

The Keys to Thriving in Exile

1 Peter 1:6-9

This week's passage makes me think of one of Jennifer's older relatives who would always offer the greeting "Waiting for the Lord to come back." While she had genuine faith and truly was expecting the return of Christ, she probably didn't intend that greeting as evidence that she was greatly enjoying life at the moment.

We probably each know of a person who lives as if they are simply waiting to die. Sometimes they will even come out and say it!

In a sense, Christians have such an incredible hope in our future resurrection that our best life is indeed what God *guarantees* we will have on the other side of death. But in another sense, God did not create us to merely survive until we experience his glory. Christians have every reason to thrive in life *right now*.

Our expectation for future glory is the key to experiencing life today in the fullness of what God intends for us. Even as we live with suffering, rejection, and persecution (all of which characterize life as exiles), we know that the expectation of what lies on the other side of our exile can give us the joy to flourish *in this moment*.

This type of future-oriented flourishing is exactly what Peter has in mind in 1 Peter 1:6-9.

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 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 honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Austin's two essential values for thriving in our current spiritual exile are that we embrace Christ's affirmation and salvation above everything else. What we experience in the world, positive or negative, pales in comparison to the embrace of Christ that we have for eternity. In this way, even the things that cause us grief only serve to refine our faith, which will be proven of greater value than anything else we can imagine.

Discussion Questions

- **What sorts of things do you think Peter has in mind for the first century churches when he speaks of "various trials"? (vv. 6-7)**

- Give some examples of various trials that have grieved you in life? (v. 6)
- How can trials be compared to refining gold? (v. 7)
- When will faith be proven to be genuine and valuable? (v. 7)
- What is the mark of genuine faith in believers today? (v. 8)
- Why is faith able to bring about joy in all circumstances?
- How can we keep salvation at the forefront of our thoughts and actions?
- Does thinking of your grief as a trial instead of a tragedy help you to thrive in it?
- Why is faith the key to thriving in difficult circumstances?