

Kingdom Exiles, Part 4

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: 13 October 2024

Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 11 through 17. 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.

So be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor 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 should 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.

[1 : 21] Please be seated. Thank you, family. Thank you for leading us in song. Thank you, Daniel. Thank you, Prakash. Thank you, Emily. The early Christians are said to have conquered the Roman Empire.

In the book of Acts, it says they turned the world upside down. Not by weapons of mass destruction. Not by political scheming or even by revolution. But by subversive holy living. By subversive, I mean their lives undermined the worldly system of living that left God out.

In other words, they undermined Babylonian living. Living as the Lord's kingdom exiles is meant to offer the nations an alternative.

You see, we are all born into this life which Peter says is useless, devoid of truth and with no purpose.

[2 : 43] But people need to. Not only hear about an alternative way of living with Jesus. They need to hear it.

They also need to see it. That is what Christ-centered, kingdom-focused lives will do as we passionately follow King Jesus.

See, the Lord equips his kingdom exiles for a new life mission. New life mission. Remember, everything we're talking about here is based upon what Peter, who Peter says we are in verses 9 and 10.

He says so clearly, and we spent time with this, that we once were not the people of God, but now we are the people of God. We are his chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that we might glorify him.

That's who you are. You are those people. If you are a follower of Jesus, that is your identity. And because of that, you are now exiled, foreigners in exile, sojourners in exiles in this land.

[4 : 01] And we are called not just to live holy lives in a holy huddle, but we are called to seek the welfare of the city without becoming an angry minority.

I'm just reviewing. But my wife reminded me of some examples. Just in case you think this is pie in the sky, whole, you know, by and by living.

And let me remind you of some people, some ministries that are doing just what we just described. We know John Perkins. This church is an old friend of John Perkins.

For those of you who are new, he is a civil rights leader who's still with us now. He's in his 90s, I believe. And he was a man living in, I think, Mendehall, Mississippi.

And he was, his brother was, I think, killed. But then he was brutalized by sheriffs. I won't describe to you the brutality, but it was very brutal.

[5 : 00] And God healed him up and sent him back to Mississippi. He left to California and came back to those same people to love them in the name of Jesus.

That's what we're talking about. That's exilic living. Let's get closer to home. We can talk about hope for the inner city. Our ministry led by Tony Watkins, which continues to administer to East Chattanooga, seeking to bring shalom.

Seeking the welfare of those in that community who are coming out of prison, who are living in their community in poverty and in need of some help and guidance. We could talk about ESL, actually. What does ESL do? It teaches, not by my wife, but it teaches in Samaria. It teaches people the language of this country so that they might flourish here.

It does more than that because we're doing it in the name of Jesus, that they may also come to know him. We want them to flourish. We want them to be blessed in this country.

[6 : 12] The Goodwood School does the same thing. We are educating. This is all shalom. Seeking shalom. Educating people with a Christian education so that they will know Christ and then grow up to love learning and progress in their learning.

To take their place as professionals or people of a trade in this city. Making this city better. What about what you do for a living?

Your work. Does your work count in this? Of course it does. You are seeking the welfare of the city. You are seeking to bring God's shalom in the name of Jesus by what you do on your job.

How you do it. With skill and integrity. You are studying for the name of Jesus.

In the name of Jesus. With integrity and honesty. With integrity and honesty. With integrity and honesty. Seeking to better your understanding so that you can take your place too in society.

Working well.

[7 : 19] Bringing God's shalom and control over all things. In the name of Jesus. You see, this is who we are. We don't sit on the sidelines.

We bring our exilic living into everything. Because Jesus is Lord of everything.

But there's something even more basic. Kingdom focused exiles have a missional new way of living. As surrogens and exiles in a hostile world, we are tempted to assimilate.

In saying, Peter says, we must sustain from the passions of the flesh. He is saying we cannot live like the nations to which we have been called any longer.

We've been delivered. We've been taken out. We've been chosen out of that life to live as God's holy people. This too is part of our mission.

[8 : 24] An exilic mission. This is Peter's way of addressing the assimilation problem. Because remember, he's using language that reminds us of Old Testament Israel.

And that was Israel's greatest issue. They wanted to be like the other nations around them. That's why they asked for a king.

Go back and read that. That's why they asked for a king. They said they wanted to be like everybody else. We need a king. We don't have a king, Samuel. You're just a prophet. You're just a judge.

We want a king. We want a presidente. And they chose Saul.

Because he was tall. He was. He was taller than everybody else. This guy was 6'6", man. He walked into the room. He couldn't hide.

[9 : 21] I don't know how tall he was. He was tall. That didn't work out too well, by the way. But they wanted a king like all the other nations. And then that led them to them wanting to worship the nation's gods.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. They could fit in. Forgetting that God wanted them to display his unique way of living, loving, worshipping, and being human as a model for the other nations.

God wanted them to be subversive light. And some of them just wanted to get along. God wanted them on mission, even in exile.

We saw that. But you remember, in the Old Testament, I don't know if I mentioned it or not, but if I did, this is review. When the Babylonians and Assyrians conquered a people, they would deport them to other parts of the empire.

And I know I didn't say this happens in Daniel. Daniel chapter 1 is that time when Judah was wiped out by the Babylonians and the royal families and those in authority were taken, those that were not killed, that is, they were taken and deported into Babylon.

[10 : 46] So you got Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were all part of the royal family and upper class. They are put now in Babylon.

And what happens when they're there? They gave them Babylonian names. They saw that they were bright and skilled, so they educated them at Babylonian University so that they would learn the culture, the literature, and the language of Babylon.

They gave them, even gave them government jobs. They said, once you're finished with your education, we want you in government to serve the king who conquered you.

They wanted them to assimilate into Babylonian culture, worship, ideas, politics, and way of life.

Paul Williams says, they were deliberately transplanted as defeated communities into other geographies, mixed them with other defeated groups, destroyed their powerful cultural symbols, such as temples and shrines.

Remember, they tore the temple down in Jerusalem. Enforced outward worship to the conquering nation's deities. That's what, that's called syncretism. They wanted the conquered peoples to merge their old lives and deities with Babylonian lives and deities.

[12 : 32] And assimilate into the new cultures of their conquerors. So what would happen then is this. You see, the Jews now would become Babylonian Jews.

With the emphasis on Babylon. They didn't mind them being Jews. But they wanted them to be our kind of Jews. Babylonian Jews.

We face the same challenge today, don't we? Preston Sprinkle says, the power of Babylon was advertised everywhere.

Now, the quote, the quote, the quote, the little brackets are mine. Through propaganda, I call that media. In temples and shrines, I call that malls.

Art and architecture. I didn't put it there, but I got it. Education. Literature and stories. They want us to hear the stories that captivate us and create sympathy for Babylonian way of living.

[13 : 43] We are everywhere being compelled to be American Christians rather than Christians who happen to live in America. But God says he wants us to not be of America, but be in America.

We're not American Christians. We are Christians who happen to live in America. There's a difference, by the way. And so, obviously, our loyalty is to the kingdom, but our lives are in the nations to display the holy, reconciling love of God in Christ Jesus.

You see, we're just like them. And so, to describe this missional way of living, the apostle speaks negatively first.

Abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. This is missional way of living. And he says there's a war going on.

Not just in the Ukraine and Russia or Israel and Iran and Hamas. No, no. That's only actually a small portion of the world involved in those conflicts. Sad but true.

[15 : 01] But there's a conflict that all of us are engaged in. It's the conflict of the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

See, we're all involved in that. Don't care where you're from. You're born into that conflict. Because what we do with our bodies matter.

Sinful. By flesh, he's talking about the sinful cravings of our bodily human nature in excess. That is out of God's order.

In excess. We want food in excess. In excess. Pleasure in excess. Sex in excess. In excess. In out of God's order. And etc. We take the good things that we have in Babylon.

And we turn those good things into idols. That give us meaning, identity, and security. We turn.

[16 : 05] I mean, all of those things are good. When used the way God told us to. And so what Peter is saying is what we do with our bodies can have negative effects on our souls.

Passions of the flesh represented the lifestyle of the pagan community around them. Paul talks about that lifestyle too.

Both apostles have much to say. In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about how they lived in the futility of their minds. And by the way, that's where God found us. In the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding. Alienated from the life of God. Because of the ignorance that is in them. Due to their hardness of heart. Hello, that's us. That's where God found you.

By passion, Peter is, the word just simply means strong desires. And sometimes these desires seem overwhelming.

[17 : 06] And they might even seem irresistible. But those desires are centered in our flesh. In our fallen human nature.

That part of our nature that loves sin and rejects God. And Peter speaks of some of those passions even in his book. In chapter 4, he'll say things like this.

He warns us not to live the rest of our time in the flesh. That's human life. No longer for human passions. But live for the will of God. For the time that's passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.

So you already did that, he says. That life, you did enough of that. It's done. It's surpassed. You've had enough of that. And he says, living in sensuality.

That means sexual unrestraint. Passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. He said, you've had enough of doing that.

[18:07] You've been chosen. You've been snatched. God wants you. He went into the darkness and brought you into the light. See, that was the old Kevin Smith.

That ain't me anymore. You see, passions of the flesh are contrary to what Christ desires for his holy people.

They do harm to your soul. It's like 1,000 paper cuts to the soul. You know, one paper cut ain't so bad. It's annoying. But can you imagine getting 1,000 paper cuts on that finger?

Man, you'd be cut this red. That thing would be. And they're just so tiny. Sometimes our sin just seems so tiny. But it leaves a bleed.

It's a bleed. My daughter's saying, you bleed? You got a bleed, daddy? Yes, I got a bleed. A little bleed. Then compounded, that bleed becomes a wound.

[19:10] You see, one thing about these strong desires, if we're not careful, we will compromise the truth of God in order to fulfill them.

If we're not careful, we're all subject. And it gets even stronger sometimes when the world says, you can't live without it. Or when we make a sinful desire part of our identity.

This is who I am. This is my authentic self. Christians, let me tell you something. Listen, if you are a new creation in Christ, your authentic self is Jesus.

You have a new authentic self. The old you was put to death. Go back and read Romans. The old you was put to death by God. When God saves you, he kills your old life.

And then he resurrects you. Into new life. You have been raised with Christ. Huh? Am I in the book, somebody? Ephesians 2. You have been raised with Christ.

[20:30] That's the new life. See, to be born again means to die and rise again. God does that. That's what he, that's his work. You didn't, you don't do it.

I didn't do it to ourselves. God did it to us. Amen. Amen. Amen. A Christian is somebody that God has done something to and is beautiful.

Amen. You didn't get a new attitude. You didn't get religion. You got got by Jesus. Bad English, good gospel.

I know. You've, it's your difference now. I know, I know. But don't, Pastor Kevin, I still, I still struggle. I understand. Of course you do. You're still human. You're still in the flesh. Yeah, you will struggle. But Pastor Kevin, it's hard. Really?

[21:33] What conflict do you know that is easy? War is hard. Come on, somebody.

We, we, I can't, it's hard. I can't, I keep going. War. That's right, because you're in war. Here's, don't tell anybody I told you this.

Here's what's happening. I'm going to give you an example. SEC football. Alabama against Tennessee.

Now, I forgot the coach's names. Y'all can tell me later. But just, I'm going to say, suppose. Now, let's suppose. Suppose. The coach of Alabama go, sends a letter to the players of Tennessee.

And he says to them, listen. Those plays you were going to run that your coach told you to run, they're not going to work. They're not going to work. If you run those plays, you're going to fail.

[22:41] We're going to crush you. And suppose the players of Tennessee then comes to their coach and says, coach, we can't run those plays.

Because Alabama told us we would lose. They're going to crush us. And the coach of Tennessee says, wow, you're right. Let's change the book.

What, do you have a job next Sunday? Okay, you got it? You with me? Christians are listening to Babylon.

Babylon is telling Christians, you shouldn't live that way. Babylon is telling Christians, you can't change. You're stuck like that.

That's your identity. You can't do anything about that compulsion. You can't do anything about that. You just go ahead and do you, baby. If you listen to what your coach, Kevin Smith, is telling you from his playbook, if you listen to him, y'all going to lose.

[23 : 55] And some of us are listening to him. We're listening to the opposing team.

We're listening to the opposing kingdom. Telling us how to live. And what we can and cannot do. And yet, King Jesus, the owner, let's just feel like this. God the Father owns the team. See, I'm just an assistant coach, under coach. He's, Jesus is the real coach.

The Holy Spirit is our personal trainer for the team. And they are working to equip us and get us into shape, see, so that we can win this game. The Father has given all the son, all the resources he needs for his team, to coach his team, to win the victory.

And so we can't afford to listen to Babylon. If we're going to win now. Now, if you want to lose, listen to Babylon. But I want to win.

[25 : 02] Amen. Amen. Amen. So sometimes, turn off Babylon. Wow. Turn off Babylon.

That's a good, I got a good case on that thing. Turn off Babylon. Put it away. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Beep. Turn off. Sometimes you got to turn off. Stop listening. We got to, sometimes you just got to say, Babylon, y'all talk too much. I need to hear from my head coach.

What's the, what's the play coach? What's the play? Here's the play he says. He says it right here. I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

That's the play. And part two. And the next play we're going to run. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they, when, not if, when they speak of you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds, how you run the play, and glorify God on the day of visitation.

[26 : 21] Paul says, under the inspiration of the trainer, the Holy Spirit, that you, in Romans chapter 6, that you are no longer slaves to sin.

But now you are slaves to righteousness. He now says you have the ability to present the members of your body to God as instruments of righteousness.

That includes your mind, by the way. All of you, you can give to God. That implies then that we've got to go to the playbook and allow the, and memorize some plays.

We got to soak up the playbook. I mean, come on, man. Can you imagine a quarterback for Tennessee? He doesn't know the plays.

Can you imagine the players don't know what to do with the plays? Everybody got to study the playbook. Got to soak it, got to soak in the playbook.

[27 : 33] Take the playbook wherever you go. Come on. Anybody here play football in college? Anybody? Any kind of college sport?

You trained. You learn stuff. I mean, if there was a playbook like in football, you got into that thing. You didn't look at it once in a while and hope you can run the play.

No, because the coach didn't want to hear that. Coach, I only had five minutes to study the playbook. I went right when I was supposed to go left. I'm sorry. No, you didn't want to hear that. Jesus is more gracious than that.

But still, the attitude still remains. How are you going to run the play? If you don't know the playbook. The playbook, our playbook is even better than theirs because our playbook actually has power in it.

The power of the owner and the coach is in the playbook. And when we open this playbook, it speaks to our souls.

[28 : 37] It goes down into our spirits. It can do what nothing else can. Dr. Phil can't do it. Oprah can't do it. Your favorite psychologist can't do it. Listen, I'm sorry. They may have good things to say.

Amen. But it don't go deep enough. You need something that can cut down to divide soul and spirit. Come on, Hebrews. You need surgery.

We need surgery. The only way you're going to abstain. Listen, now keep in mind. Abstentia, what Paul Peter is talking about, is not just stopping.

Okay, sin is wrong. Don't do it. Don't do it. That's part one. Part two is doing what is right. Paul calls it put off and put on.

Clausewitz chapter three. You put off the old life, but you don't sit there and just say, I'm not going to do it. No. He says, now put on Christ and begin to walk in the new life. So therefore, huh?

[29 : 36] So therefore, Paul will say, if you stole, it's Ephesians chapter four, I believe. He says, if you stole, steal no longer, but work.

Get a job. Get a job. Work. Make some money. Stop stealing. Earn it right. And then he says what? Give. That's how abstentia works in the kingdom of God.

It's not just stopping. Now we stop because we're holy and we see that's in the holy living. So we stop because it's not like Jesus. That's not like God. So that gets our attention. That is darkness. That's the old life. Run. Flee temptation, Paul tells us, right? Flee. Run for your life. Run away from it. But when you run away from it, run right into righteous living. It's always put off and put on. So whatever the sin is or the vice, find the opposing virtue in scripture and seek and go that direction. And here's the thing.

[30 : 45] I mean, it's hard to do that. But as you turn in that direction, Jesus empowers you now. Here's what happens. Too often we don't want to turn. And we keep saying we're falling.

Well, because you don't want to turn. You're like Lot's wife. I made it out of Sodom. Woo-hoo! Oh. But Sodom. Pillar of salt.

Jesus is giving us new desires. New wants. And that new desire is coming.

It's going to fill the gaps of the old desires. It's going to come against them. The spirit of God working in you is coming against those old desires.

They're giving you new desires. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And all he wants you to do is say yes.

[31 : 51] Here's the thing. Sanctification is by grace. That's the grace of God to you. Amen. Amen. Amen. But it's not without effort.

Amen. Amen. God, real quiet. Amen. Amen. Amen. Santification, becoming like Jesus, holy living, is what we call synergistic.

It's too working. Salvation is what we call monogistic. One work. God does it. Boom. He don't ask your help.

He don't ask your permission. He saves you. Boom. But when he saves us, then he says, Kelsey, abstain and follow me. Right. The ability to abstain and to follow is the gift of his grace and spirit to you.

Right. But then Kelsey is responsible to get up and follow. Right. That's right. Amen. Amen. By grace, but not without effort.

[32 : 57] Can I show you what I mean? Turn over to chapter 1, 1 Peter, verse 13. Therefore, preparing your minds for action, being sober-minded, alert.

He's talking what you need to do. Prepare yourself for action. Prepare your minds, he says. Be alert. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In other words, we keep, to abstain, we have to prepare ourselves, prepare our minds, begin to let God renew our minds to think differently about sin, about life in Babylon.

Sober-minded means we've got to stop being drunk. Not just physically, but spiritually drunk on the wine of Babylon. On the teaching of Babylon. On the ideas of Babylon.

Sober up, he says. Listen. And then put your hope on the coming of Jesus. To set everything right. To transform you in life and everything.

[34 : 01] Look forward to the coming. Because when he comes, the battle will be over. The battle will be over. Look forward to the battle being over. But while you're here, as obedient children, don't be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

He said, do you stop conforming to the world? Stop thinking the world's grass is greener.

How much? Oop. Time's up. I can't see without these things. Stop thinking the world's grass is greener. Stop saying, oh man. No.

Wake up. Smell the hummus. And stop being conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy. Listen. You shall be holy. For I am holy. It is his holiness that he gives to us that we may live like he calls us to.

[35 : 09] We don't invent holiness. That's God. We sang it this morning. Holy, holy, holy. Didn't we say that this morning? I came in late, but I heard that. And the wonderful gift of the gospel is that God gives us this holiness.

He sanctifies. He sets us apart for him. We saw that already. That's what you do. That's what we, he's calling us to do something.

To prepare ourselves. Stop getting sucker punched. Let your mind be renewed by the word of God. So you think about life and everything differently according to God. Hope in G. Look forward.

Hunger for the coming of Christ. Remember you're God's children.

And because you're his children, don't let the passions of your former way of life go. Let it go.

You're not going to lose anything.

[36 : 17] The culture will tell you, you're not going to have fun. Or you're going to lose who you are. Don't listen. When you let go of the old life, you gain the new one.

More than that, you gain Christ. You have Jesus. He outweighs everything that you could lose. He tips the scales.

Jesus on this side. Babylon's joys and pleasures over here. Jesus always tips the scales easily. So you, you don't have to give in to the passions of the flesh.

But Pastor Kevin, I do. Yeah, you do. It happens. Yes, it does. But we have a Savior. Who saved us from our sins.

Not just our past sins. But our current sins. And our future sins. The cross covers your life. Into eternity.

[37 : 19] So when you do fall. When you do fall. You do get suckered in by Babylon. Get up. Don't stay there.

I blew it. I messed up. God will never accept me. I'm embarrassed. I'm ashamed. Get up. Babylon tells you to stay there.

Stay there. Don't get up. Stay there. Just wallow and all that stuff. Just stay there. That's not the gospel. We have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ.

We have an advocate. If anyone does sin. We have an advocate with the Father. Jesus. So, so, so. You got a lawyer in the courtroom. See. And, and, and he never loses a case. So he says. So, so he's handing.

Come on boy. Get on up. And you get up. And you say, Lord, forgive me. Yes. That's exactly where he wants you. Lord, forgive me. But it's the 10th time.

[38 : 17] So? What you need to do is find out why you keep getting tricked. Think about what's happening.

Do it. Why do you keep falling for the same stuff? Ask yourself. Ask, have God help you to see it.

Why do I keep falling? Is it because I'm finding my identity there?

Is it because I, I think I have to have that part? Why do you keep falling for the same thing? Why do you keep acting in the same way that's against God's word? Why? Ask yourself. And then ask God. Help me to put that off. Coach, help me to put on Jesus. Help me to, I don't want to do that anymore. I don't want to live that way anymore. I know the world. I know Babylon keeps saying, you got to live this.

This is who you, no, don't. And listen to the, to our coach. Fill your ears with his word.

[39 : 18] Yes, you can extain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. If you couldn't, he wouldn't have said it. Resist.

James, resist the devil and he will flee from you. He wouldn't have said it if you couldn't do it. Put off the old man. Put on the new. He wouldn't have said it if you couldn't do it.

Because you have all the ability because of Christ's ability. You have all you need because Jesus is all you need. You have what you need to stop and abstain.

You do. You do. But do you believe it? Do you believe it?

It depends on which coach you're listening to. That's right. And which playbook you're reading.

Father, help us.

[40 : 25] Help us. We want to glorify Jesus. Jesus. Your servant Paul told us to walk, to live lives worthy of Christ. He shows us in this passage.

Peter has called us to abstain from the flesh so that by our good deeds, those around us living in Babylon can see. And Lord, but Babylon keeps telling us we can't.

Father, deliver us. Deliver us and give us ears to hear your voice and the voice of your son and your word. May your spirit empower us. Some people under the sound of my voice right now are trapped in life, life-threatening sins, life-controlling sins.

Some people are caught in addictions and other things that are, Lord, you speak peace to their hearts. Help them to see that you are their deliverance.
And Lord, those of us, when we fall, some people to this day probably came to church, defeated. Father, help them to get up. Help them to get up. Because Jesus loves them.
[41 : 34] And die for their sins. Help them to get up. Dust them off, will you, Father? Put them in your lap. Speak your word of life to them.
And help them to follow. Help them to follow Jesus. Help us all to follow. In Christ's name. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.