

Exiles

Beyond This World

Sermon Recap

This sermon series, "Exiles," begins by introducing Peter, a disciple who experienced both profound faith and significant failure, denying Jesus three times. Yet, Jesus pursued and restored Peter, not to shame him, but to recommission him for ministry, calling him to strengthen his brothers. This personal story highlights Peter's unique qualification to teach us how to "stand firm" in faith, drawing from 30 years of walking with Jesus.

Peter writes to believers as "God's chosen people who are living as foreigners or exiles." The term "chosen" emphasizes that God selected us not because of our performance or perfection, but despite our flaws and failures, knowing everything about us. This foundational truth—that salvation is "DONE" by Jesus through His mercy and grace, rather than earned by our "DOING"—is crucial. Mercy means not getting the punishment we deserve, and grace means receiving what we don't deserve.

The concept of being "foreigners" or "exiles" reminds us that this world is not our permanent home; it is temporary, like a hotel stay. This perspective is vital because following Jesus can often make life harder, leading to a "spiritual culture shock" when trials, suffering, and unanswered prayers arise. Peter addresses the question, "Is following Jesus even worth it when faith doesn't always make my life better?" He teaches that trials serve to test and refine our faith, proving its genuineness, much like fire purifies gold.

Ultimately, we can stand firm because God actively protects us by His power until we receive our priceless, eternal inheritance in heaven. Even in the midst of trials, Jesus Himself is interceding for us, praying that our faith will not fail. While our present troubles may feel immense, in light of eternity, they are small and temporary, working to produce an everlasting glory that outweighs them all. Therefore, we are encouraged to fix our gaze on the unseen, eternal realities, knowing that God doesn't owe us a good life, but has already given us everything through Jesus Christ. The goal of this study is not just information, but transformation, prompting us to ask each week, "Jesus, what's the one step you're asking me to take?"

A faith that is not tested is a faith that cannot be trusted.

Discussion Questions

Reflecting on Peter's Restoration

The sermon detailed Peter's journey from denying Jesus three times to being lovingly restored by Him on the beach. How does Peter's experience of profound failure, followed by Jesus's intentional pursuit and restoration, shape your understanding of God's grace and His willingness to restore us after our own significant mistakes or moments of doubt? This story highlights that Jesus doesn't abandon us in our failures but actively seeks to bring us back and re-commission us.

Chosen Exiles in a Temporary Home

Peter addresses believers as both 'chosen' by God and 'foreigners' or 'exiles' in this world. What impact does understanding your identity as 'chosen'—not based on performance, but on God's foreknowledge and grace—have on your confidence and sense of belonging? Additionally, how does viewing this world as a temporary home, as an 'exile,' influence your priorities, attachments, or reactions when facing difficult or unsettling circumstances?

Standing Firm Through Trials

The sermon explains that trials are an inevitable part of the Christian life, serving to test and purify our faith, ultimately producing an eternal glory. How have past or present difficulties in your life challenged or strengthened your faith, and what did you learn about God's character through those experiences? What practical steps can you commit to taking to 'stand firm' when life throws unexpected challenges your way, anchoring yourself in the truths discussed today?

The Power of Mercy and Grace

Pastor Jared emphasized that salvation is 'DONE' by Jesus, rooted in God's mercy (not getting what we deserve) and grace (receiving what we don't deserve). How does a deep understanding of this 'DONE' gospel—rather than a performance-based view of faith—transform your perspective and response when you encounter suffering, unanswered prayers, or feel that God 'owes' you something better? This perspective helps us avoid anger at God by recognizing His ultimate generosity.

Prayer 🙏

- May we deeply internalize the truth of being chosen by God, recognizing that His grace and mercy embrace us fully, not because of our performance, but despite our failures, empowering us to stand firm in His love.
- May we view life's trials and difficulties through the lens of eternity, trusting that these temporary struggles are refining our faith and producing an unshakable hope, as we remember this world is not our permanent home.
- May we lean into the awareness of Jesus' constant intercession for us and God's protective power, boldly asking, 'Jesus, what's the one step You're asking me to take?' to navigate challenges with divine wisdom and strength.

- May our understanding of the gospel—that salvation is 'done' by Jesus' sacrifice, not by our 'doing'—be the unshakable root of our faith, leading to transformation and a confident reliance on His finished work.