

Kingdom Exiles, Part 3

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Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] Let's pray.

Father, we give ourselves to you. We give ourselves to you because you are worthy. For you have given your son to us that we may have life.

Life now and life to come. So, Father, we give the only thing that really matters. We give our hearts. And as Paul said, we present our bodies as living sacrifices.

We give our praise. The fruit of our lips that confess your name. And we want to do good. In the name of Jesus, use us to glorify your name.

The name of your Holy Son. The name that is above every name. Jesus is Lord. And may we live like it. Speak to us, Father, as we come to your word.

[1 : 17] For we are needy. Each one of us is needy. And only you can satisfy. Speak and feed our souls.

We pray that our worship has been acceptable to you thus far. And we thank you for filling this place with your presence. You made it clear that we are not alone.

That you are here. Hear our cry now. And use your unworthy servant to preach your word. For Jesus' sake and the good of your people. Amen.

1 Timothy chapter 2. We are back to these wonderful verses. 1 Timothy chapter 2, 11. I'm going to read down to verse 17.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

[2 : 20] 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.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Whether it be to the emperor, or in that case the president, as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free. Not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. That is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Man, thank you, Praise Team. That was beautiful. Thank you so much. Christ honoring God bless music.

[3 : 33] The King of England, in light of... No. I was going to do this anyway. It's not because of you. But the King of England is an interesting monarch.

The King of England reigns, but he does not rule. Rule. He reigns. That is, the reign is the term of a monarch in that position.

Rule means govern. You got parliament for that and the prime minister for that. He reigns, but he does not rule.

Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns and he rules. There is no end to his reign and there is no end to his rule.

How do we know he is ruling, governing? Because each and every day, he is calling people into his kingdom. Each and every day, he is snatching people in Taiwan.

[4 : 41] He's snatching people in Delaware. He's snatching people in England. He's snatching people in Chattanooga. And bringing them to himself to be their ruler, their Lord.

He reigns. And he rules. And when you come into his kingdom, there's a transformation that takes place in you. It's an ongoing transformation, but there is a transformation.

You are born again. You are born into his kingdom. You are children of the living God. That's who you are. And because of that, you are called now to live each day as a member of his family kingdom.

To live each day under his reign and rule. And as we've been seeing, to live each day as an exile. An exile. An exile. An exile. An exile.

Are you willing to be an exile for the sake of the kingdom of God? By way of review, briefly, we started looking at our identity before the nations.

[5 : 59] And we saw that Peter says in verse 11 that we are sojourners and exiles. Remember, a sojourner is a temporary resident who's passing through. Exile, which this is the second time he's mentioned exile.

He did it in chapter 1, too. That's the emphasis in particular. Exiles are also temporary residents, but they get involved. They don't go native, but they get involved.

They maintain their identity. They maintain the customs and the laws of their homeland, which for us is heaven.

Our citizenship, we saw this some weeks ago, is in heaven in Philipians. And because of that, we live heavenly while we are exiles here in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

We don't fit. But we're still called to get involved. Sure, we're passing through.

[7 : 00] But we're not passing through in such a way that we act as if the people around us do not exist.

We are to get involved. And we've been looking at that. And that's what we were looking at. We were looking at it in particular. We were talking about what it means how that as kingdom-focused exiles, we have a new loyalty.

And that is, of course, to the kingdom. Now, let's move on. Let's continue with that thought. A new loyalty. Remember, we're looking at Jeremiah 29. Jeremiah 29.7 says, So we've been looking at the fact that Peter is using Old Testament language to apply to new covenant Christians.

Just like Israel was in exile in Babylon, sent there by God, you and I are in exile in this place, sent here by God.

Now, they were sent because of disobedience. We are sent for mission. We are sent for the purposes of God. And that passage reminds us that in all these things, we must give ourselves consistently, and this is moving on.

[8 : 27] I didn't mention this last week, last time, consistently and fervently to prayer. Pray to the Lord on behalf of the city.

That's what God told them to do. That's our life blood, brothers and sisters. That we must fall on our face together and individually calling upon God to, remember the word welfare is the word shalom in Hebrew.

We are calling upon God to bring his shalom upon Chattanooga and even this nation. Not because this nation is great, but because God is great.

And he has sent us here. That we might not just live for ourselves, but that we might live for him.

And we might bless those around us with his kindness and goodness and grace.

And we must pray for them. When's the last time you prayed for Chattanooga? When's the last time you prayed for your neighborhood? Family, we cannot neglect this.

[9 : 42] This is the only way we can truly be useful to God by calling upon his power and his presence to work in us. That's called prayer.

God is bigger than our city and nation. He holds all people, cities, and nations in the palm of his most holy and loving hand.

The nations, as the prophet said, are as a drop of the bucket before the Lord. And so we are called to seek the welfare of the city by seeking God.

There's a combination here. Jeremiah was letting them know that you must do both. And they are connected.

But there are two dangers to avoid here. And I want to move with this. Those who seek the welfare of the city without seeking God.

[10 : 51] Lose the gospel. They've lost their power and reason for the work that they do.

We don't do good just to do good only for the welfare of people. We do good in our pursuit of God.

We do good. We do all things in the name of Jesus giving thanks to him. You see, when you give yourself to seek doing good but not seeking God, that's when people become revolutionaries.

Because you get disillusioned. You get desperate. That's when riots take place. When people have lost all hope.

They are seeking to change things. But they're not seeking God in the process. And you need him to help you do what he's called you to do.

[11 : 55] You will fall flat on your face and give up. You will become disillusioned. Maybe even little fruit. But here's the thing. Here's the thing. You will get manipulated by other forces who seem to want what you want.

When you seek the welfare of the city, doing good, without seeking God, you become easily manipulated.

By those who say they want what you want. But don't. Are you with me? Remember last time? Alignment does not necessarily mean agreement. They may be aligned with you. But if you're seeking this for God, they don't agree with you.

Alignment and agreement can be different. So, all right, that's one thing. Seek the welfare of the city without seeking God. That's one problem. Here's the other problem. Seek God, but not the welfare of the city.

[13 : 10] When we do that, we've lost part of the mission that God gave us. We've lost the drive to pursue good deeds that impact society around us.

It's all going to burn anyway, right? Why do we got to get involved? Who cares what they do? It's all going to burn. Okay, except when it comes to abortion and gay marriage, we'll talk up about that. But other than that, it's all going to burn. By the way, the first thing is what we call Christian liberalism, liberal theology.

Now I'm talking about Christian fundamentalism, as it is now, that is. It's insular. It's turned in on itself. Work to them becomes just work for a living.

And go home and close the doors and prepare for the rapture. When you seek God, but not the welfare of the city, you fail to see how Christ can use you in the flourishing of all for the cultivating of the earth as his representative.

[14 : 25] In other words, you fail to see how your job, your profession, what you do for a living impacts the kingdom and impacts the work of God around you.

What you do matters. And you can become ingrown. Only concerned about our families and churches.

And what happens, you know what happens when a church isn't reaching out? It reaches in. And after a while, they fight each other.

A church that refuses to reach out, Christians that refuse to reach out will end up fighting other believers. Because you're in a spiritual battle and you're going to fight somebody.

Because your heart is not drawn to the mission. It's not drawn to the calling. We are exiles who get involved.

[15 : 31] And we're not called to fight each other. God help us. We're called to do spiritual battle with the forces of darkness. We have an enemy and it's not each other.

We have an enemy. And he does not play fair. We must be alert in our prayers to the work of the enemy.

Holding fast to his word and the mission to which he has called us. I love what my friend Phil Riken says. Do anything and everything for the public good. Or here's a more ancient one who is even better.

John Wesley. Wesley said, do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can.

At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as you ever can. Paul would say.

[16 : 35] Be steadfast. Unmovable. Sometimes abounding. I'm sorry. Always. Thank you.

Slipping the tongue. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Why? Why? Because you know your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Not in vain. Brothers and sisters. We must give ourselves to the work. We must give ourselves to seeking the shalom of our city as exiles. Holding fast to the kingdom narrative.

Holding fast to our kingdom identity. Praying on our knees. Calling upon God to bless our police department. To bless our governor. Our mayor and his cabinet.

To bless our fire department. To bless our education system. We need to get involved in these things. As God calls you to be involved. Move in your neighborhood. What about your

neighborhood?

[17 : 37] Where you live? Do you have a testimony on your own street? Do people know who you are?

And what you stand for? Do you stand for? Not because you walk around with your chest poked out. I'm holy. No.

But because you serve. And you love. And you give. Let me say it again. You are not there for you. God sent you there. It may be the. It may. You may hate your apartment. You may hate your neighborhood.

How do you think the Jews felt about being in Babylon? You think they were happy to be in Babylon? Their people were killed.

[18 : 38] Tortured. Killed. The Babylonians and the Assyrians. Those folk didn't just kill you. They. They killed you. Okay. They wiped folk out.

And yet. In the very place. Where they're captive. By the very people. Who mutilated. And destroyed.

Their kingdom. God says to them. In that place. Pray for those folk. Now listen y'all. If God can call the Jews. To pray for the Babylonians.

And seek their welfare. Their shalom. Surely. Surely. We can. Surely.

Right? Right? Surely we can. Give yourself to the work of the Lord.

[19 : 38] Because we know our labor is not in vain. As a kingdom. We display in our church communities. What it looks like to have King Jesus.

As our president. And as our mayor. When people look at New City Fellowship. If they were to follow. You know. Come with cameras. And all through the week.

Go to our small groups. And follow us around. What they should see. Are people. Who live. A kingdom ethic. Of love. And care.

And service. To each other. But also to their community. To their neighbors. They should serve people. Who care. About what's happening. In their spheres of influence.

Who pray. When you hear about something. On the. When you hear about another shooting. In our city. Do you pray?

[20 : 35] That's a good time to pray. Yeah. When you hear. About another tragedy. Or another. Official. Elected official.

Who's done something. He or she shouldn't have done. Do you pray? You see family. God calls us. Into this kingdom.

Living as. Sojourners. And exiles. But it does not mean. We are to live. As an angry minority. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. You see. Here's what's happening. Christians. Are just angry. At America. We're angry. With the Republicans. We're angry. With the Democrats. We're angry. At what's happening in our cities. We're angry. We're angry. We're angry. When was Jesus ever angry.

[21 : 36] Say it Darrell. In the temple. With the religious hypocrites. He was never angry. At the sinners. He welcomed.

The tax collectors. He welcomed. The prostitutes. He welcomed. Those. Who the world said. Stay away from. He didn't say. I hate. You people need. You people.

No. He put his arms around them. And he hugged them. And he touched them. He touched the leper. The very one. That people said. I ain't touching him. He stank.

I might catch it. And Jesus touched them. I see. I hear a lot of angry Christians. A whole heap of a lot.

Especially on social media. But I hear a lot of angry. Whose spirit are we of? I think we got confused. I think we got confused brother.

[22 : 36] I think we forget whose spirit. We belong to. We're not called to be angry. We're called to reach out. With the love of Jesus. No. That doesn't mean we agree with everything.

No. But we're not called to be an angry minority. We're called to be a loving minority. In the midst of the darkness.

Pointing people to the light. Of Christ. And guess what? You're going to suffer for it. Amen. You know.

To be in exile. Is a very vulnerable position. I think I mentioned this last time. Vulnerable. It's not easy. Israelites didn't find that easy.

Being in Babylon. With the Babylonian culture. All over them. And with. I can imagine. Moving into people's neighborhoods.

[23 : 35] They probably looked at them like. Who are these folks? Oh. And they probably treated them. Some of them very despicably. Because. They weren't their people. But they knew.

But some of them remembered who they were. And they were willing to pay the price. Let me. Let me show you. I'm not going crazy here. Peter says it in first Peter.

Chapter three. 14 and 15. But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake. You will be blessed. Exiles. If you should suffer for righteousness sake. You will be blessed.

Have. No. Fear. Of them. No. Let's get. Nor be troubled. But in your hearts. Honor. Christ.

The Lord. As holy. Always. Listen. Always being prepared. To make a defense. To anyone.

[24 : 33] To everyone. Anyone. Who asks you for the. A reason for the hope. That is in you. Here you go. Yet do it. With gentleness. And respect.

Where's the anger? Do you see it? Do you see. Anybody see anger in this passage? It's what Peter's telling. The exiles.

To do. This is what he's calling us to do. He's calling us. Into this life. That yes. You will suffer. For righteousness sake.

But you're blessed. He said. If that happens. We saw that in the Beatitudes. Blessed are you. When they persecute you. And say all manners of evil. Falsely.

Against. Against you. For my sake. Right? We saw that. Here it is again. Peter. Peter. Heard Jesus. Teach this. But even as.

[25 : 32] We are. Finding. Our. Our. Exilic. Lives. Being pressed in upon. Our. Exilic. Ideas. Our. Biblical. Ideas. Our. Biblical. Values.

As they're being slammed. And pushed against. And saying. You know. You people. And you got. As that's happening. And some of us are finding ourselves. On the outs. We're finding ourselves. Being squeeze. We're finding ourselves. Losing privileges. In this culture. Because we're standing for Jesus. As that can. As that happens. Notice. The way we deal with it. We set apart.

Christ. In our hearts. We. In other words. We say. This is for you. Whatever I'm going through. I'm going through.

In your name. For your glory. Not to make me look good. But. Lord Jesus. It's for you. My heart belongs to you.

[26 : 27] Use me. No matter what it costs. Use me. You are holy. And I will give myself to you. In holiness.

Because you are holy. I will not go native. I will follow you. Because you. Are everything. Christ. Christ is everything. And when he becomes everything.

That's when we can find peace. That's when we can. That's when we can get. That's when we can take it. That's when we can. Make a defense.

A good defense. For our faith. Why? Why are you. Why do you tell your children. To wait to marriage. To have. To have sex.

Why do you tell. Tell your kids. To do that. Why are you. Why? We can make a defense. Why do you people believe. Jesus is the only way. All these religions around here. And you're telling me that. Jesus is. Be willing.

[27 : 24] You can. And. And. And. And. And. And. And. And. And. And. And.

If what you want to do is see him glorified because he is glorious. If you've been raptured by his love and set free in his grace because of his death and resurrection and ascension for you.

If this is who you are, if this is your life, here's what happens. You can give the soft answer that turns away wrath. You can make an answer.

And even though someone may be coming at you vehemently and mad and angry and attacking what you're saying. Listen, here's what happens. You can respond to them with gentleness and respect.

Why? Because they too are created in the image of God. Why? Why should we do it? Do you think you saved yourself?

[28 : 59] You are them. We are them. But for the grace of God. I didn't save myself.

God didn't save me because I had it all together. Remember where he found you. Okay? I grew up in a Christian home. Remember where he found your parents.

Or your grandparents. Remember. Look around you at those who are. You got. I hope you have friends who are not Christians. Look around.

People are hurting. You are them. But for the grace of God. You see. You see. When I realize those things. Gentleness and respect.

It's not so hard anymore. I only become evil and nasty and want to fight. When I forget that I was saved by grace.

[29 : 56] And I start thinking about those people as those people. And I forget that I'm them too. Peter's telling us something here. He's.

This whole book is beautiful. We are. We are able. To not live as an angry minority. But we're enabled as exiles.

In Babylon. To allow Christ. To be seen in us. We're enabled. By the grace.

And the power of the Holy Spirit. Living in us. To love your enemy as yourself. To speak. Kindly to those.

Who speak evil to you. You're able. Even when they vote differently than you. Or they say things you don't want to hear.

[30 : 52] And it's. You're wondering what's happening to America. Family. What's happening to America. America is Babylon. And always has been.

But it's always been a remnant. Called to be exiles in this nation. Who've held up the light of Christ. Are we part of that remnant?

Will we. Will we. Will we. Will we be named among them? Who lift up the name of Jesus. In the darkness. Who'll be salt. In the decaying.

Neighborhoods. And communities. We are true citizens of the kingdom of God. That is now and not yet. Amen. So do. Choose your career.

For the glory of Christ. Yes. Choose what. Reflects your interest. And your gifts. But your identity is not your job. It's Jesus. Yes.

[31 : 58] There's nothing wrong with making money. Make. Amass wealth. And property. But know that your true treasure. Is in heaven. Yes. Yes. So if you lose it. Or it won't own you.

You'll own it. Amen. It's okay to want to be healthy. And seek to be. Look buff. And work out. But understand something. You recognize. Because you are in exile.

You recognize that physical health has its place. But death has been conquered. You're not afraid to die. Because you know where you're going. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. I hope you're going to agree with his will of God. but you're in exile, and you are complete in Christ right now.

You have all that you need right now in Christ. Right now, you are whole. You are well. You are prosper. You have shalom right now. If God blesses you with a family, or if he doesn't, you're not destroyed because you have an identity, and it's in Jesus.

[33 : 04] Exilic living in the midst of a world, in a city, that may look upon us at some point.

We're in the Bible, but I know. Pastor Kevin, we're in the Bible, though. Yep. For now. But it's changing. And right now, you may feel like we got a lot of support here as Christians.

in this city. It's changing. It's changing. Are you ready? Are you ready to be on the other side?

Are you ready to go with Christ outside the gate? That's where they crucified him. Outside the gate of Jerusalem. Are you ready to go with him outside the gate?

Because you know you're following the great exile. He is the great exile. He is the one who came and did not fit.

[34 : 15] But he loved. And he gave himself. That people who didn't even fit with him might start to fit with him.

Might be brought into his kingdom. He came for folk who don't fit. Lord, thank you. We ain't done yet.

Part four. Give yourself to the kingdom. Father, in Jesus' name. Lord, we Lord, just some thoughts as we are looking at teasing out what Peter is talking about.

Thank you, Lord, for the example you give us in Israel to understand who we are now. And Father, we need your help.

Because to tell you the truth, we don't want to live as exiles. We want to be liked by everybody. We want to, too often, we want to fit in. Deliver us for Israel, too, wanted to fit in.

[35 : 21] And they ask you to give them a king so they can be like the other nations. Oh, Lord, deliver us from doing the same.

May we follow our king who was lifted up, buried, risen, and ascended to you, Father.

Help us to follow that king. no matter what it takes and no matter what it costs. For we know, we know that our citizenship and our glory and our blessing and our future, our destiny is with you.

In the new heavens and new earth, we will have all that we could ever hope. And even now, we have Jesus, your son. He is our treasure.

Help us, Lord, to remember. Amen. Amen.