

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

Part 19 – Elect Exiles in Caesar’s World: How Should We Live? [Part 2]

December 4 , 2016

Sermon Text: *1 Peter 2:12-25*

Scripture Reading: *Isaiah 53*

1Pe 2:12-25 **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.** (13) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, (14) or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (15) For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (16)

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. (17) Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (18) Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. (19) For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. (20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. (21) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (22) He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. (23) When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (24) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds

you have been healed. (25) For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The theme verse of this section, and on into chapter 3 as well is verse 12 –

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.

I cannot emphasize enough how important this statement is. We are, as Peter calls us in the opening of this letter, “elect exiles.” We are God’s people, His elect from among the nations, and we are strangers and aliens in this world. Our citizenship is of God, not in this present temporal world. And as such, we need to carefully heed the Lord’s instruction to us as to how we are to conduct ourselves while we are here.

So what Peter is doing, having stated this principle, this command, is *giving us practical examples from life as to what it means for the Christian to keep his conduct honorable*. What does he mean by “honorable”? He means that we are to live in a manner that models Christ to the world, specifically in a way that though the world hates Christ and hates us and *speaks against us as evildoers*, the unsaved nevertheless

must acknowledge that the Christian is “honorable.” That we live in a respectable manner. That nothing evil can be spoken against us that has any true basis.

And so it has been down through church history, beginning with Christ. Maligned, slandered, accused – and yet these very accusers knew full well that He had done nothing wrong and had in fact lived in a righteous, good, godly, honorable manner. The world speaks against the Christian, calls us evildoers, but when we live as we are called to lived, on that Day when Christ comes to judge the world (the “day of visitation”), the world will be forced to admit that we were not in fact evil doers but were “doers of good” and they will have to give glory to God for raising up such a people.

The Bible has many examples of this very thing. The world accusing Christians as evildoers, but finding no foundation for their charges because of the righteous lives of those they accuse -

Luk 6:7-11 And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. (8) But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. (9) And Jesus

said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" (10) And after looking around at them all he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. (11) But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Mat 26:59-62 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, (60) but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward (61) and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" (62) And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"

Dan 6:3-5 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. (4) Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. (5) Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against

this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

Peter will return to this issue again in chapter 4 –

1Pe 4:14-16 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. (16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

The Christian Will be Maligned

There are two vital points here for us to get hold of. First, if you are a Christian, then you ARE going to suffer. You have been told this before of course, but nevertheless we often don't get a firm grip on this. When we "suffer as a Christian" because this world hates Christ, then many times Christians seem surprised and even seem to wear some false guilt. AND other Christians can also accuse us of causing unnecessary trouble when in fact the "trouble" is to be expected.

So if you are a genuine Christian, this world DOES hate you. Don't expect to be popular with it and don't be taken off guard when the world labels you an evildoer.

- You Christians are judgmental
- You are hateful people
- You cause wars and trouble
- You are bigots

Do not be ashamed! Glorify God for the evidence that you really DO belong to Christ. The person who SHOULD be worried is the so-called Christian who IS popular with the world. And notice, the false Christian sooner or later will, just like the world, speak against the true Christian. We have all seen that very thing many times.

"When the debate is lost, slander becomes the tool of the loser." -Socrates

Be Certain You are Maligned as a Christian, NOT because you are an Evildoer

This second point brings us back more directly to Peter's theme statement in chapter 2. Listen again:

2:12 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.

When they speak against you. Not IF, but WHEN. It will happen. But we are to be certain to live such honorable lives that even when the wicked make

these accusations, there is no basis to them. As was the case with Daniel, Paul, the Lord Jesus and all of God's people. *By our honorable deeds we silence the accusations, showing them to have no basis in fact.*

What Peter is doing, and this is very important to understand if we are going to apply what he says properly, is giving us hands-on examples of the kind of honorable lives we are to lead:

- As citizens in this world where we are exiles:

1Pe 2:15-17 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (16) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. (17) Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

- As slaves (ie, employees)

1Pe 2:18-20 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. (19) For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. (20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if

when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

- As wives

1Pe 3:1-4 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, (2) when they see your respectful and pure conduct. (3) Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— (4) but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

- As husbands

1Pe 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

- And more generally in all the situations of life,

1Pe 3:8-16 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. (9) Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the

contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. (10) For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; (11) let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. (12) For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (13) Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? (14) But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (16) having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

See it? “Christian, be the BEST citizen of your country. Be the BEST employee at your work. Be the BEST wife and the BEST husband.” Because this is how the false accusations against us will be shown to be groundless. The Christian is not to be some rebel radical who is always “against” any kind of authority, using their faith as an excuse to live lawlessly –

1Pe 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Now, let's consider what happens when professing Christians do NOT live honorable lives.

Every church membership covenant contains a clause that addresses our need and our promise to "walk circumspectly" in the world. To be careful how we live and think so as to remain unsoiled by the world. But there is more to this than just avoiding immorality, drunkenness, and so on.

As I look back on the 8 years we were in our first church as a pastor, I realize that our efforts to be an effective witness for Christ were largely neutralized by people who claimed to be Christians but who lived *dishonorably* in their lives. *And the community knew it.* Let me give some examples.

There was Dick, for instance. Dick loved to talk about his testimony and how the Lord had saved him out of sin and alcoholism. He carried a Bible around. He would pray at church. *But Dick was a sluggard.* He was lazy. And the people who lived in that mountain valley knew it. They also knew that he was a member of our church. Dick's house was half-finished and remained that way until the logs

rotted. Dick slept in until 10 or 11 AM and when an opportunity for a job came along, he would always say "yeah, I heard about that and I'm prayin' on it." But Dick never worked.

Al also claimed to be a Christian. Al did work, but Al was a lecherous man – a womanizer. Al was a member of our church as well, and all the people in the community knew him.

Mabel was a drunk. She loved to go hand out at Liquid Louie's Tavern. Mabel claimed to be a Christian and was also a member of our church. The community knew Mabel as well.

Liz was a very musically talented person who actively led the choir and other music ministries in the church. Liz appeared to be the finest Christian woman in town. Unless you worked with her in her office. Then you would soon know that Liz had a tongue that cut like a knife and she would always get even if she thought you crossed her. I had invited some of the people who saw this side of her to come to our church. They never did.

I could go on and on. And on and on and on. I did make efforts to confront these people but for the most part nothing was done because the church board members didn't see the problem. The typical thinking was like this:

“Hey, no one is perfect. God doesn’t expect perfection from us. God is gracious and forgiving. If people are looking for a perfect church then they aren’t going to find one because Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven. We need to be patient with Dick, Al, Mabel, Liz...and all the rest.”

But you see, *even just ONE such person in a local church* will erode and undermine all the best efforts to lead the lost to Christ. Allowing people like this to continue as church members is most certainly not the forgiveness and patience and mercy that God calls us to. How, for instance, do we ever think that we are going to credibly present the gospel to a man or woman who works hard at their job, pays their taxes (Oh, by the way, Dick never ever filed an income tax return), provides for their family, and who knows the sluggard who sits in our pews week after week? What is the picture of Christ we would be giving them?

I know a man who is a hard worker, honest, respected in the community, but not a Christian. I have presented the gospel to him and he knows I am a pastor. In fact, I would say we are friends. But he is in no way interested in the Lord – partly because he wants to do his own thing on Sundays. I know people like this look for excuses to blow off the gospel. Nevertheless, he has some good points, one of which

is “I drive by the local church on Sundays and look at whose cars are parked there and I think, ‘what is THAT guy doing in church?’”

This does not mean that sinners are not welcome to come and hear the gospel and be called to repent and believe. But it does mean that the person who claims to belong to Christ is expected to be the best citizen, the best employee or employer, the best husband, the best wife, the best student, they can possibly be. So that when we are maligned by the world, we will be maligned for being Christians, not because “Oh, yeah, THAT church. I’ve heard of those people. That’s where Fred is a member – you know, that crooked businessman who rips people off. No thanks, if that is Christ, I don’t need him. Doing quite fine, thank you.”

Our Example

1Pe 2:21-25 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (22) He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. (23) When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (24) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and

live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (25) For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Here is the perfect example then of precisely what Peter has been talking about – Christ. Surely Peter has our Scripture reading from Isaiah 53 in mind as he writes this.

- Christ was reviled
- Yet Christ never sinned. He lived a righteous life.
- We must do the same, remembering that by His sufferings WE have been healed so that we who were strays have died to sin and now live for righteousness.