

EXILES

LIVING IN HOPE
1 & 2 PETER

SERMON TITLE: Faithfulness in Exile
SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 2:11-12

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PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

Identity is an ever-present buzzword. This should especially be true for Christians. We are chosen, loved, forgiven, and secure in Jesus. But Peter reminds us of another part of our Christian identity—we are exiles. The "world as it is" isn't our home. We are pilgrims on a journey, telling others along the way about the wonderful things God has done in calling us out of darkness and into his light. And just like Peter's personality, these two letters that share his name are bold invitations to cling to a living hope in the face of any suffering that may come our way.

Peter is writing to his Christian friends who are beginning to experience the first waves of a huge storm of suffering and persecution will come crashing against the church. They are not being arrested and put in prison. They aren't being fed to lions, that's coming later, but they are being shamed and slandered and scorned because of their faith in Jesus. They're being falsely accused of all kinds of things because of their beliefs and values. And all this affected how they were able to relate to their family and friends who were not Christ-followers. It impacted their jobs and their ability to do business. Essentially, they were being marginalized and ostracized from all social life. They were literally: exiles, strangers, aliens, sojourners, outcasts, refugees in their own land. Of course, as Christians, they were and we are exiles in a more profound sense. This world--this country--is and has never been "home" for God's people. As the Scriptures tell us, our true home is the New Heavens and Earth that Jesus will usher in on the Final Day.

That mindset is very much needed today. For much of our country's history, Christianity shaped much of American life. Not that everyone was a Christian, but Christianity was sort of the "favored" religion and Christians felt "at home" in the culture.

Twenty-five/thirty years ago, "secular culture"—(and by that I mean the "elite framework that drives the culture"—media, Hollywood, pretty much all public education)—the "elite framework that was driving our culture" was simply disinterested in us. But now, there's a growing majority of people that despise us. It's not just that our beliefs and values are considered wrong. They are now considered dangerous. Christians are maligned as "dangerous bigots" and hate-mongers. As a result, we have no voice in the growing majority elite culture that we find ourselves exiled within. The minute we try to "take a stand" as a Christian, we are completely dismissed and there is no apologetic for our views that we can offer that's convincing. Like it or not, we are living as exiles in a post-Christian society. Following Jesus in our country today is learning the way of the exile.

So the question is: How do we live as exiles in a society that's rejected our beliefs and values? What does "faithfulness" look like for the exile church today? How do we raise our kids and grandkids in a world that will be much more hostile to their faith than the world we grew up in? Fortunately, the Scriptures are not silent on this issue. Here's how the apostle Peter counsels the Christian exiles of his day.

READ 1 Peter 2:1-12 — These two verses are a kind of headline, an introduction. They are the *Big Idea* that Peter will unpack in a more detailed way from 2:13 to 4:11.

1. Don't give in to the passions of the flesh in order to fit in with people who don't know God. "Passions of the flesh" are not "sinful actions." Rather, they are over-desires. An over-desire is looking at something good as being so important that you will do almost anything to have it.

2. Live an honorable life and do good to people who are hostile toward you.
3. Expect to be attacked—*expect to be maligned and scorned by people outside the Christian community.* However, know that some who attack you will be attracted to Jesus—*some will glory God*—because of you.

Watch the Bible Project Video—*The Way of the Exile*—available on YouTube.

When God exiled Israel in Babylon, some tried to revolt, others compromised and blended in, but the prophet Jeremiah called for a “Third Way” to remain faithful to God in exile. And that is by being *loyal* to God above all else, but also being “*subversive.*” Exile faithfulness involves a subversive posture where you seek to influence the majority culture by living and working and raising families among people who have very different beliefs and values and lifestyle than you—living honorable lives, doing good to those who malign you, and even, seeking and praying for the welfare of the society within which God has exiled you. (see Jer 29:1-7)

How do we apply all this to living as faithful exiles in our country today?

- 1.
- 2.

Discussion Starters

Have someone people read 1 Peter 2:11-12 then ask...

1. What do you think about the idea that we are “living as exiles in a post-Christian society?”
2. In verse 11 Peter says, “The things that war against your soul are not “sinful” desires, they are “over-desires.” Charlie mentioned “having money” and seeking “intimacy” as good desires that can become “over-desires.” What are some other examples? What are over-desires do you struggle with?”
3. Why is “God wants me happy” the ultimate over-desire? How would you counsel someone who is planning to walk away from their marriage and they feel justified in doing so because they assert—“God wants me happy?”
4. What in v.12 argues against a Christian “separatist mindset?”
5. What in v.12 argues against Christian exiles going out and pushing Jesus and our cherished beliefs and values on people?
6. According to Peter, how do you influence a society that has rejected you?
7. In the video—“*The Way of the Exile*”—what is the “Third Way” that defines exile faithfulness?
8. Read the explanation of “subversive exile faithfulness” above and talk about what that might look like in view of recent news stories both locally and on a national level.
9. Talk about the two points of application Charlie suggested at the conclusion of the message. (1) As an American citizen, let your faith influence your politics. (2) As a Christian exile, don’t label your politics with your faith.