

# Living as Exiles in an Unjust World

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to Watermark. My name is Chris, if you don't know me. And it's, I think going through this series in 1 Peter, I don't know how it's impacting you, but actually I'm really very challenged by this. And actually, even with this passage today, I've been going, God, just, I need you to work in my heart through this.

Because this is a, there's some tough things that God is saying, but things which I think are really, we need to hear in our society. Because we live in a world which, if you ever watch the news, is very polarized, right? We have all kinds of issues. There's mass immigration throughout the world, whether it's in rural China into the cities or the mainland into Hong Kong or war-torn countries into safer countries or people seeking economic opportunities in different places.

People are looking for a home. People are looking for an identity. And across the world, there's also this kind of backlash against a lot of this. People are being protectionistic. There's nationalism growing in different areas of the world. And everyone seems to be becoming either pro or anti-everything. Pro-government, anti-government. Pro-immigration, anti-immigration. Pro-poor or anti-poor. Pro-rich or anti-rich. And in 1 Peter, Paul is talking to a group of small groups of Christians across Turkey. And he's writing to them and he calls them exiles and sojourners. He says, basically, you're like migrants in a foreign land. And he says, your primary allegiance isn't to be to any political authority. It isn't a national identity. Your primary identity is that your citizenship, like Paul talks about, is in heaven. We have a different president. You know, right at the heart of the gospel message is the statement, Jesus is Lord. That means he's higher in allegiance to every other allegiance. And that puts us in this world in a kind of no man's land in many ways. But in God's eyes, through faith in Christ, and this is what Bon Peter's been showing, we are God's chosen people. We have a home. We are the royal priesthood, a holy nation. We belong to him. And all of those privileges that David was talking about, of our heavenly identity, are ours. We have a different hope. We have a different joy. We have a different holiness. We're distinctive, a different honor. And last week, we talked about how we are now the new temple of God, this place where God by his spirit dwells amongst us. And that's where we've got to today in 1 Peter.

[ 3 : 1 0 ] But the question that comes with all of these things is how do we live out this heavenly identity in an unjust world of politics and power struggles? How do you live that out in the day-to-day of life?

And the next two chapters, Peter's going to flesh out what this looks like. He's going to talk about as citizens. He's going to talk about in workplaces. And he's going to talk about in marriage, how these things work. And we're going to look at the first two today. But the early Christians, just to give you background, the early Christians were often accused of being dangerous to society.

not because they were doing a lot of terrible things, but they didn't worship the emperor or the pagan gods around them. And so people thought they were disrupting the harmony of society. Slaves were meant to worship the gods of their masters. So if they became Christians, it looked like they were rebelling against them. And then there were so many rumors that went around.

You know, there were a number of rumors which said that Christians commit incest because they call each other brothers and sisters. They had other rumors which people thought they were cannibals because like we've just taken with communion, they talked about eating the body and blood of Jesus.

[ 4 : 3 0 ] And they ridiculed them. This is true. They ridiculed them for being killjoys, because they wouldn't join in with all the drunken parties and they wouldn't go to all the gladiator fights. And if you're a Christian in this and you're feeling rejected and misunderstood, and ill-treated in many ways, how do you respond when you feel like life is unfair?

Well, I don't know if you've got kids or if you've ever been a kid, which I think is all of you. But when things seem to be not going the way you want them to, what are the words that every kid says? It's not fair. It's not fair. You didn't have to think about it. Every language in the world has it's not fair in it. You see, you know, you get parents going to their child, did you hit your younger sister? And the kid goes, well, she hit me first. And the parents go, well, you're her older brother. And the kid goes, it's not fair. She always gets away with it. I always get in trouble.

Isn't that what happens? And we have this innate sense we want justice in the world. And we know that this world is filled with unfairness. And it's not just kids who feel that. But what happens is normally when we feel like we're treated unfairly, we think that that excuses us to treat other people the way we've been treated. And we feel perfectly okay about our behavior. But Peter is going to say to us, you guys, that's the way the world rolls. But you guys are a different people. You're a holy people. You are following in the footsteps of the one who experienced the greatest injustice that history has ever known. And yet, he stayed holy and responded perfectly. And that was Jesus. And so what I want to do is start in this passage to look at the end of the passage and then to flow through the logic that

Peter is showing to how we are to respond to political authorities and to unfair bosses. Okay? Are you with us? Kevin's with us. That's great.

[ 7 : 04 ] Okay. I've got three things. Patterned after Jesus is the first one of them. Verse 21 to 25. Patterned after Jesus.

He says this. And have your, if you've got your booklet with you, have this in. Please make notes in your booklet. If you don't have it, get your bulletin out. He says, verse 21, to this you were called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his footsteps.

And that word, he left you an example, is the same word that you use for when a kid is learning to draw the alphabet. Write the alphabet and you have a template over which they begin to start writing.

It's, that's the word. And what he's saying is, Jesus has given you a template. Jesus suffered for you. He died to atone for our sins. You cannot do that. Jesus doesn't ask us to suffer to make up for our sins or to atone for anybody else's sins. He's done that. But he does say, your life is to be traced over the pattern of my life. And not just the way I lived, but the way I suffered and the way I died. See my footprints and you start walking in them. And so he says, when Jesus called you, he called you as a disciple and he said, follow me. And where did he tell you to follow him too? To the jacuzzi? No. He tells you to follow him to the cross and then through the cross to the resurrection hope that we talked about a couple of weeks ago. And so here, Peter begins to kind of riff off Isaiah 53 to show you that Jesus understands. If you think the world is unfair, Jesus knows exactly what unfairness and injustice is all about. It says, Isaiah 53, it says, Jesus took up our pain. Our pain. It wasn't his pain. It was our pain. He bore our suffering.

[ 9 : 20 ] Not his suffering, our suffering. It says he was pierced for our transgressions, our iniquities. We deserved it. We deserved it, not him. And we even thought, it says, we considered him punished by God.

We thought he deserved it. And yet it was what we deserved. And so we get peace. He gets punishment. We get healing. He gets wounds. We go astray. He takes the consequences. It's the ultimate in unfair trade deals. But he did it to bring us back to God so we could come to know him. And how in all of this did he respond to the injustice? Well, Peter tells us, without sinning, committed no sin. When he was mocked and reviled, that means insulted. He didn't throw insults back.

When he suffered, he didn't threaten. In other words, Jesus didn't sin. No one, their sin and our sin couldn't make him sin. When we shout, it's not fair, he said, Father, forgive. When we get mad and to someone's face or behind their backs try and tear them down, he showed grace. And Jesus in John 18, he says, my kingdom is not of this world.

If it were, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from this world. I don't fight the way everyone else fights.

[ 11 : 00 ] You see, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, he knew he was innocent, but he condemned him just to give himself an easy life. His sin couldn't make Jesus sin. You know, people think that freedom is the ability to do what you want. But freedom is actually the ability to do what God calls you to do, regardless of the circumstances. And Jesus was the freest man the world has

ever known.

Because no matter what they threw at him, nothing could touch his soul. He wasn't a fearful victim. He was courageous and strong in the midst of the injustice. How did he do that? How was he without sin?

Because it says he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He entrusted himself to his father. Do you know that word entrusted? It's the same word that is used for when Judas handed Jesus over to the authorities.

Judas entrusted Jesus to the authorities, but Jesus entrusted himself to his father. You see, his silence wasn't passivity. It was a deep confidence that in an unjust world, his father was always just and would vindicate him. He didn't need to judge and shout now because he knew his father would be the judge. Because that's security.

Without sin, he could entrust himself over to his father. And he had this focus on his father's mission through it all. Because you know, even in the most unjust situation, his life was a witness to the gospel. He didn't just die to save us. Even the way he died, others were saved.

[12:57] Right? On the cross, one of the thieves who'd been mocking him suddenly stops and says, man, we guys deserve what we're getting, but he's done nothing wrong.

And he turns in faith to Jesus and Jesus says to him, today you will be with me in paradise.

Someone right at that darkest hour snatched out of hell into the heavenly kingdom.

How did he respond like that? Because he saw how Jesus responded. You see, his response was evangelistic. His response was honoring his father.

And Peter says, The one who was led like a lamb to the slaughter is now the shepherd of your souls. He bore your sin not to just get you a get out of hell free card, not just to make you a nice person, but he died so that you might die to the desires for payback in your own life.

And you might live to do what is right in God's eyes. Do you realize that's why you were saved? You see, the gospel isn't just what saves you, it's what shapes the pattern of your life.

[14:08] The gospel's not just what saves you, it's what shapes the pattern of your life. And so Peter is saying to these Christians who are facing this unjust, unfair treatment, he's saying, that's who you're to look to.

Follow him. And so he comes back, so if I move back, and he says, Now this is how you were to live distinctively. Verse 11 and 12. As sojourners and exiles, abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.

Abstain from the passions of your flesh that wage war against your soul. What he's saying is, just like Jesus, the way you respond in unfair treatment is evangelistic.

So don't let the desires for revenge, for anger, for bitterness, to overtake your desire to follow Christ. Because it will destroy your soul. Do you know what soul means?

Soul doesn't mean just kind of that spiritual kind of fuzzy part of you that you have no idea where it is, but it's in there. That's not what it means. It means your identity. That's what the word, your whole identity.

[15:19] So don't let who you are, this chosen, holy, beloved child, chosen people, distinctive people of God, for who Jesus died to make you.

Don't let that be derailed in this moment. He says, He says, He's saying, Don't just kind of withdraw from society.

You know, often in history, people, when they're oppressed, minorities just kind of back out and go into monasteries. You know, don't just withdraw into your own little holy huddle. And don't just go into society and try and be as disruptive as possible to make your own demands.

He says, Be engaged in your city and known as Watermark who does good in this city. That's who you're called to be. So even if they hate your teaching on sexuality, even if they hate your teaching on truth, they can't argue with your lives.

Do you know, Bill Clinton, who was a fierce abortion advocate, that once heard Mother Teresa speak passionately at the UN against abortion.

[16:33] And do you know what his only response is? He stands up after her speech and everyone's stunned, waiting for him to answer. And his one response is, It's hard to argue with a life well lived.

That's who God has called us to be. A witness as a community, even when you are slandered and mistreated, to draw others to himself like that thief.

Because that's what's going to show and demonstrate the distinctiveness of the gospel. So Peter's going to now earth that, of Jesus as our pattern, and how he's to shape the way to live distinctively in two ways.

First way is living distinctively as citizens in an unjust world. He says this. This is verse 13 to 17.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the Emperor Supreme or to governors, as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[ 17 : 41 ] For this is the will of God. If you were wondering what God's will is, here it is. That by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. What is he saying?

He's saying the way that you live as citizens and the way that you treat those in political authority is also a witness to other people.

Because the Christians could say, well, we belong to another kingdom. Jesus is our king.

Therefore, we don't need to obey the Emperor. And actually, you find in the history, a lot of people have said that kind of thing.

Because he's just human. We follow God. We're free from that. But Peter says, you are free. Your highest allegiance is to God, not the Emperor.

So live free. Don't be intimidated by the power of unjust rulers. But don't sin against them. Everyone else is always trying to break the rules, trying to get behind and get under and trying to find loopholes.

[ 18 : 45 ] But you guys be distinctive by honoring and submitting to them. Because God has put them in place, Romans says, Romans 13 says, to protect society from chaos.

So keep the speed limit for the sake of Jesus' name and reputation. Because actually, if you're the one who's speeding and others are not, what does that do to Christ's reputation?

Because he says, your opponents, like with Jesus, may slander you, may say all kinds of things against you, but your life is your greatest argument to silence them.

And you know, I don't know about you, but actually the first thing that came into my mind was, that sounds great, Peter. But how do you honor, not good governments, I can cope with good governments, but how do you honor someone like Hitler?

How do you honor an unjust government? And Peter would go, that's precisely the kind of governments I'm talking about. Because, you know, Jesus knew about unjust politicians.

[ 19 : 56 ] Herod at birth, Pilate at death, okay? He knew something about that. Peter himself was beaten and imprisoned by political authorities. You know, Nero, the emperor, would kill Peter in a couple of years' time.

And if you actually do any reading on Nero, I don't know if you have, but he's not the kind of guy you want to hang out with. Here's a couple of things.

He killed two of his wives, one by kicking her and their unborn baby to death. He killed his mother. He tried to murder and force all his political opponents to commit suicide. He killed Christians mercilessly.

He's not the kind of guy you kind of want ruling your country. But if we complain sometimes about the governments in our countries, just look at Nero. How do you honor a guy like that?

And that's who Peter is precisely talking about. And maybe for us, we're not quite at that stage.

Maybe we're like, hey, how do you honor and submit to political leaders that you don't always agree with?

[ 20 : 57 ] And you know, Christians can and we should disagree on political issues. The Bible is not a political handbook. But I was reading something that John Piper wrote and I often quote him, but this I found just very helpful, just even as we're wrestling through this because we live in an environment with politically charged.

John Piper was writing in an American context about the abortion debate under the previous U.S. administration. and he wrote an article saying, how do pro-life Christians honor a pro-choice president?

And here's four things that he said, which I think are just really helpful for us as we think about this. He said this, he said, we honor the president by acknowledging that you are made in God's image. Therefore, you have dignity and worth. The government of your country are not faceless. They are people made in God's image. So we will treat them with that dignity and we will not just mock them and speak ill of them.

We will honor you because along with Romans 13, we know that God has appointed you to this office to be a servant for good. Though we're grieved by some of the political decisions you have made with that authority, we know that bad government is better than no government as Somalia and other lawless countries show us.

[ 22 : 23 ] He says, we honor you because we know if we dishonor you, we dishonor God who placed you in power. We honor you through making you an image bearer.

We honor you knowing God has appointed you. We honor you by submitting to the laws of the land which don't conflict with Christ's lordship. Submission is a gift we offer.

It's a gift we offer. Jesus pays his taxes even though he says he's free. He says, I do it to not cause offense. You know, the only time you disobey those authorities is when they call you to disobey Christ.

In Acts 5, Peter is told to stop preaching and they go, hey, thanks for the suggestion but Jesus has told us that we need to preach so we're going to honor him first.

That's the only time you dishonor and disobey them. But also, he says a fourth thing. He says, just like Jesus and the prophets call us, we honor you by opposing injustice with nonviolence.

[ 23 : 30 ] And I think I have the quote on the screen. With nonviolence, with reasoning instead of rocks, with rational passion instead of screaming, with honorable speech instead of obscenities, with forthright clarity of language instead of dodging the tough realities and tough words, with evidence instead of hearsay, with real portrayals of life instead of blanket statements, we'll honor you by a relentless effort to put truth and not mere emotion before you in the White House.

Do you see what he's doing? He's talking about a hot button issue that they're there and he's saying, our first allegiance is to Christ and though I disagree with you in this position, I need to honor you even in my disagreement and the way I do that.

Do you know, the emotion that spreads virally, let me just earth this a little bit. What's the emotion that spreads virally on social media the most? Do you know?

Anger. All studies show anger spreads faster than anything else. And you know, anger and hate is often towards leaders and political decisions.

And I don't know how you use your Facebook account and your social media accounts, but you know, we're called to honor our leaders and to glorify God even there. And so, what we say is we will not sin in our disagreement, but we will entrust judgment to God and we will care about our witness to his name.

[ 25 : 05 ] Because you know what? I've received so many things as Christians, I think we can actually pass on information which is unsubstantiated, which actually dishonors leaders because we haven't taken the time to really work out whether it's true or not and we just WhatsApp it on to everybody else.

And do you know what? That dishonors Christ because I've found that sometimes those things are not always true. And so, here's just a few things that I think what Jesus is saying, our pattern of Jesus for how we live distinctively towards our leaders on social media.

Okay? The gospel's very relevant. Here's a few things. Am I glorifying God by the way I'm reacting and responding? This is what you should ask yourself. Should I hold off commenting before I'm sure I have the facts so I'm not just venting?

Do I praise the good they do as well as critique or not just critique the bad? Do I pray for my leaders? Because, you know, and this is, oh, I found this convicting.

I should not post or speak a critique of a leader that I'm not praying for. Do you know why? Because my heart is not entrusting them to God. I'm actually just trying to take control of the situation and be what honors me rather than what honors Christ.

[ 26 : 30 ] Because 1 Timothy 2 tells us to pray for those in authority. So are we that kind of church that does that? Respectful, honoring, but still speaking where we need to speak in a way that causes Christ to be honored.

Because you see, we live in a polarized world. You're either pro-government or anti-government. But if we're citizens of another country, those who are pro will dislike the way we critique policies which are unjust.

And those who are anti will dislike the way we honor people they want us to hate. But we're exiles with a different president and our lives, even our political discourse, is patterned after him.

Does that make sense? I think this is challenging. But we need to hear this even in Hong Kong right now. That's the first point of how we can live differently patterned after Jesus.

Second point, we need to learn how to pattern our lives in an unfair world as workers in unjust workplaces. This is tough.

[ 27 : 44 ] Servants, verse 18 to 20, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

Don't you just wish Peter hadn't put some of this stuff in here? For this is grace. That's what it means. This is grace. When mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

Let me just say, the context here, the Roman Empire is made up of 25% of slaves. So many Christians came out of this group.

And life was tough. When they converted, they came out and it's as if they were standing against the religion of their master. And you know, a slave could be anything. They could be a domestic helper, they could be a tutor, they could be a doctor, they could be a miner, they could be anything. But slaves were legal property of their masters. There were no career moves for them. It wasn't a kind of great way out that they had available. Because if they escaped, well, the consequences could even be death.

[ 28 : 55 ] And you know, just like we have, some slaves had good masters, some slaves had bad masters. And Jesus still says, pattern your life after Christ whether you have a great boss or you have a bad boss.

And you know, he's talking to powerless people. He's talking to those of you who have to answer your emails at three in the morning or you'll just get shouted at the next day. He's talking to those of you who get unreasonable deadlines placed on you and no sense of appreciation or recognition for what you do when you do them.

He's talking to those of you who feel devalued and who feel exploited in work. Who get blamed for mistakes that other people have made. For those who feel you're mistreated and mocked even for your faith.

Some of you know what that's like. And Peter knows. He says, even when you've been trying to do good, you've been trying to do the right thing, you've been trying to honor God and trying to show integrity and work hard and do all the things that you know good Christians should do and then you still get treated like that.

And that's really hard. But he says, endure, keep going without letting hate or anger or insults shape you because this is grace to you.

[ 30 : 17 ] This is pleasing in God's eyes. In fact, it's a sign that you are following after Christ and you will enter into resurrection glory. Because what Peter is not saying here, he's not saying if you have a bad boss, just kind of keep calm and carry on like a good British person.

He's not saying have no emotion. He calls it sorrow. You see, he knows, you know, have you ever read the Psalms when they're in unjust situation?

It's not British emotion. It's like filled with cries to God in the midst of injustice. So it's not emotionless and neither is it simply accepting abuse just passively as if you've got to kind of act as a punch bag for Jesus and then kind of thank people for hitting you.

That's not what he's talking about. He says, no, we honor and respect our gods because when we're mindful of God, we know when we go into our workplace, I've got a higher boss than the boss who's right in front of me and he has my allegiance, not my boss straight in front of me and sometimes that will mean you speak out where there is injustice and sometimes that will mean you actually get out of there if actually it's going to lead you to dishonoring Christ and for those of you who are going through, if you are going through an abusive situation at work, in family, in any place, come and talk to us as elders because we're a community we want to walk alongside you in that. Because I want you to hear that. That's not what Peter's talking about. Peter's talking about your heart. Because, you know, sometimes in work, in hard workplaces, we don't speak out when we should because we're so intimidated and fearful because we fear we're going to lose our job if we say something or our sense of worth has been so crushed because what's happened is their words and our boss has actually become larger in our eyes than God and what he says about us.

[ 32 : 21 ] And God, Peter says, be mindful of God. Fear him. See him for who he is whenever you go into your workplace because he's with you. He's with you.

He's with you. But sometimes it's not just fear which grips us. Another response when you're treated unfairly is we kind of want to fight back and we kind of get a little bit rebellious in our heart. Maybe you don't say it. Maybe you just vent to all your colleagues around and try and show them how bad the boss is. Maybe you kind of do the equivalent of spitting in the food when you're cooking.

You withdraw. We forget who we are because the passions of our flesh, our anger, begins to eat us up inside. I wonder how many of you have actually become so consumed with the unfairness of your situation that it's no longer even on your radar to do good to your colleagues.

Have you ever thought about that? Because he says, or maybe you haven't even prayed for them. Because he says, if you sin and are beaten for it, in other words, you deliberately get rebellious and then you kind of take the punishment for it and you endure because I'm going to be strong.

[ 33 : 36 ] He says, what reputation, what credit is that to you? That doesn't honor Jesus. You know, I've shared before but I had an experience with a previous boss and it wasn't Tobin.

Just in case, you know, rumors spread. Where a previous boss just treated the staff so terribly. They lied and tried not to pay us our salaries. They blamed us for problems at the company and when this particular boss left, we discovered she'd embezzled the whole year's profits from the company and stole half of the company's computers as well.

I was pretty angry during this time. I was not, well, I felt justified to be mad. I felt absolutely justified because this was unjust.

The way she was treating everybody there. I was mad. And before she left, I knew I'm a good Christian so I'd be polite on the outside but on the inside I was a furnace of hatred.

[ 34 : 50 ] Anyone ever been like that? Was it just me? Okay. Okay. Okay. Well, come and see me afterwards and pray for me.

But you know, I wouldn't pray for her. I'd join in with all the venting at all my colleagues and I had not even one thought to do anything good to her. Didn't cross my mind.

I was not mindful of God. I was mindful of her sin. I was mindful of all the things I wanted to say to her but didn't have the courage to say. But I wasn't mindful of who God had called me to be in that situation and that my God was with me right there.

And then one day I was reading my Bible and God spoke to me and said, have you prayed for, and let's call her Mary, and I went, no. No way.

I'm not going to pray for her. Don't you know what she's done? And I felt God's voice coming back at me and says, yes. And do you know what you've done to me?

[ 36 : 03 ] Jesus himself bore your sin, Chris, on that cross. By his wounds you were healed. Chris, you are a victim of injustice but you're also a perpetrator perpetrator of injustice in the way that you have responded to people who are made in my image.

And Christ, Chris, is not just your example. He's also the Savior who needs to save you from yourself to show you mercy, to save you even from your bitterness right now, to show you that grace.

And he said to me, you know, I've called you from being a wandering, stray sheep, as Peter calls it, insecure, vulnerable, feeling the need to passively fight back.

But now, he said, you've got a shepherd who cares for your soul. You're mine, I've got you. And you know, as God convicted me of my own sinfulness and I repented, I began to pray regularly for my boss.

And do you know what? It's hard. Those of you who know what I'm talking about, it's hard. But do you know, over time, God gave me courage to speak out where there was injustice because my fear of losing my job if I spoke out lessened as I saw that my boss was insecure and she didn't hold my future, my career, in her hands.

[ 37 : 34 ] Jesus did. And I could speak without hatred and fear and still honor her in my words, but still talk about the issues with clarity and directness because Jesus is the shepherd of my soul and he's going to bring me through.

You know, it was Easter time and I went and bought Easter eggs for all my colleagues and I bought one for everyone except her.

And I felt God tug in my heart saying, love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you.

How different are you from all the pagans around you if you just love the people who love you? You see, in an unjust world, we're not called to be just avoiding sin.

