

Exiles live differently

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. It's really good to be back with you. Thanks to Phil for leading us in our service and for our musicians leading us so well in song.

! We've prayed, so let's head straight back into 1 Peter chapter 2, particularly looking from verse 11 to 25 this morning.

Well, as we know, it's summertime at the moment, and many of us, I'm sure, have had opportunity to go away at different points, or maybe we're looking forward to going away on some sort of holiday.

Or maybe we're here this morning because we're on holiday. If you are, welcome. It's really good to see you. And I guess we'll know what it's like to arrive at a new destination, at a new place to spend our holiday.

A few weeks ago, Becky and I were able to go off to Cornwall, and as we journeyed down to Cornwall, things looked a bit different to what home looks like here in Brighton.

[1 : 27] A lot more green. Beaches looked a lot more green. Beaches looked a lot sandier. Cornish flags flew everywhere.

Every shop sold Cornish pasties and clotted cream. You can even buy an ice cream and get clotted cream dolloped on, and instead of having one of those chocolate flakes, you can get a fudge stick. How good is that? But as lovely as Cornwall was, it's not home. For me, Brighton is home. It has been over the last year.

Cornwall was lovely, but it wasn't familiar. It was different. I was a stranger. I didn't belong there. It was not my home.

And once upon a time ago, in history, there was a man who lived, a man who left his home to come and live in a different home.

[2 : 35] Someone who came and left the comforts and the joys and delights of home to live among a different people.

People who didn't welcome him. There was a man who left the comforts of his home for a place which was uncomfortable. Who chose even to endure suffering.

To endure mockery. To endure insults. To even endure unjust suffering and even death at the hands of wicked men.

I don't think he felt very at home in this world compared to his home in heaven. I am, of course, talking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of God who chose to leave his home in heaven to live among us in this world. And Jesus' experience of living in a world that is not his home.

[3 : 47] And Jesus' experience of suffering in this world is an experience we each go on if we're following him as our Lord and Savior today.

And in 1 Peter, right from the outset, as Phil helpfully read for us from the very beginning of his letter, Peter writes to these people saying, To God's elect, exiles.

Though they were people who found a home in this world, Peter was reminding them, Actually, you're not at home. You're exiles.

You belong to a different home. And they do that because they belong to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ who in his mercy has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And because of him, we have a new home. A home in heaven. An inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

[4 : 53] And we sang to remind ourselves of that as well, that we don't belong here. Here we stand. But here we don't belong.

Though we may live here in Brighton, or somewhere in this country, or maybe even our home is abroad, this world is not really our home.

We are looking forward to that home in heaven. But right now, this is where we live. This is where God has placed us. And so Peter, as he writes to these people, these exiles, he says to them in verse 11, Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul.

In other words, Peter is saying to his readers and to us today who live in this world that is not our home, he says to us, live differently.

Live differently from the world around you. Live as foreigners and exiles because this world is not your home.

[6 : 13] You're looking forward to a new one. Now after being away in Cornwall, as we return back to Brighton, I came back and I kind of walked down London Road and headed towards Churchill Square.

And as I walked down that way, even though I was back in the place I call home, I felt very out of place. I looked in all the shop windows and looked at flags flying and thought, I feel very out of place right now as I've arrived back home.

Because everywhere had rainbow flags. Everywhere was looking forward to pride celebrations. And so even here, I felt un-at-home.

Even here where I live, in this city, I felt like a foreigner and an exile. And I wonder if you've ever felt like that too, living in Brighton.

You work around here, your church family is here, maybe you grew up here. But as a Christian, you don't feel at home. Well hopefully this morning, this passage is going to encourage us as Peter writes and tells us to live differently as foreigners and exiles.

[7 : 38] And he tells us to do that in different ways. Two different ways.

Oh, I forgot about this one. Be like salmon who swim against the tide. That's what salmon are famous for doing.

We swim against the tide of this world. And Peter tells us to live differently in two different ways.

Here's the first way, by abstaining from sin. That's what he says there in verse 11, to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul.

Abstain means to hold yourself back. Hold yourself back from sin. One of the greatest, great things that I enjoyed about Cornwall was the food, if you haven't guessed already.

And I couldn't resist but buy some fudge to take back home with me. But since being back home, I have said that I will only eat one piece of fudge at a time.

[8 : 54] I'm abstaining from eating the whole packet. I'm holding myself back as difficult as it might be. And that's kind of what we need to do with sin.

But with sin, even more than that, to abstain completely. Holding ourselves back completely. Not even letting us indulge even once.

That's what Peter's calling us to. Abstain from sinful desires as you live differently in this world where you're not at home. Hold yourself back from saying that lie.

Saying, no, that's not true. I must not say that. Hold yourself back from looking lustfully again at that person. Hold yourself back.

hold yourself back hold yourself back from lashing out at someone in anger. No, that's not kind. We do that because we're not citizens of earth but of heaven.

[10 : 01] We live, we're to live differently. We're to swim against the tide of this world. Even if the people of Brighton Hove may say it's okay. We say, no, it's not because God has said to us as Peter has written earlier in this book.

God has said, be holy because I am holy. But it is hard. It is hard. Sin, we're in a battle against our sinful desires and Peter acknowledges that.

He goes on to say, our sinful desires which wage war against your soul. Sin is not on our side. We battle against it.

Wars are not easy things, are they? Wars require hard, determined fighting. We battle. We battle against our sinful desires.

And the reality is in these sinful, human, imperfect bodies, we will fail in abstaining from sin.

[11 : 12] we will get hit. Soldiers in fights, they will get hit. But they will be able to pick themselves up again, hopefully, when they're injured.

They may have fellow soldiers or medics to help them get picked up again. And as believers, we know a God who is merciful, don't we, when we sin?

We've sung earlier that new song, His mercy is more. Our sins are many, His mercy is more. A song which I hope we can keep singing together and learn to love the truths in it.

It is true. And in God's mercy, surely He will help us to fight against sin too. He will help us in this battle against our sinful desires.

He will help us to abstain, help us to hold ourselves back from delving into sin. So we live differently, we swim against the tide by abstaining from sin.

[12:27] And secondly, we do that by living such good lives. That's what Peter goes on to say there in verse 12. Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits.

We must live such good lives among a world that is watching us. In around the year 500 AD, long time ago, around a generation after the last Roman emperor, there was a man known only to the world as Benedict who was sent by his wealthy parents off to complete his education in Rome.

And as he arrived in Rome and lived there, he was disgusted by the city's decadence. Who knows what he'd think of Brighton and Hove. Benedict chose to flee to a forest to pray as a hermit.

And from this guy Benedict, we get the order of Benedictine monks. They're people who withdraw from the world around us to focus on living for God, following God.

And a book was even written in the last 10 years or so called the Benedict Option, examining should we as Christians do what Benedict did and flee off from the world around us, hide from it and focus on living and praying to God.

[14:11] Perhaps at times we wonder that as we live in Brighton and Hove. We think maybe it would be far better for us to live away from here, somewhere quiet and peaceful without the distraction of the world around us.

Maybe it would be better for our children if we moved away. But Peter is clear that this is not the way he sees God's people living. He sees God's people living lives that are different among the pagans, among the world, the world that does not know God.

Live such good lives among them. Even though they may accuse us of doing wrong things, they may think we're weird as Christians as we live these different lives, as we abstain from sin.

In chapter 4 and verse 4, Peter says, they are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless and wild living and they heap abuse on you.

People may be surprised at the way you choose to live your life. The way you choose to spend your time. Maybe Brighton may think it's weird that we don't have a pride flag outside the church building at the beginning of August every year.

[15:33] And they may even accuse us of doing wrong in that. But we pray that as we live these good lives, these lives that God has called us to live in this world, we pray that people may turn and glorify God.

We don't do it to get people to look at us and say, oh, look how good Daniel Shapala is. No, it's so that people see how good God is, God who's working in us.

That's what Peter says, that they may glorify God on the day he visits. We pray that people may see us living these different lives, swimming against the tide, and may see God at work in us.

And of course, in all of this, we have Jesus as our great example. Jesus, who Peter writes in verse 22, committed no sin, no deceit was found in his mouth.

He abstained from sin completely, perfectly. And even on the cross, as Jesus hung there to die, before a watching world, Jesus prayed, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.

[16:58] Extraordinary that he would pray for them, pray such a merciful prayer. And as he prayed that, there was a man watching, a centurion. And he saw what had happened and praised God, gave glory to God, and said, surely this was a righteous man.

We follow in the footsteps of Jesus as we live differently in this world. And as we live differently in this world, Peter gives us some examples of how we can do that.

We've got a couple to look at this week and one next week. This week we're going to think just briefly about two things. Firstly, as we submit to rulers and as we submit to employers.

So let's see what Peter says about submitting to rulers. Live differently as we submit to rulers. See, Calvary Church Brighton submits to Rishi Sunak as your Prime Minister.

Submit to your MP, whether it be Lloyd Russell Moyle, Caroline Lucas, or Peter Kyle, depending on where you live in the city. And I say that not because I'm a big fan of any of those people, but I say that because God's Word tells us to.

[18:27] Now have a look there in verse 13. Peter says submit yourselves to the human authorities.

Apparently, literally, he says that to every created being, to human beings created in the image of God, including those that he has set in positions of authority over us.

He talks about the emperor here. We don't have an emperor, but we do have a prime minister, don't we? But is Peter for real?

Should we really be taking this seriously? Should we really submit to these people? Peter had seen Pontius Pilate unjustly condemn Jesus to the cross.

Peter, are you saying we should submit to people like that? He's writing to people in an area who, maybe about 30, 40 years after this letter was written, suffered greatly at the hands of an emperor.

[19:50] This letter is written by Peter, who is believed to have been executed upside down on a cross by the order of Emperor Nero. Peter, are you seriously saying we should submit to him?

He says we should do this because we're living such good lives among the pagans. We're living as people who know that this world is not our own.

And though people may accuse Christians of being up to good and causing trouble, verse 15 says, as we submit to rulers, for it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

In a world where there might be much anger at the thought of Rishi Sunak being a wealthy prime minister, does he even care about little old me?

In a world that may say we didn't even vote for him as prime minister, may not really want to listen to what he says. In a world that may think, well, the government spent all their time partying, didn't they, during COVID?

[21:07] We can't wait until they're replaced with a new government. It's what many people in our country, maybe even we, might be thinking about those who rule over us.

Peter says, for the Lord's sake, submit to them, follow them, take seriously obeying the laws of this land, so that though people may accuse you of doing wrong, you should silence their ignorant talk. God. I think we can, as a church, we can thank God for our pastor Phil and a member of our church, Corin, and their work in the local action team, and they have, don't you, relations with council officers and the council and various other people in positions of authority.

You can praise God for what they're doing and pray that those others on the local action team who may not be Christians might see their respect for those in authority and might even turn and glorify God.

And we do all this because we are following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ who stood on trial before rulers, before Pontius Pilate, as we've mentioned.

[22:38] Verse 23, when they held their insults at him, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Through all that, he trusted his father, his father who's sovereignly in control over all people, including all those in authority, who has placed them over us.

and we trust that he is the great judge of all and all things will be made right in the end. Peter nicely summarizes this section for us, down in verse 17, saying, show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

show respect to everyone, every created being, every human being made in the image of God, whoever they are in whatever position they find themselves in, in life.

He tells us to love the family of believers, love each other as a church before the watching worlds.

And as we do that, fear God, revere him, respect him, honor him, and honor those he places above us in authority, honor the emperor, honor the prime minister, honor those who rule, who govern.

[24:10] And finally, as we seek to live good lives among the pagans, Peter says, live differently as we submit to employers, as we submit to employers.

Verse 18, slaves in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

It's important to point out to us this morning that when we read the word slaves here, maybe we're thinking about like the slave trade and the awful and barbaric things that happened in that.

Peter is writing to people in a different context. He's writing to first century believers. We must always remember who the original text is being written to first.

And first century slaves were a bit different. It was never a particularly desirable thing, but many of them may well have been well-educated.

[25 : 22] Some will have served the families they lived with as doctors or teachers for their children. Slaves could even buy their way out of slavery.

It was hard, but it could happen. They had the freedom for that. So though never a desirable thing at all, and never affirmed in the New Testament, it was an accepted part of how life worked in that society.

And Paul wonderfully talks about how in the gospel in Christ, both slaves and free are one in Christ. And as we read this today, I think we can certainly apply this to those who have employment, those who submit to those who manage us, maybe even people at school, submitting to those who teach us.

And Peter says, submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but even to those who are harsh. Even to those who may take advantage of your good nature as a Christian.

[26 : 43] who may take advantage in the fact that you're always going to say yes to staying another 30 minutes. Who may use you as a target in their jokes.

Even to the master, you know, is taking advantage of his position, maybe taking more money from the company than he should be. I worked in a Tesco store a few years ago, and there were rumors spreading around the place about the big boss at Tesco not being nice at all to the managers and supervisors, which was why all these managers and supervisors were leaving.

It wasn't a particularly nice environment to work in. We're told in God's word to live such good lives, to live lives that are different, that swim against the tide, that will even, in reverent fear of our God, even submit to those who might even be harsh.

Verse 19 says this is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. or as another version of the Bible says, it's a gracious thing.

It's a gracious thing to keep working even though we're not going to be considered for a promotion because maybe we're a Christian. Christian. It's a gracious thing to continue to keep working in that place even though we get a lot of stick for not wearing a rainbow lanyard.

[28 : 36] It's gracious to continue to keep working in a place even though we constantly get complained at for not working on a Sunday. day. It's a gracious thing to say I am happy to continue to work for you and help your business grow even if you keep mocking my faith because this world is not my home.

I'm a foreigner, an exile, and I want you to know the grace of God and I pray that you will glorify him on the day he visits.

And suffering for doing good, suffering even though we're living lives that are seeking to be holy, is what our Savior has gone through to.

Verse 21, to this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.

steps. You see, our Savior has gone through unjust, unfair suffering.

[29 : 54] This world was not his home. He did absolutely no wrong at all. He committed no sin, no deceit was found in his mouth.

He died an unfair and unjust death on the cross. at the hands of wicked rulers, wicked authorities. And he did that for us.

For us, because we were like sheep that had gone astray. We're sinful people. Verse 24, he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness, live those good lives in this world.

hearts. By his wounds, you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

By his wounds, we're healed, we're forgiven because of the suffering he was willing to go through for us. And so if you feel like you're out of place in this world, if you feel like you're living in a foreign land even though you should be living at home, if you feel like it's hard to submit to those who govern over us, if you feel like it is hard to work for a boss who is against you because you're a Christian, take comfort in the fact that Jesus, your Saviour, has felt that too.

[31 : 41] He has felt the pain of unjust suffering, the hands of wicked rulers, he's been insulted, suffered injustice, all for you and your salvation.

Take comfort that he, your good shepherd, knows and understands and cares. take comfort that he, your good shepherd, is leading you home where you won't any longer be a foreign exile in this world but so at home and so safe and so free from any sort of suffering.

And we need God's help, don't we, as we live these different lives in this world that's not our home. So let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your word, we thank you for the way it speaks into our lives and situations even today.

Father, we pray, please would you help us as we seek to live for you in this world.

Help us to live such good lives among the pagans that they may accuse us of doing wrong, they may see our good deeds and glorify you on the day you visit.

[33 : 16] So Father, help us. we need your help as we live in this world. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. And we're going to sing of the Lord Jesus, the man of sorrows, the lamb of God who was betrayed even by his own people.

sin of man and wrath of God has been on Jesus laid. And I think this next verse is appropriate to some of the things we've been looking at.

Silence as he stood accused, beaten, mocked and scorned, but he was bowing to the Father's will and he took a crown of thorns. And we sing of that cross, that cross which is our salvation.

So when the musicians begin. ending