

Kingdom Exiles, Part 1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 September 2024

Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0:00] Amen. We're continuing our series in the Kingdom-Focused Church, and we're kind of following up from Philippians, as we were talking about what it means to be kingdom citizens, and we're kind of following that up with another idea that flows out of it here in 1 Peter.

So allow me to read the passages we're going to be thinking about in the next few weeks. 1 Peter 1, beginning verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadoia, Asia, and Bithynia.

I'm going to read verse 2. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Now, chapter 2, beginning in verse 9. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

[1:32] 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 when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

So ends the reading of the word of the living God. You may be seated. Thank you again, praise team, so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Someone once said, home is where your heart is.

I don't know who said that. Pretty good. The story is told of an old missionary couple who had been on the field in a foreign country serving Christ and his kingdom for decades.

[2:37] They retired and came home on a ship. As they pulled into the dock, there was a large group of people waving and shouting.

A band was playing music and a banner was strung across the street saying, welcome home. We love you. Their spirits were so lifted and they beamed with tears of joy that all of a sudden, men in black suits with little airwigs pushed everyone to the side of the boat and they escorted a man and his wife very richly dressed off the ship into the waiting crowd.

The crowd went wild and they cheered and then they all took off down the road as the man and his wife got into the limousine and the black SUVs surrounded them and led them away.

The crowd dispersed with the band and the banner was taken down. You see, this man was a politician who had come home and his people have rejoiced into having back a senator, I believe, as it were.

Remember, when the old faithful saints came off the ship, there was no one there to welcome them. No one. Even the dog had left.

[4:11] They didn't have a ride. No one had set up an Uber. No taxi. No Lyft. No Lyft. They're standing there on the basically the dock area thinking about how we're going to get to the missionary house.

The husband turns to his wife and, of course, he's feeling very dejected and his face is falling and he can't believe it. He says to her, we've been on the mission field serving Christ for decades.

We gave up our careers, our home. We didn't see our kids and grandkids nearly enough over these years. We have little money to show for our hard work.

We're hoping that what little pension we have will be enough. We have sacrificed greatly for our God and King. And yet there's not even one person here.

Baby, there's, honey, I don't understand it. There's not even one person here to welcome us home. Not one. Tears are in his eyes and he's shaking his head and he's asking the question, was it worth it?

[5 : 27] Was it worth it? His wise and beautiful gentle wife takes his face in both of her hands. And she smiles at him and she's beaming and she says, honey, we're not home yet.

We're not home yet. Are you expecting this world to give you maximum comfort, maximum respect, maximum love and maximum glory?

Is that what you expect this world to give you? I'm just asking that in general. Now to you who are Christians, followers of Jesus, are you expecting this world as it is to give you maximum comfort and glory for your service to Christ?

Are you living like you're at home? A kingdom focused church is made up of people who call Jesus their king and who recognize they're not home yet.

So the question isn't how do, how should we live away from home? Peter tells us, this letter is about that really.

[7 : 02] It's written, Peter writes to Christians who have been scattered around the Roman Empire of Asia Minor. I think that's called Western Turkey today. Based on the clustering, you remember what I read, right?

It says exiles of the dispersion, Deponis, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Biphany. Based upon the map and my crazy geography, it's like he was writing a letter to Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and Georgia.

Think like that. That'll help us, I think. Christians scattered around that area. Now these Christians here in Peter's writing seem to be under some type of persecution, dealing with social ostracism and ridicule.

It's not yet government sanctioned, but that's coming. Sounds like where we are in the U.S. to me. Christian businesses and schools who won't go along with the various ideas of our culture, taking some shots.

The media doesn't usually portray us very well. And even in the movies and whatnot, the Christian is usually somebody who's a hypocrite or evil or something.

[8 : 19] Very well they are portrayed well. And as these Christians here that Peter is writing, they're experiencing this and they're thrown for a loop.

They're like, what's happening? I mean, they didn't seem to fully expect this kind of persecution. So they're discouraged, becoming discouraged.

He writes a very pastoral letter to comfort and help stabilize their faith in Jesus. I need this. One theologian called this letter the most condensed New Testament resume of the Christian faith and the conduct that it inspires.

And how Peter, the reason I read chapter 1, because my text is really in chapter 2, but the reason I read chapter 1, a little bit of that, because that sets the stage for the entire letter and our passage in chapter 2 in particular.

Remember what 1 Peter 1 and 2 said. Peter, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those, listen, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion.

[9 : 38] Elect exiles who've been spread out. And he lists all those countries. And he says this happened according to the foreknowledge of God.

God's foreknowledge. He foreordained it. And it's for the sanctification of the Spirit that they're spreading out in what they're going through.

And so they grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus and become more obedient to Jesus Christ as they've been sprinkled clean by his blood. He calls them exiles.

Exiles are people from another country living in a foreign country. Today we speak of expatriates. The dispersion here is a reference to, in particular, to Jewish exiles from the land of Israel, stripped of their geopolitical status, who were sent by God into the nations in the Old Testament.

He's using that language now to talk about Christians. We're spread out. There's a sprinkling of us throughout, even bigger than what Peter was talking about.

[10 : 53] All throughout the world, we are dispersed. First, Preston Sprinkle in his book, Exiles, says, the Jewish exiles had to embody their mission to be a kingdom of priests while living in the

shadow of the Babylonian Empire.

So just like them, and I'm going to talk more about that because there's a really strong connection between Israel and the church and what we call the church here. Very strong connection. Language is beautiful here. And we're spread out. We're not home yet. But we're on mission. Peter himself was writing from the church of Rome.

Chapter 5, verse 13, he refers to Rome as Babylon. The Jewish place of exile in the Old Testament. But Peter in the New Covenant is using that word Babylon to refer to the nations and the cities we find ourselves. Babylon. Chattanooga.

[12:09] Babylon. United States. Babylon. He says that these Christians are elect exiles.

Elect means chosen. They weren't exiles by oops. By bad luck.

God chose them for this distinction. You've been chosen. We'll come back to that too because there's more on that.

But we've been chosen to live in Babylon for such a time as this. Babylon's a pagan land.

And sometimes even hostile. Hostile. To God's people. And yet here they are.

[13:16] Chosen to be there. Planned by God's foreknowledge for them to be there. Far from home.

And there's pushback towards them. That's not an accident either.

Christian faith in this country was once the backbone of morality and faith in America. We were never a Christian nation. But listen. There was a Christian ethos here. Backbone of morality and even faith was Christianity in this country.

Think about the hospitals and the schools that people forget. A lot of these institutions were started by Christians to bless the people of this country.

And now what's happening is we are not a, we have become a post-Christian culture.

[14:19] And in this post-Christian culture in America, Christian faith that was once the backbone of morality and faith is now the enemy of tolerance.

Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Okay. Right. ■. Right. Right.

Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. And triumphing in the name of Jesus.

Right. Right.

Right. Right. Right.

ory h. Infrast. Right. you choose, that's where you are. You are in that place where once we were the cat's meow. Once upon a time, if you were known to be going to church, you got the job.

Because people felt that you were a man and a woman of integrity. To call somebody a God-fearing person was considered a compliment. To say that you believe in the Bible and that Jesus is Lord of your life was considered something positive and people would say things like, I appreciate that man, I'm not there yet but I appreciate you. Now, now they're wondering, they now look at you like this. And I know, see, I got to preach our context. Chattanooga deceives us. I'm getting there, bro. I'm going to get there. He's helping me. Actually, the nation and now Chattanooga deceives us.

Because we were, so we're the nation national, we were there. We were important as Christians.

We were considered. And Chattanooga being the belt buckle of the Bible belt seems, deceives some of us into thinking Chattanooga is a Christian city. We have a lot of Christian stuff here, don't we? It's beautiful and I'm down with that. I had never seen a city where I walked into a mall and in the food court where they advertise all kinds of stuff, there was scripture written across the board. I kept waiting for the ACLU to come in with cops. I was terrified. Even that's not there anymore. I haven't seen that in a while. Has anyone seen that at the mall? Let me know if you have. I haven't seen it in a long time. Chattanooga is changing. And yeah, we have a lot of Christian influence here. But we also have a lot of Christian, Carl, Christianity-ism. Dr. Carl, Christian culture, Christian air, breathing, but is it really deep and wholesome and holding on to

[17:43] Jesus? We're changing. This is where we are. I'm just saying we're similar to these folk where they are right there. Very similar. Now our passage here answers two questions that I kind of brought up from last week. And it kind of answers these questions. If our citizenship is in heaven, what does that make us? What does it make us before God, number one? What does it make us before the nations? So let's talk about what does it make us before God? Kingdom focused exiles embrace their new identity. What is our new identity? Peter is eloquent here in verse nine. But you, I'm going to try to read it the way I think he really wanted it to be heard. But you are a chosen race,

a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. The big idea here is that we are exiles. Chapter one, verse one, and it's coming down to verse 11 in a minute. But we're exiles. And the motive and power for living as exiles comes from these verses here, nine and ten. God, through the work of his son, has laid hands on those who believe in Jesus and made us special. We're special. All of humanity can be said to be special to God because we're made in his image. But those who belong to Jesus have been recreated in his image because of his initiation. Paul says, we're not only chosen exiles, but we are a chosen race. That's the first thing, a chosen race. Meaning, he selected us from a large sample to be a new humanity, a new people group. Chosen suggests he had, he didn't have to choose you. He had other options. I feel like the NFL draft. There was a whole bunch of athletes up there. And God started looking around and saying, which one do I want?

He didn't, and he didn't take the best. He didn't take the Heisman Trophy winner. He didn't take the runner up. He didn't take the Lombardi Trophy winner. I think that's in college. It is a, it is a, it is a trophy. He, no, no, he chose second string, third string. And when he got me, he got the water boy. Chosen, you didn't, meaning you didn't earn or deserve it. There was nothing in you that induced him to choose you. He didn't look down through the crystal ball and look down through time to find out if you would believe in Jesus if he gave you a chance. Because the truth of the matter is, without his work in you, you wouldn't do anything with Jesus. If he had done that, all he would have saw is, you're dead. Chosen suggests that he laid his hands on you before the foundation of the world. That's Ephesians 1 and 4, by the way. But listen, this even comes from the Old Testament. And this won't be on the screen. In Deuteronomy 7, 7, and 8, it says this, God is speaking, talking to Israel through Moses. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you. For you were the fewest of all peoples.

In other words, you were nobodies. But it's because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers. That's why God chose them. And guess what? That's the same reason he chose you.

We weren't hot stuff. But he loved us. And he kept his word that he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, choosing us today.

[22 : 41] In reality, you deserve not to be chosen. Then he says, we are a royal. I want you to take this in, all right? Just let this soak on you.

Let this settle on you. Chosen race. A new humanity. A royal priesthood, he says. Now that is an Old Testament. It comes from Exodus 19.6. And God says to Israel, you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Royal priesthood means our lives are given in sacrifice to his worship. We give. Every priest has got to offer sacrifice. We offer ourselves.

We present our bodies, Romans 12, as living sacrifices. Hebrews 13, we offer the fruit of our lips, lips that confess his name in worship and praise. That's what we offer. We bring ourselves.

You see, some of us want to do this. We want to step back. We might put a little money on the altar, but then we stepping back. Some of us maybe will put a little time on the altar, but then we're stepping back. God don't want that. He wants you laid across the altar.

If you're not going to get on the altar, then keep your stuff. Because that's what he wants. You. And that's what it means to be a priest for New Testament believers. We are all priests of the living God. We don't need a priest, human priest, to go before us. No, we are all priests.

[24 : 37] We all have access to God, and we all bring sacrifice of ourselves in our worship to him. But he, listen, he calls us a royal priesthood. Now here's where it gets beautiful.

Why are we a royal priesthood? That's, you know, royalty. It's because we're joined to Jesus. We're royal because King G, we are joined to the king who is the great high priest and sacrifice.

We are in Christ. We are joined to him. And because we're in him, we become royalty. We are royal priests. And we give to our God our sacrifice because of what he has done for us.

We are a holy nation, he says. I just read Exodus 19.6 where that comes from. Holy nation, meaning a body of people who are set aside for God's use and glory alone.

Alone. You've heard me say this before. We're the good China. Every Thanksgiving, my wife pulls out the good China.

[25 : 55] It never gets used any other time. I keep wondering if it's the same thing. Does it gather dust all year? But on Thanksgiving, the stuff the kids were never allowed to touch comes out of the

cabinet.

Like the Ark of the Covenant. And it comes to the table and we get to eat on it. It's not for ordinary common use.

That's what holy implies. God says, you used to be for ordinary common use. And the devil and the world used you up.

Pumped you around like a ping pong ball. Teared up your emotions. Got you loving and desiring things that were going to kill you.

We'll talk about that later when we get there. Got you wanting to live lives that as you look back now you go, oh my goodness. Lives that were going to lead to more pain and suffering and destruction.

[27 : 12] That was us. We were being used. Used. Used. And God says, no longer. You're not going to be used anymore.

You're for me. You are my hope. I'm going to use you now for my glory and your good. And you're going to grow more and more into the image of my son.

Holy, holy, holy is his name. And then lastly, he says, are you letting this settle on you? Are you feeling it? And lastly, he says, we are his own possession.

What a thought because everything else suggests that. But this, it seems redundant. But I think it emphasizes God's love for us. Like no other people on the face of his, on the earth, his love for us is possessive.

We are precious to him. Precious to him alone. Not because we were precious, but because he made us precious.

[28 : 15] Hello. Exodus 19.5. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.

Malachi 3.17 calls us God's, the Lord is, Lord in that passage, he's talking about those who fear the Lord and he calls them his treasured possession.

That's, that's what God is saying now. You, you who are in Christ, you are his treasure. And he's possessive about his treasure. Aren't you possessive about your treasure?

Anything that you value, that you truly value, you are possessive about it. Your children, your car, your house.

If you value it, and this is not wrong, so don't get, I'm not trying to trick you. It's not wrong to value that which, or to be possessive about that which you value.

[29 : 20] Now, it can get crazy, but it's, but it makes sense. It's for you. You, you value it. You bought it for you. You, you, these are, these children came out of your loins.

They're yours. That's your wife. That's your husband. You're possessive. Amen. That's your boyfriend. You're a girlfriend.

Girl, you better step back. That's my boy. I'm sorry. You're possessive. It's okay in general. God is even more possessive.

And he says in verse, verse 10 that, this is beautiful language. He says, after he says that, he says, once you were not my people.

You know where that comes from? Book of Hosea. Once he named his children like this. Once you were not my people.

[30 : 25] But now, but now you are my people. I will be your God. You will be my people. And I will dwell amongst you. That's the covenant motto throughout all of scripture.

Once you had not received my mercy. Mercy is that compassion, that pity that moves to do something about the condition.

Once you had told God, I don't need no mercy. I'm good. I'm good. What do you mean? You give him mercy. I don't need no. But then you found out how needed you really were.

And you received his mercy. See, this is, whew. This is good stuff. And it's all old covenant language now being applied to new covenant believers.

This is us. This is not Israel. This is us. Or is it Israel? Hmm. Or is it Israel? See, this language shows that God only has one people.

[31 : 36] Not two. I know people will say, you got, God has Israel, then he has a church. And both have two different destinies. Well, I don't think so. And I think Peter's trying to tell us that.

You see, old covenant Israel, who were faithful, and new covenant believers in Jesus, are one people.

[38 : 20] You see, this is why we're exiles. Because God has done this to us. You didn't do that. You didn't make yourself a chosen people, a royal priest. You didn't do that.

God chose you for that. He chose you to be in exile. He chose you for the fire because he chose you for glory. We need to live who we are.

In every aspect of life. We got to understand what it means to live who we are and to be exiles and to see ourself.

I know the world is going to call you all kinds of names. And the doctor may give you all kinds of names. Your shrink may give you all kinds of labels and names. And well, okay, amen. But no. Who you really are is what God has said. You feeling depressed today? Let's go back and find out who you are.

[39 : 21] You feel like there's no hope right now? It's because you put your hope in something other than Jesus. I'm saying that gently. I'm not beating up on you.

It's just the way it is. Let's go back to find out again who he says you are. Let's start there. And we can move forward from there. But let's just soak in this for this coming week.

Can we do that? Father, in Jesus' name, will you please help us to identify ourselves the way you identify us. To really bask in what it means, all this language Peter has given us.

Help us to embrace it. Help us to see who we are. Not in arrogance or pride. Deliver us from such foolishness. Because none of this is ours because we earned it.

You did it because of your grace and your choosing and your mercy. You have made us special. We didn't make ourselves special. So please help us, Lord.

[40 : 23] And those who are in particular need of knowing who they are, please speak to their hearts and encourage them. Stand them up on their feet. Lift their spirits. In Jesus' name.

Amen.