casts out fear," we say. But the best way to think of fear here is "awe," which is why the CSB translators wrote it that way.

Why stand in awe? We serve a God, he says, who *judges impartially*. Everybody is going to judge fully and impartially based on what they did and why they did it! Nobody is getting away with injustice!

Peter goes on: ¹⁸ For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.

The same God who will judge everyone impartially gave Christ for us, to satisfy God's judgment against us. Though our deeds and our motives were bad like everyone else's, Peter says, God redeemed us by suffering judgment in our place. To save us, it cost God something immense. He didn't save us through some trifling gesture, a wave of a wand or set of rules for us to follow. He gave his own Son to be cursed, humiliated, and tortured in our place.

That should make us stand in reverent awe. I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned unclean? See from his head, his hand his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down? Did e'er such love or sorrow meet, or joy compose so rich a crown? Were the whole realm...

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/a-sojourn-on-earth-in-confident-fear>

King David said it this way in Psalm 130: "There is forgiveness with you [O God], that you may be feared." Meditating on the price of our salvation--how great the judgment of God was against us; how much he paid--makes us stand in wonder of God; it makes us afraid of being apart from him again, and makes us in awe of the treasure he has now given us. It's fear, and awe, but it is a confident fear. A fear of what your life would be like God, and in awe of how secure you are with him!

The price of our forgiveness makes us stand in awe! There is none like our God. There is none beside our God. He's worthy of all the praise we could ever bring him. Let's pause for a moment and sing with great joy to our God, and then we'll come back for our final point.

[Build My Life]

Lastly,

6. Love Extravagantly

²² Since you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth, so that you show sincere brotherly love for each other, from a pure heart love one another constantly,

The last command is to love. We do that because we're part of a new family, united by a common salvation and a common hope. The gospel gives us a remarkable ability to love people. The gospel gives us patience with the flaws of others, because we recognize that we had a bunch of flaws of our own when Jesus saved and forgave us. It frees us from the tyranny of needing other people to be happy, so that we can stop using them and start loving them. When you're codependent on somebody, you can't love them, you use them. When you need others to recognize you so that you can find meaning, and that makes you nice and kind and good so that they will recognize your goodness, that means you are not doing goodness out of the overflow of your heart, but to win their affection. Your good deeds are serving yourself, not loving them. When you need to be the best in order to feel valuable, that puts you always in competition with everyone. You can't love them because you are competing with them for a sense of self-worth. The gospel gives you the ability to love--it makes you complete in God so you can love others. It shows you patience and love so you can show it to others. We can love, because he first loved us.

Obedience to these commands flow out of our hope in our imperishable inheritance. Obedience is fueled by our hope in Christ. Look at the last verses in this chapter: ²⁴ For "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8)

Everything else we live for fades; every foundation crumbles. But Christ, Peter says, is eternal. His love went farther for us than anyone had ever gone; his love will endure longer than everything else. Compared to his love, the most permanent things on earth are like grass that appears one week and is gone the next.

Peter's question is, "Have you found this hope that makes obedience to these commands easy?" I think a number of you have had your foundations rocked in the past few weeks. And maybe he's gotten your attention. For some of you, he's trying.

The greatest invitation ever given came from Christ. He said, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you give your life to him, he can forgive your sin, give you new life, and promises to bear you up under all your troubles. He'll be your guide when you feel lost, your support when

you feel broken, your Comforter when you feel overwhelmed. Has he been speaking to you since quarantine started, inviting you to come to him. Is he doing that? Why not give in to that now?

Before we sing, and worship, would you PRAY WITH ME

If you prayed that, let us know at prayer@summitrdu.com

Let's sing, "O Come to the Altar"