

Kingdom Exiles, Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] We turn now once again to the first chapter, 1 Peter chapter 2. You can stand for the reading of God's Word. 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 11 and 12, Kingdom Exiles part 2 in this wonderful passage.

Let's ask the Lord, let's heed our choir and take our request now to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you for your mercy.

Thank you that you do hear our cry. That our prayers are not bouncing off the ceiling, but they are ascending as incense ascends to you.

And because they come to you in Christ, they are a beautiful aroma. Without Jesus, Lord, it wouldn't be beautiful.

But because of Jesus, who takes our weak, stammering prayers, who takes our weak ambitions, who takes our misguided requests, and by your Spirit makes them acceptable to you, thank you for hearing us.

[1 : 2 9] Pray, certainly continue to pray for those who are hurting among us, that they may know the joy of the Lord in the midst of their suffering and find in you that you, Lord Jesus, are the balm of Gilead, that you are that healing ointment upon their souls.

Father, we come now because we need to hear from you. We need your Word to speak to us, and you will speak to us from this passage we know, but you will speak to us in different ways.

Each one will hear, in some sense differently, because they will hear your message to them. But we pray that the message of this text would go down deep in all of our souls as well, and that we would live as your people in the midst of a generation that, in this country, that denies you.

But thank you that you always have a remnant, and you are still saving, and exalting yourself through each generation. You are saving.

And we would join you in that work of discipling the nations, and discipling our families, and discipling our communities, our city, and wherever you would send us.

[2 : 4 9] Help us, Lord, to be your people. Give your unworthy servant utterance to preach your Word in a way that your people can hear. In Jesus' name.

Amen. 1 Peter 2, verses 11 and 12. 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 honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Once again, that is the Word of the Lord. Please be seated. The early Christians were to use an old phrase, strange ducks.

I don't really know what that means. Are ducks strange? I don't know. Maybe it's just the ugly duckling story. I don't know. But they were strange. Especially at the time of the writing of the New Testament.

[4 : 19] We call that time apostolic Christianity. Why? Because the apostles of our Lord were alive and preaching and teaching his message in their early first century.

The Christians were strange. They were strange to the Jews, though, even though the first believers were all Jews, they were strange because they insisted that this Jesus who was crucified, crucified was their long-awaited Messiah.

You see, crucifixion to the Jews meant he was cursed by God. That was scandalous to say that to them. And also, equally scandalous, the Messiah was killed by the Romans?

The Messiah was supposed to come and defeat the Romans. And these Jewish Christians were saying, Jesus, the crucified one, was the Messiah.

It didn't click. They were strange to the Romans, too, and Gentiles of that day. Because the Christians did not worship the pantheon of gods.

[5 : 34] They didn't worship Apollo and Zeus and Hera, et cetera, et cetera. They didn't worship them. They only worshiped Jesus. And so the Romans called them atheists.

Isn't that a trip? When Polycarp, the early bishop of Smyrna, who was believed to be a disciple of the apostle John, he was brought into the arena to face death in AD 155.

He was given the opportunity by the proconsul of that day to recant. The proconsul said to him, swear by the spirit of Caesar, repent and say, away with the atheists.

The Christians, atheists. Polycarp, an old man at that time, 80 plus years, I believe, if I remember correctly, he gestured toward the crowd that was chanting for his death.

He gestures towards the crowd and says, away with the atheists, waving at them. It didn't go over too well.

[6 : 53] The Christians were strange to the Romans because they had a strict sexual code. That sex was only for heterosexual marriage alone.

And they didn't promote polygamy. They didn't dally with the temple prostitutes or have mistresses and they fled away from homosexual relationships, which were common in the Roman Empire.

They were strange. They referred to one another as brother and sister, leading some of the Romans to think that they were incestuous. This is history, y'all.

I'm not making this up. They were incredibly hospitable to strangers. Strangers. And they would take in the children that had been left in the street to die because they were unwanted.

But they would take these children in and adopt them and raise them to keep them from being taken by the temple and turned into prostitutes. But most strange of all, they insisted that this man named Jesus was their God and had been crucified as a rebellious criminal by the Roman state.

[8 : 13] Romans said, that's your God? We killed them, remember? And to add insult to injury to both Jews and Romans, the Christians insisted that this Jesus didn't stay dead.

That he arose again from the dead bodily, physically in time and space. And they were known for this.

This is very important. All that's important, but very important. They were known for worshiping this Jesus early on the Lord's Day.

Sunday morning. They were known for this. Sometimes they worship him in the catacombs, wherever they could find space to worship this Jesus.

They were known. It was part of what they were known for, to gather on the Lord's Day together and worship this Christ.

- [9 : 15] Christ. And they said, this Jesus will one day come and judge the world. Including the false gods of the world.
- and the nations of the world. It's all very strange. It's all very peculiar to them. And even sometimes they were seen as dangerous.
- I talked about that a few weeks ago. You remember that message in Philippians. Here's the thing. I suggest to you that those times are returning.
- That once again to be a sincere follower of Jesus is strange. Becoming stranger and stranger. If you are committed to Christ more and more those things I just spoke about those commitments morally and with your time and your talent and what you believe is becoming even strange again in this country even.
- The sad thing is I think we're fighting against it. What I mean by that is we don't want to be strange.
- [10 : 49] We don't want to be thought of as odd because of our faith in Jesus. I'm not talking about anything else. We want everybody to love us and to fit in and to go along and get along.
- We are fighting to bring back the old days. Or maybe we thought we were in charge and more accepted and appreciated. But I wonder family if we should be embracing apostolic Christianity and allowing the reality of Jesus to have more presence in our lives and be okay with being strange.
- the apostle John said friendship with the world is enmity with God. Jesus said woe unto you when all men speak well of you.
- And yet we are courting those very things. We must begin to once again embrace our identity as kingdom exiles.
- I believe only then can revival break out into our churches as the Lord sees fit. Are you an exile? Last week we saw that as a kingdom exile before God.
- [12 : 22] Before God now we have a new and glorious identity given to us because of our union with Christ. Remember last time? We are the verses above us. We are a chosen race.
- We are a royal priesthood. We are a holy nation. We are God's own treasured possession. We are a people who have experienced his great mercy so that we might live lives to give him most glorious praise.
- And as we do that we are lighting the way for others to come to know this risen Christ. That's our new identity before God.
- God you're not just a sinner. You're a son. You're a daughter. You're a treasure.
- I don't care what the world calls you. God says you are his treasure. Hallelujah. But because of him doing this to us remember this is what God has done to us.
- [13 : 22] This is what we are before God. Because he's done this to us we don't fit. We don't quite fit. Now we should fit somewhat.
- Amen. We're human beings. We're people. We can't be his ambassadors if there's not some fitness. But in general but when it comes down to it where it's really most important no we don't fit.
- Not in the world as it is we don't fit. So Peter now wants to help us understand our identity now before the nations. Before the nations what is our identity?
- Kingdom focused exiles have a new loyalty. That's what Peter is getting at when he refers to us as strangers sojourners and exiles.
- But notice he begins in verse 11 with the word beloved. beloved. Beloved I urge you he says I urge you I strongly encourage you as sojourners and exiles.

[14 : 35] I think he's speaking with such tender language because he's going to call them to something difficult. He wants to know that we are loved by God.

The apostle says I love you but more than that the Bible says we are in the beloved and the beloved is Christ. He is the beloved of the father and because we are spiritually joined to him we are now beloved.

Woo! But now the apostle says I hear your marching orders. The idea of us being exiles is reintroduced.

Remember from chapter one. but he adds the word sojourner to it. Sojourners were temporary residents. The words overlap in meaning certainly.

Both express people living in a kingdom or country that is not their home but sojourners are more temporary residents for they are just passing through.

[15 : 42] They don't tend to get involved in local affairs because they're just passing through. They are looking forward to going home. They long for home.

They can't wait to get home. Says Christian sojourners we constantly pray don't we? Thy kingdom come.

That's the language of the sojourner. That's the one language of one who is longing for the kingdom to come for Christ of the kingdom to come in all of his glory and set everything right.

As was said of the Puritans we have our bags packed and ready to go. Now here's the problem some have taken that idea of sojourner to mean that the earth is not our home.

Or is he talking about the moral spiritual environment of the nations which is not our home. Let's take the first one. First of all the earth is our ultimate home.

[17 : 04] God created the earth for us and us for life on the earth by creating us from the earth. We're earthy.

The earth is good but fallen. So God has promised to do something. In Revelation 21 he has promised to renew the heavens and the earth.

Heaven will invade earth when Jesus comes. There will be a new heavens, listen, and a new earth. Sin has marked this creation but God's goodness is still present.

So don't miss that. So we have to say that the earth as it is now is not our home, our ultimate home. As it is now but God's going to fix it.

That's why Paul could write in Romans 8, 18 and 21 he says this, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time, whatever we're going through that hurts that is, are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

[18 : 22] Something better is coming that's going to make all your sufferings seem like nothing. Hallelujah. Now watch this, for the creation, that's the earth, earth, and all that goes with creation.

The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Creation, as it were, he's picturing creation as a person who is aching and longing for freedom. But that freedom will only come when Jesus comes and reveals in glory who we are as the children of God.

And God will renovate us and renovate the earth so that we can live with him forever in all of his glory and majesty. So yes, the earth as it is, is not our home, but ultimately God's going to fix it so it will be.

Second, now here's everything. We are not at home in the nations in their sin. We're not at home here. In this sense, morally, spiritually, politically, socially, there is a sense in which, yes, we do not fit.

[20 : 02] Like the Bible says about Lot in Sodom, his soul was vexed by the sin of the city. Jesus tells us that we mourn over sin.

We mourn. We mourn over the sin of our city. We mourn over the sin of our nation. And let's get this straight. We mourn over our messed up stuff too. kingdom, listen, this is so important.

Kingdom values may overlap with the culture, but they're still very different. Let me give you an example. WebMD. I went to WebMD, and I looked up family values.

Christians love talking about family values. And the world loves talking about family values. Now, here's a definition. I love it. It's not on the screen, sorry. Family values are beliefs, ethics, priorities, and worldviews shared by each family member.

These behavior codes create structure in families and can define each member's role. Husbands, wife, children, whatever.

[21 : 19] They also help families cope with difficult challenges and determine right from wrong in complex situations. That's good stuff, y'all.

Family values. Amen. But here's the question. When everyone talks about family values, saints, here's the question.

What is the standard of what determines those family values? There's some overlap, but hold it now. We as Christians say the word of God determines our family values.

Is that what the culture means when it talks about family values? So when you hear the phrase family values, listen, when there's overlap, we should applaud.

We should applaud the world when the world gets it right. When the world aligns itself without meaning to with God's revelation, we should applaud, but don't fall into bed with it.

[22 : 29] See, that's what we're doing. We forgot who we are. We join the group and give our allegiance, but you don't understand.

Family, alignment is not agreement. We may be aligned and going in the same direction, but the Bible says, how can two walk together unless they agree?

Agreement goes deeper than alignment. The world may align but never agree with us because our values come, we say, from an absolute standard.

We say our values come from the living God. We say our values are codified and written down in the book of God, and the world denies all of that. Alignment is not agreement necessarily.

So applaud, yes, when the world gets it right, but understand it's not for the same reasons that you are standing because you don't fit.

[23 : 44] Your values don't fully fit. We're not in the same kingdom. We don't have the same king, so we're sojourners.

This world is not our home yet, so don't fall for it. So we're also, but he uses two words, right? Sojourners and exiles, we're also exiles, meaning exiles are permanent residents.

He uses both ideas. Notice this, he uses both ideas, sojourners as temporary and exiles as permanent. We're both. We're both.

The exile still longs for home, but they buy property and build lives. They get involved. Exiles get involved. They don't know when they're going home.

We get involved. We get involved. Keeping in line with the old covenant identity of God's people, Peter is again using an old covenant idea. Just as we saw last week, with all those titles he gives us, that's from the old covenant.

- [24 : 52] He's doing it again by using the words sojourner and exile. This goes back to Israel, because while in Babylon, when they were taken to Babylon because of their sin, God sent them into exile, they were there as sojourners, and particularly they were there as exiles.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God told them their deportation would last 70 years, and then they would be returned to the land. That was the prophecy given to them through Jeremiah.

Of course, this was speaking of them as a nation, not necessarily as individuals, people, because some of them would die in Babylon, and some would even choose to remain in Babylon because they went native and became Babylonian.

But God put a longing in their hearts for Jerusalem, for the land of Israel. We have a hunger for the new Jerusalem, the true kingdom coming down from God.

We have a hunger. God would bring them home, but now there were exiles, and exiles, family, listen, exiles were vulnerable. They were deported to a country where the language, customs, and religion were different.

- [26 : 17] They had no economic standing and little security. So if some, if not all of their neighbors would have been suspicious of them and maybe a little hostile, this is the lifestyle of an exile.

They were hostile until they assimilated. See, once they became like them, they were like, okay, no problem, you're one of us. Keep applying it.

I hear, I feel you, you're thinking about us. That's right, think about us. So what, what did they do? As exiles, because they felt this tension, they were tempted to withdraw from the pagan culture around them and build little Jewish ghettos for Jews only, Jewish daycare, Jewish TV programming, Jewish bowling clubs.

Jews, you know where I'm going. You know what I'm saying. Can I tell you, can I really show you their attitude toward this culture?

Psalms 137. That's not going to be on the screen, so if you've got a Bible, turn to it, but listen to what they said. This is their attitude in exile. By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept.

- [27 : 45] when we remembered Zion. On the willows, there we hung our lyres, for there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors mirth.

Sing us one of your songs of Zion. Sing for us. We love to hear you sing. We love gospel music. Sing.

And they said, how shall we sing the Lord's songs in a foreign land? How can we sing? And then later on they say, remember, O Lord, and basically strike them down.

You read it for yourself. I'm going to paraphrase that. They said, remember, O Lord, and even destroy their babies. Read it for yourself.

I'm just paraphrasing. It's in the text, 137. they were angry with the culture around them. They were angry that the culture was so pagan.

- [28 : 55] They were angry that the culture didn't accept them. They were angry, and they wanted God to judge them. Get them, Jesus. God sends Jeremiah a word for them.

Jeremiah 29, 4-7. You know this passage. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I sent. So you're not there because it just happened to you.

No, no, no. I sent you into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Then he says, here's the word. Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce.

Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons. Give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply in Babylon.

Multiply in the pagan culture. And do not decrease. But seek the shalom. Welfare, that's what that means.

[30 : 01] seek the shalom of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf. For in its shalom, its welfare, you will find your shalom, your welfare.

God didn't tell them to take over or leave. he didn't tell them to withdraw into a ghetto. He says, get involved in the culture.

He even says further down in chapter 29, verse 11 and 13, he says, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. In the midst of Babylon, plans for welfare, shalom, and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

In the midst of dark Babylon. This is good news, y'all. In the midst of living in a difficult environment, in the midst of living in pagan darkness, God promises his blessing as they call upon him and seek him.

[31 : 23] He is to be their greatest desire through experiencing exile. Exile should make us long for him.

For him. You don't fit. But what do you long for? We don't fit, so we long to fit.

long for him. Right? Come on, somebody. We got to revamp our thinking and our hearts and put them in the right place.

They needed to trust God's plan and the God of the plan. right? Right. Right. Right. And never think about these exiles and these sojourners, let me tell you.

They carry their customs and ways of living into Babylon. You see, that's why he says pray. When he says pray to me, that says that they are distinctly living as his people.

[32 : 35] They're not worshiping the idols of Babylon. They're not fitting into the lifestyle that's against God in Babylon.

They're not assimilating and going native in that sense. They are engaging. They're going to build houses. They're going to build businesses. They're going to be involved in the culture, yes, but distinctly as God's people.

Daniel, who was one of these exiles, was so distinct that the people knew the only way to get him was to get him on his religion.

And so they said to the king, don't let anybody pray to anyone but you. And they knew that Daniel prayed three times a day to the living God, and that's how they got him.

Would they get us? would they get Kevin Smith? We must navigate the foreign land but not go native.

[33 : 46] We must retain our distinctions as God's people. Whether old covenant or new covenant, we're new covenant. We're in exile.

Who are we? we are to seek. That's a strong word, isn't it? You ever lose something invaluable? How do you look for it?

Casually? If it's valuable, you seek it. You search. I get a flashlight out. I'm looking for that thing, especially if it's money.

I'm looking for it. Drop my, oh, I'm going to find it. I'm going to take time. I'm going to put everything on the back burner. When I lost my wallet one time, believe me, I was under everything.

Lift up the sofas, pulled out the cushions. I went everywhere I thought I might have gone. In some places, I didn't think I went. I went everywhere searching because I was determined to find my wallet.

[34 : 52] Seek the welfare of the city in exile. Seek God in the midst of the exile. Both are essential.

One is more important than the other, seeking God. Our Lord will let us say to his people in Luke 20, 25, he was asked if it was lawful to pay taxes, biblically lawful.

You know what he said? You know what he said. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God. Don't get it twisted.

Don't get it confused. Seeking the city's welfare means doing all we can to promote our city and nation's order, harmony, security, prosperity, health, and happiness.

that's what shalom means. It's a big word. Shalom colors all of that. And God says the blessings of shalom he pronounces on his people, he says I want you to pronounce those blessings on the people that you're surrounded by.

[36 : 06] Go seek their welfare. Do all you can to bless them. But don't go native. So let me let this up.

Are you a good neighbor? Keeping your yard nice? Picking up the trash in front of your home? Because you know the trashman always falls and you just leave it out there?

No? You pick it up? Do you welcome new neighbors to your community, to your block? How about when you find out a neighbor's in need? Are you willing to help? A neighbor who's hurting, are you willing to help?

Are you a good neighbor? If community involvement is needed, are you willing to get involved in your community to make it better? Are you a faithful student or employee?

Do you get your work done on time? Do you avoid lateness? Are you dependable, doing good work? Do you gossip at the water cooler or behind when you leave the class and you all get together and talk how the professor is such a horrible person?

[37 : 14] Will you run down your boss? I used to work in the real world, okay? Yes, ma'am, I sure enough do.

I remember, man, I would go in, I was the only male therapist, so we had like 13, 14 females. I was the only male therapist, and I'm surrounded by these beautiful women. And I loved all of them.

I watched out for them. When patients went off and got crazy, I stepped in between. I protected them. That was my job. That's how I saw it. I looked out for these ladies, but they could gossip.

Now, men, you gossip too, so don't get crazy. I'm just telling you about my, this is my story, so you know. I mean, they would start talking about each other. I mean, you'd be in the room, and they start talking about everybody I know and love.

I know. We'd run them down. Horrible stuff. So I got in the habit of picking up my notes. Back in those days, we wrote notes on paper for patients.

[38 : 18] I would pick up my notes, and I would just leave the room. Quietly, just leave the room. I didn't say anything. I'd make a big deal. I'd just leave the room. They caught on. So when they wanted to gossip, they'd say, Kevin, leave the room.

We're going to talk about something. That was my testimony. Hallelujah. I had other problems, but I wasn't the gossip. Do you seek to make your school or dorm or workplace a place of an enjoyable environment?

As much as it depends on you. You can't control everything, but are you pleasant? When you come in, I mean, do people go, hey, good to see you?

Or if they realize they don't like your faith, do they go, hmm, I mean, it can go either way, okay? But what do you bring to the environment? What do you bring?

Do we really care about the poor? Some of you have unfaithful landlords on your block who are letting people live in horrible conditions, and you know the landlord, or you know who it is.

[39 : 29] Will you intervene on behalf of those dear folk? Will you take a meal or groceries to a family you know is struggling in your neighborhood or hard times?

If you are, if you have relationships or influence politically, will you leverage your influence to help the poor and the homeless? In this room, there are people who are connected.

I know some of you. Not all of you, but some of you are connected. You could call the mayor right now. You could call some builders who are making big, big money.

You can call the police chiefs. You can call some judges. You know some people. Are you using your influence for the kingdom? What about criminal justice fairness?

Are you encouraging the police and the judges that you know to do right?

[40 : 43] We seek Chattanooga shalom by making a place for people to prosper and be at home, no matter their economic or ethnic background, all within our own spheres of influence.

people. But most of all, shalom is nothing without the gospel. You can't have true, lasting peace until you have peace with God.

People are at war with God. Listen to me. If you're in this room right now and you have never surrendered to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, listen to me, hear me. You are at war with God. And you may not think you are at war with Him, but I guarantee you He's at war with you.

We're all born at war with God. All of us. Every single one of us is born at war. But Jesus, the good news of the gospel is that Jesus has come to make peace.

To give you peace. Family, that peace comes through us. That shalom, the ultimate shalom. It's what we give to people as we share with them the love and grace of Jesus.

[42 : 00] But it must come in the context of seeking the good, of recognizing, one, that we're exiles. Because if we go native, we have nothing to really give anymore.

I'll talk more about that next time. But if you go native, your life doesn't look like anything different. So therefore, what do you have to share? Stop trying to fit.

let Jesus go crazy in you. Submit yourself to the word of the Lord. Call upon God to work in you, to transform you, to deliver you from all kinds of stuff that we all struggle with.

Call God to be the center of your family and heal your homes and heal your marriages and heal your children and heal you at work. Even though you may be at a job you hate, but God can give you grace.

In the midst of that pain, you can do good work for the glory of Jesus even though you hate your job. Because who are you doing it for? If I keep looking at my boss, I ain't going to do it.

[43 : 05] Because my boss is a pain in the hoo-ha-ha. But if I look at Jesus, hallelujah, my ultimate manager. If I look at Jesus, my ultimate el presidente.

If I look at Jesus, my ultimate mayor. If I look at Jesus, my ultimate professor. Now I can do right. I can do what I need to do to honor him. And he will do what he wants to do through my testimony.

Come on, y'all. We bring the shalom. Who knew? Exiles. Exiles.

Exiles. And sojourners. Would be the hope of the city. Because we bring Jesus. Father, help us.

Lord, we're trying so hard to fit in. We're trying so hard to be like everybody else. Now, Father, keep us from being crazy with that, Father. We don't want to keep us from being show-offs and trying to be holier than thou.

[44 : 18] I know you don't want that, I know. But Lord, you do want us to be different. You do want us to look like Jesus more, no matter what it costs us.

So help us. Help us to want to fit with you. Help us to really look at you and your people, your community of the faithful.

And help us to want to fit with your people and you more than anywhere else. And then, Lord, send us into the culture that doesn't know you, the cultures that don't know you.

And help us to be distinctly your people while being kind and compassionate and caring. Help us to fit like that with your kindness, your compassion, your caring.

Help us to seek the shalom of Chattanooga and all that lives within it and around it. Help us to seek that shalom, but to do it your way. And Lord, Father, will you then revive us in doing this?

[45 : 26] Will you, as we call upon you and seek your face and say, Lord, help us and Lord, revive us and Lord, come. Come, help us, Lord. Make us more like Jesus.

And make us light. We beg you. Don't leave us like this. There's more you can do in us.

For Christ's sake. Amen. Amen.