

02-06-02 AM - Aliens and Exiles - 1 Peter 2:11-17

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 2nd of June 2002. The preacher is Paul Dudley.

His sermon is entitled Aliens and Exiles and is based on 1 Peter 2.11-17.

End of 1997. In 2007, Michelle and I left the church that we were attending to go into Bible College. We had a magnificent four years at the church that we were at.

I was the youth worker there and the children's worker and it was just fantastic. We have many great friends who are still there. And at our farewell, a few of our friends put together a farewell video.

And on that video, they went around and asked all our friends just some of the reflections they had of us. Well, I'd love to spend all day here talking about all the lovely things they said about me and Michelle.

[1 : 1 0] It was really quite nice. It was quite touching, some of the things that they said. Things that they appreciated about us. Things they enjoyed about us. The ministry that we had had.

And it was all here. All taped. Of course, there was a few embarrassing moments they spoke about as well. But those bits will be hidden from people. We won't allow people to see that.

But what I think is interesting is, what if I went and got a video and asked people, how would they describe your life? What are the things that they appreciate about you?

Or how would they describe it? But let's change it a little. Instead of the people here in the church, the people that love you, let's change it to the people out in the world.

The non-Christians that we meet. Whether it be in the workplace. Perhaps even family or friends. Perhaps it's just even the person who's driving in the car beside us.

[2 : 1 2] If I was to get my little camera out and put together a video and ask them the question, so, how would you describe? How would you describe them? How would you describe that person there that is in the car beside you?

Or your workmate? What would they say about you? How would they describe you? What are the characteristics that they would talk about? What are some of the things they may, negative things they may talk about?

Today we're looking at the question of how it is that we relate to the non-Christians, to the people in our world. How is it that we live as a Christian in the world that we are in?

Because I think it's quite a difficult question as Christians. How do we live in this world? And this is the question that Peter takes up today. Peter takes it up and he looks at this question, how is it they are to relate to non-Christians?

So before we do that, let's pray to our God about this matter. Let us pray. Father, we do pray that you'll help us this morning as we reflect on how we are to live in this world.

[3 : 2 9] We pray that you'll open our ears and minds, that we may hear you clearly. Father, we pray that you'll help us to have courage to obey the things that we hear.

We pray this in your son's name. Amen. We're continuing our series in 1 Peter. We've had a couple of weeks break from it, but we're starting up again our series in 1 Peter.

It's a great book. It's a book which Peter writes to some Christians, some churches that are scattered through Asia Minor, the provinces of Rome. They're scattered out there and they're under great persecution and suffering.

Things haven't been easy for these churches. It has been very difficult for them. And Peter knows this. He knows the sufferings they're going through. And so Peter writes this letter to them to encourage them, to help them to remember the grace that God has shown them and to help them stand in that grace.

See, many of them are starting to feel a little bit shaky under the persecution, under the great times of trouble and they're starting to leave the church. And Peter wants them to hold firm.

[4 : 41] So what we've seen so far in the first couple of chapters over the last couple of weeks, over the last month or so, is we've been looking at the fact that Peter starts by talking about the great privileges they have as being Christians.

And if you flick back, if you open up your Bibles and flick back to the beginning of chapter 1, Peter starts by talking about the fact that they are a people who have new birth, people who have a living hope.

An inheritance that can't spoil or fade. He gives this beautiful description there in chapter 1, verses 3 through to 6. Not only that, they've been protected by God for a salvation to be revealed in the last time.

What a great picture that we have here of what it is to be a Christian. A living hope. In verse 18, if you turn the page to pick up another couple of the images here that Peter talks about, about the great privileges of being a Christian, we see there in verse 18 that they have been ransomed.

They've been ransomed from their futile ways. Not with perishable things, but with the precious blood of Jesus. What a privilege it is to be a Christian, Peter points out to these churches.

[5 : 58] In verse 23, we see the fact that they have been born anew, not of perishable, but imperishable seed, the living and enduring word of God.

In chapter 2, verse 9, again, Peter picks up these beautiful images. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.

In verse 10, once you were not a people, but now you are a people, God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

What a great picture that Peter points out here of the great privilege it is to be a part of God's family. But in the midst of all this painting of this great picture to encourage them, he starts giving them some general instructions about how they are to live in this world.

We see in verse 13, they are called to be holy. Just as God is holy, they are to be holy. In chapter 1, verse 22, we see that they are to be people who love deeply.

[7 : 07] A people who love deeply. And throughout these two chapters we've seen that they are to be a people who trust in God. These are the general instructions that Peter has been giving about how you live in this world.

Well today, we start a new section of Peter's letter. At chapter 2, verse 11 and 12, we start the beginning of where Peter starts to give actual examples of how we are to live in this world.

And he starts by giving a general principle. A general principle of how you are to live in this world. If you note there in verse 11 and 12, the general principle is we are to flee from the evil desires of the world.

And we are to be people who have honourable conduct. People who have good conduct. The negative and the positive there. But more of that a bit later. Let's have a look here as we start to look at this passage which you might like to have open before you on page 984.

It's important there to see some of the descriptions that Peter describes these people as. In verse 11 he says, Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.

[8 : 28] He starts by talking about the fact that they are beloved. He talks about the fact he talks about his great love for them. Peter is not only an apostle a person with authority trying to help them to grow as Christians he's also someone that loves them dearly and he wants to let them know that he does love them.

They are people who are loved. But this word also picks up the idea that they are loved by God. deeply loved by God. You only have to look back there in chapter 2 verses 9 and 10 just before.

They are people who are now God's people. A people who have been shown mercy. They are loved people. But not only they are loved people they are people who are aliens and exiles we see in verse 11.

Aliens and exiles in this world. This describes their present situation. It describes the fact that they are aliens and exiles in the community that they are living in.

In the society that they are living in. They are exiles. This is their present reality. Because they are Christian because they follow God they have different values.

[9 : 45] They have different attitudes. And it makes them aliens. It makes them very different. As you know Paul Barker is over in France at the moment and he is an alien.

An exile. Although he probably wouldn't think that at the moment he is probably having a great time. But there is this notion that he is very different to the culture that he is in.

He is an alien in that culture. He is an exile. He is a stranger to that culture. This is where he fits most naturally in. Peter is trying to pick up this idea that they are aliens and exiles in their culture.

This is their present reality. And because of this present reality they lack a lot of legal rights. They have no social standing. And because of this there are people who are abused.

Who are easily harassed. from all sides. They are aliens and exiles. But there is actually a deeper truth here as well.

[10 : 56] Not only are they only aliens and exiles in their community because of the way they live. There is a deeper reality here. They are aliens and exiles of this world. Their true home is not of this world.

Their true home is in heaven. That is their true home. They have a heavenly home. They are aliens and exiles in this world.

It is because of this fact that they are aliens and exiles of this world that they have a heavenly home is the reason why they are aliens and exiles in their present circumstances. It is because of that reality the heavenly reality it affects their present reality.

Note here that Peter is not saying that they should try and get together. Note here this is the way they are to be. Aliens and exiles.

It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament Israel was to gather together. They were to come together in the land the promised land. I am a science teacher and one of the great frustrations in trying to teach science is trying to get the language right.

[12 : 07] Now central let me see if I get this right. Central pedal is this notion of where they come together. something comes together is drawn to the middle. Central pedal. So we have central pedal forces on us drawing us to the centre of the earth.

That's what gravity is. It's that notion of coming together being drawn together like Israel coming together at a central point.

But Peter is pointing about the fact that they are to be scattered. They are people who are aliens and exiles. They are people who have gone out moved out opposite to Israel.

They are people who have the central fugal forces where you I don't know if you've ever been on those lovely whirligigs at show parks where you get thrown out on the outside and you keep on getting pushed away.

Well this is the notion that they are scattered people. Peter wants them to maintain that. to maintain their alien and exile status. Well because they are a loved people, because they are aliens and exiles Paul then tells them how they should live.

[13 : 17] Firstly as we see in verse 11 first of all they are to abstain from the desires of the flesh. Now this desires of the flesh is not just talking about sexual misconduct.

The idea of flesh here is also the idea of things that are contrary to God's way. contrary to God's will. It's taking on the desires of the surrounding world.

Taking on those desires and embracing them. Peter is saying the first thing you can do is abstain from them. Abstain from them. Don't allow these desires to grab hold of you.

Whatever they may be. Whether it's hatred, a desire for money, a desire to be popular or even sexual misconduct. Don't allow these desires to grab hold of you.

Abstain from them. And we see why. Because they wage war against our soul. They wage war against our very Christian lives. We allow them to get a foothold in our lives.

[14 : 22] And these innocent desires are so they seem. These desires that don't seem to hurt anyone. These desires grow. And they wage war against us.

And they can cause terrible, terrible actions. Terrible actions. We are to struggle against it. We are not to indulge our sinful desires.

We must not allow them to get their foot in the door. That's the first way we are to live in this world. Flee, abstain from the desires of this world. The second thing is a positive thing.

We are to be people of good, honourable conduct. We see there in verse 12. Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

Conduct yourselves honourably. Have good conduct amongst the Gentiles. The idea of the Gentiles here is those non-Christians, those who aren't Christians, have good conduct amongst them, let them see these good deeds.

[15 : 35] Therefore I think it has in mind here deeds that will be recognisable to those who are non-Christians. Therefore we should be involved in setting up hospitals and schools.

We should be seen to be looking after the sick and the poor. These are good things that we should be involved in. This is good and honourable conduct.

But I think we also need to be careful that we just don't leave it at that. Conduct that the world sees as good. Because we have a different standard.

We have God's standard. We are to be a people who follows God's conduct. A people who love our enemies. A people who care for each other.

A people whose conduct reflects God's will. This is the conduct we are to have. We are to have this type of conduct.

[16 : 37] And the result of this conduct we see is the fact that non-Christians will glorify God. They will glorify God because of our good conduct. Note there though that Peter puts in the fact that even though they malign you as evildoers even though they slander you and give you a hard time they will still be forced to glorify you.

Now many have tried to work out what this slander comes in the form of. Many think that well it's been written down that many of the Christians were given a hard time and classed as being cannibals.

Christians were seen as cannibals because of the Lord's Supper. where we celebrate the fact that we by faith share in Christ's blood and body.

Some think that they were given slander because of incest. They thought that incest was happening in Christian communities because of the deep love that they spoke about.

Many thought that we were atheists, the Christians were atheists because their failure to honour the emperor. terror. These could have been the possibilities of why they were slandered. I think probably more likely is the fact they were slandered because they didn't get involved in the culture of the day.

[18 : 02] They were unwilling to be involved in the sinful things of the world. And so people slandered them and gave them a hard time. Peter says, even though they slander you, they will see your good deeds and glorify you.

If you look there, glorify God when he comes to judge. If you look down the very bottom, if you look down there where it says H, the very bottom of your Bibles, you'll note there that it gives a little note about the Greek.

The Greek actually, instead of saying glorify God when he comes to judge, picks up this idea and says God on the day of visitation. Here is the idea that they will glorify God when God comes to visit.

Now as we look through the Bible, this notion of God visiting is a great and terrible day. For it's a day of great blessing and also a day of great judgment.

So I think that what Peter is trying to get at here is they will glorify God if God comes to visit them in their lives. It's this idea of they look at your good example and the way that you're living your life and because of that God works in their life and they are converted.

[19 : 22] God visits them. God comes into their life. God visits them and they are converted. This is the first idea that they glorify God.

They glorify God because of your deeds because it's through your deeds that they have come to know God. They will glorify God that way. But there is also the other idea that not everyone will actually glorify God because of your deeds in terms of this life.

But there will come the day when God will visit, a great and terrible day where God will bring about judgment. judgment. And on that great judgment day we'll see that they will glorify God in that day.

They'll glorify God because of your deeds. They'll come to recognize that your good deeds were deeds that were in accordance with God's will. And they will be forced to acknowledge your good deeds.

They'll be forced to glorify God. Well this is how they are to live. This is the general principle that Peter sets up for the way they were to live. They were to be people who are aliens and exiles.

[20 : 37] People who were to abstain from the desires of the flesh. The desires of the world. And they were to be people of honorable conduct. Well this is the general principle.

And this general principle flows right through to the middle of chapter 4. And we'll see the way that it's worked out. For what Peter does is he now starts to give some actual examples of how this has worked out in people's lives.

If you look there in verse 13 the first example that he gives is the way that we are to be submissive. For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution.

He gives this general command that we are for every human institution we are to be submissive to it. We are to accept its authority. Now Peter goes on to explain how we are to which we'll be looking at briefly today how we are to be submissive to the authorities.

To those who are in authority over us in government civil government. Next week we'll look at the fact that Peter tells the slaves to be submissive to their masters. And the following week the way that wives are to be submissive to their husbands.

[21 : 50] They were to be submissive. Now this is not a very popular notion the idea of submission. In our society we love freedom.

We cry freedom. freedom. I don't know if you've seen the movie with William Wallace. What was it? I've forgotten it.

Thank you very much Braveheart. Yes. Gosh. Slipped my mind there for a moment. And right at the end what does he cry out? He cries out freedom. We hate to be have our freedom taken away from us.

We hate this idea of having freedom, being removed, being told what to do, the idea of being limited in what we can and can't do.

We resent it. Some resent the idea of submission and authority and rightly so. For they have people who have been abused, abused by authority.

[23 : 05] Terrible abuse. No wonder people hate the idea of submission. Yet Peter picks up here in this passage this idea that we are to be submissive to every human institution.

How are we to deal with this? I mean as we look through the Bible this idea of submission is not just in the way that we relate to one another. We see the idea of submission even in the Godhead.

There at the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus cries out to God and says, not my will but yours. Christ obeyed God.

We may not like this idea of submission to human institutions but the Bible sets up this idea that God establishes this idea of patents where there is authority.

So we need to look at it. Particularly we're going to be looking at today the fact that we are to be submissive to the civil governments. Well in verse 13 it says, for the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution whether it is the emperor as supreme or of governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right.

[24 : 35] They are to be people who submit to the governing authorities. Here Peter is saying whether it is the emperor as supreme.

Now the emperor at this time they think is Nero. Nero ruled between 54 AD and 68. He was the Roman emperor, the ruler of the world.

Peter is saying that they were to submit to his authority. Even the fact that Nero persecuted the church. Even in the fact that it was Nero's persecution that in the end killed Peter himself.

He was martyred under this regime. Not only the emperor but Peter goes on to say it's those also that have his authority, the governors, the Roman governors that are scattered out throughout the land.

As we look in the Bible we see people like Pilate and Felix. These are Roman governors. They, we were to, those rulers, those governors had the authority of the emperor and they were to submit to them.

[25 : 48] Now note here it gives us a bit of an inkling as to what was the role of those who had authority. They were to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right.

This idea is picked up in Romans 13 much more. Peter is not so much interested in here trying to explain what a governor or a, or a, an emperor should do.

What he's interested in is saying we need to be submissive to them. We need to accept their authority. Well, why?

Why? Can you imagine being under this, this Nero, under the Roman governors? Can you imagine the great persecution that they felt from these leaders, these authorities?

Would you want to accept their authority? Would you want to be submissive to them? I imagine that you would have one of, we draw from, from society. Go in little huddles.

[26 : 53] Move yourself away so you don't have to, so you can ignore the authorities that are there. Or the other option is you might rise up in rebellion against them. Peter says no.

The reason why they should comes in verse 15. For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. Peter makes it very clear.

It is God's will that we should submit. That we should live good lives. It is God's will. And see there, it is God's will that by doing the good that you should silence the ignorance of the foolish.

In verse 12 we picked that up idea, didn't we? We've already picked that idea up. That by us doing our good deeds, that there will be silence. There will be forced to glorify God.

Well, they were not to withdraw. They were not to fight. But they were to live lives in good conduct. Lives of submission. For us, I think this is quite difficult times.

[28 : 05] I remember preaching a similar sermon to this in Sydney. And as I was driving, I had to pick up my sister before going to church and I was running late. I wanted to speed so they could get there on time.

But I thought, ooh, it's probably not good. It's not good that I speed here. It's not right. I need to be submissive to the authorities that are over me. We need to be submissive in all areas.

Whether it be at work, the way that we conduct ourselves in driving, or so many different areas. We need to accept it. Yet Peter here in verse 16 doesn't say that it has to be a blind submission.

It's not a submission where we just blindly accept everything that they say. Let me read verse 16. As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext to evil.

As servants of God, you are first and foremost a servant of God. You have a God who is your master.

[29 : 13] He is your true master. We've had a change of masters. Our society has this great claim of freedom. They are free to do whatever they want. Whenever they want.

The Bible tells us different. We're not free. Society is not free. They are ensnared and slaves to the sinful nature.

They are people who cannot break the bondage of sin. They cannot get themselves out of it. They are slaves to sin.

Yet as we've seen through 1 Peter, Christians are people who have been set free. They've been set free from this futile way.

They've been set free to serve God. We have a new master. We have a new master. God has given us this freedom. And Peter says, live as free people.

[30 : 11] Live as free people. Do not use your freedom as a pretext to evil. Peter is making sure that we serve God first.

What Peter is saying here is, if the government has set up rules that force you to sin, then we serve God first. We submit to God first, not to the civil authorities.

We see this in the Bible. Daniel refused to stop praying to his God and he was thrown in the lion's den. We see it with Moses. His mother refused to kill him and put him in a basket.

We see it with the early church. They were told not to preach Christ, yet they continued preaching Christ. We are the people to serve God first.

We are not to use our freedom as a pretext for evil, to do what we want to do. Well, verse 17 brings the whole thing to a conclusion, this first little part.

[31 : 20] Here we have a hierarchy of values and allegiances. We see there, honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God.

Honour the emperor. Here we have a hierarchy. He says that we are to honour everyone. We are to respect and honour everyone, including, at the end of the verse, the emperor.

Respect him. Honour him. But note, for your Christian believers, other Christians, we are to treat them as family.

Therefore, we need to love them appropriately. And the third one we have there is we see that they are to fear God.

He alone is the one that we give our true allegiance to. He alone is the one that we show reverence to. That little verse 17, that summary there, sets up the way that we should be living, the way that we should establish our values, a hierarchy there.

[32 : 25] It's important that we recognise this. Well, Peter has told them that they were to be aliens and exiles. They were to flee the evil desires.

They were to live honourable lives among the Gentiles. This meant for them they were to submit to every human institution, including civil governments.

But they were to recognise they were servants of God first and foremost. They were to fear him. There was a woman by the name of Natasha.

She lived in Russia. She was a woman who was a Christian. And she would meet regularly with other Christians.

But she lived in a time where Christianity was not approved of by the state. One of the authority leaders was Sergio.

[33 : 27] And he caught Natasha meeting with other Christians and had her punished. She was persecuted. Yet he was astounded to see she didn't stop meeting with other Christians.

She kept on meeting with other Christians time and time again. The punishment that she took, Sergio was just staggered by.

Her good conduct, he was blown away by. So much so, that in the end, he recognised that God was the true God.

And he was converted because of the good deeds of this woman. Converted. Well, soon Sergio started getting persecution himself.

He knew he had to get out. So he was on a boat just off the coast of Canada. And he jumped boat and swam ashore. The water was icy cold and he only just barely made it with his life.

[34 : 34] When he was up on the beach, they dragged him up and warmed him up and cared for him. Looked after him. From the brink of death, he was restored.

Later, he sat down and wrote a book entitled, Forgive me Natasha. Forgive me Natasha.

He was a man that was profoundly affected by this woman. The sad thing is, Sergio was assassinated for writing this book in Canada.

He was a man that led a life at the end of good deeds. May God help us to live our lives in this world.

Lives that bring him honour and glory.