

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let Us Live as Strangers to This Age

1 Peter 2:11-12

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SermonAudio Blurb: In this sermon we are exhorted as we enter into the unknown of the new year to be found faithful as believers. The world is actively at war against the Church after many years of relative peace in America. But that has changed and with it comes many temptations on how to respond. This is a pastoral plea to the people of Missio Dei to be found faithful in both the big and little things, especially the Gospel.

I. Introduction.

- A. Turn to 1 Peter 1:11.
- B. We enter into a new year and it is a habit of mine to pause for at least one week to reflect on what the church ought to keep in mind or understand better.
 - 1. Often this takes the form of reminding, which is perhaps the most common activity a pastor does for his church.
 - 2. The apostle Peter himself said this, *“Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me”* (2 Peter 1:12-14).
- C. Too often we forget what we ought to remember and remember what we ought to forget.
 - 1. The apostle Paul speaks of this. Though he was religious in every way in the eyes and standards of mankind he understood that his efforts, his bloodline and his righteousness would not save him. Instead he says, *“forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead”* (Philippians 3:13b).
 - 2. Much of our anxiety and foolish decisions lie in forgetting who Jesus is, what Jesus has accomplished and what is to be our hope.
 - a. So, in forgetting, we invest our time and energy for things that God says are passing away. We forget to instead invest in those things that prepare us for eternity.

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- b. In forgetting we become bitter thinking that God has failed us; when we ought to remember that if God the Father gave us His Son, will He not give us all other things we actually need?
 - c. In forgetting we fail to ask our heavenly Father for things; when we ought to remember that He bids us to come and to ask for He loves us.
- D. Today I want to remember something that is very easily forgotten, that this world is not our home and we hope.
- 1. Yet, though we do not find our hope here and now, nonetheless, we live here and now. So what are we to do?
 - 2. And behind this you will find the heartbeat of this church. Our name is Missio Dei Fellowship for a reason. We gather together (fellowship) for the purpose of learning and then being faithful to the mission of God (Missio Dei).
 - 3. If we lose sight of why God saved us and why we have another day to breathe then we may accomplish many things and yet actually accomplish nothing.
- E. 1 Peter 2:11-12.
- 1. These two verses serve as a hinge for the entire book.
 - 2. Verse 11 basically summarizes 1:1-2:10.
 - 3. Verse 12 then summarizes the rest of the book.
 - 4. Notice by way of introduction the tone of Peter's appeal.
 - a. "Beloved, I urge you."
 - (1) The term speaks of a deep affection for these people. They are truly loved by the apostle.
 - (2) This is a pastor looking at his people and talking to them as dear, precious souls and has their best interests in mind.
 - (a) He is not going to give some random thoughts to them.
 - (b) He knows that these instructions are how they can practically live out their time here on earth to God's glory and their joy.
 - (3) In fact, the word, "urge" means to call someone alongside.

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- (a) It is not a harsh or angry command but rather the entreaty of a close friend who runs up beside you to help you see a better way.
 - (b) One man rightly said that true holiness is not procured by the application of a compelling external authority, but by awakening and strengthening the personal desire and will of the appealed to.
 - (c) There is a relationship that Peter has with these people and it is out of that relationship that Peter challenges them.
 - (d) They are strangers and aliens to this world, and so is he. He has spent a lot of time discussing why they are strangers—due to the saving work of the Lord, now he is prepared to talk about them acting like strangers.
5. Let me take a bit of time here to explain how and why they are aliens and strangers in this world. Because if you don't know this then nothing else really matters. (Gospel)
- F. With all of that in mind we want to spend the rest of our time looking at two aspects of living as a strange in this age.

II. Let Us Live as Strangers to This Age (11b-12).

- A. We are to be a holy people (11b-12a).
- 1. Now in the English this passage appears to be giving two separate things:
 - a. In verse 11 we are to abstain.
 - b. In verse 12 we are to keep excellent behavior.
 - 2. In reality there is only one point, that is to abstain from fleshly lusts.
 - a. **Listen and understand this beloved, because what this means is that for you to ever have righteousness before mankind, before you can ever truly live properly before the unbelieving world, you must have personal holiness.**
 - b. But to have personal holiness requires you to first be clean before God and that cannot be something you do. That is what Jesus does on your behalf. (Give gospel)
 - 3. Peter is calling for an inner discipline for their lives.

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- a. He reminds them that they are aliens and strangers.
 - (1) Aliens speaks of people living in a foreign country where they do not have the rights of citizens.
 - (2) Strangers speaks of living alongside other people, with whom you do not belong to.
 - b. He is emphasizing, by putting both together, that truly we are foreigners in a Christ rejecting world.
 - c. Therefore we cannot be living out and taking part in those customs that are not Christ honoring (11).
 - d. Yet, at the same time, we are also to be living in such a way that we conduct ourselves with honor and generosity toward that same unbelieving world (12).
 - (1) Now that, beloved, is a challenge!
 - (2) How many times have we seen men and women who are Christians, but when we watch them they are harsh, strident, complaining, negative, and a whole host of other things that are unpleasant.
 - (3) Their neighbors have little good to say about them. The press has no reason to consider them as unique for they are really nothing more than a bunch of trouble-makers.
 - (4) The Christian should be a great boss and an excellent employee. They should be a faithful student and an excellent instructor.
4. Therefore, Peter is arguing that just because we are strangers to this world does not mean that we fight against it, **nor that we withdraw from it**. Instead, we are to learn how to live out our faith in a holy lifestyle.
 5. The call is to “abstain.”
 - a. It means literally to be holding ourselves off of or away from something, to be distant.
 - b. This is in the present tense, so he is saying to us that there is a constant need for us to be doing this.
 - c. It is also in what is called the “middle” voice. This means that it is our responsibility, not God’s, to be doing this.

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- (1) We are not to wait until “God lays it on our hearts.”
 - (2) We are to do it because the Bible calls us to do it.
 - (3) **2 Peter 1:3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness,
6. “Fleshly lusts.”
- a. The word “lust” is actually neutral. Simply means to have a strong desire for something.
 - b. By adding “fleshly” Peter shows us what kind of desires need to be held away from us.
 - c. Well what are these exactly?
 - (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:3, *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.”*
 - (2) But immorality is not the only thing that is “fleshly.”
 - (3) Galatians 5:19 ff.
 - (a) Fleshly lusts are therefore anything that is contrary to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22 ff).
 - (b) They are the things that the unsaved person is characterized by.
 - (c) The flesh belongs to this fallen world and its god, Satan. This is why Paul tells us to not let it reign in our bodies.
 - (d) This makes is rather easy to understand, but also perhaps becomes quite the challenge as you look at your life and see fleshly lusts.
 - d. Let me make a key observation here.
 - (1) Peter is making this appeal with the idea that he **knows** that the people can actually do this.
 - (2) In other words, contrary to current teaching both inside and outside the church these desires are not uncontrollable for the Christian.

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- (a) There is nothing about alcohol, drugs, sex, power, emotions, eating, excessive day-dreaming, etc. that are uncontrollable.
- (b) According to the Bible, they are controllable. They can be restrained. And the responsibility lies at our feet to do so.
- (c) So, how do you do it? Peter says by not allowing yourself to be close to those things that tend to capture you.
- (d) Seems simple doesn't it?
- (e) **Romans 13:14** Two points here:
 - i) First we must put on Christ.
 - ii) But second, we must make no provision for the flesh? No room for the lusts of the flesh!
 - iii) We will never destroy the flesh, but we are to attacking its fruit and the lusts that are waging in our hearts.
 - iv) Which is what Peter is saying (turn back to 2:11).
- e. He reminds us that these desires are waging war against our soul.
 - (1) That word, "war" speaks of a strong enmity. These lusts are actively hostile toward our soul.
 - (2) The soul is the seat of our affections, will, desires, and thoughts. It has been redeemed, and is to be protected.
 - (3) This term, "war" speaks of, not a mere battle, but an actual military campaign.
 - (a) What is its objective?
 - (b) To wage war against your soul with the intent to capture it and make you useless to your Lord while here on earth.
 - (c) **Don't let it happen!**
- f. In verse 12 he then changes to the positive side of this appeal.

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- (1) Here he is looking at the visible fruit of this struggle against fleshly lusts.
 - (2) Again this is in the present tense. He is describing our lifestyle before the world—a day-to-day life.
 - (3) Our behavior is to be excellent or good.
 - (a) The word is hard to nail down in English. Means, “good; right, proper, fitting; better; honorable, honest; fine, beautiful, or precious.”
 - (b) We know it when we see it. You see something and you realize it is just right. It enhances rather than detracts. It adorns and makes everything else better because of itself.
 - (4) Peter is very concerned that our behavior before the world be proper and excellent.
7. So the first point in understanding our mission as Christians is that we are to be a holy people
- B. The second is that it is at the heart of evangelism (12b).
1. Let me repeat that, the abstaining from fleshly lusts and having an excellent life before the unsaved world is the heart and soul of true evangelism.
 - a. So many churches have no reputation before the world because of the way they pay their bills.
 - b. It is far too common to see churches, pastors and individual Christians who live one way on Sunday and a whole different way the rest of the week.
 - c. They allow the various ideas of this world and age define how they speak and live.
 - d. I have had the awkward privilege many times to meet a person and find out they know a member of our church. And when I tell them that I am that person’s pastor they react surprised. “Oh, he goes to church?!”
 - e. How many will listen to him? I think very few.
 2. Notice the goal of this according to the Holy Spirit: “So that. . .” this speaks of the goal, or aim of his appeal.

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3. What happens is this: you begin to abstain from fleshly lusts.
 - a. As a result you begin to withdraw from activities you once took part in.
 - b. Your friends and neighbors don't understand what the big deal is. So they begin to revile and accuse you.
 - c. "Slander" or "accuse" speaks of hurtfully speaking down to someone with the goal of turning others against them.
 4. But Peter tells them that they can turn the tables on these people. In the very things that they discredit you, you're going to prove them wrong and you're going to even lead them to trust in the gospel.
 - a. But it isn't through fighting and arguing or bitterness. It is by the exact opposite, by refusing to go down to their level. To instead to love them, pray for them, bless them, and show them kindness.
 - b. This is exactly what was to happen to these people in this letter.
 - c. The first 200 years of the church's history records many slanderous details.
 - (1) They were accused of being cannibals, demonic, killers of babies, and partaking in the most horrible acts of immorality.
 - (2) They were even used by Nero as scapegoats for the burning of Rome, when in all probability it was Nero, himself, who ordered it burnt so that he could erect some more buildings in his honor.
 - d. We see this trend today. The press and the government is very contrary to Christ and the Church. There is a strong intolerance that we are beginning to face.
- C. So what do we do to deal with false accusations?
1. You live a life that is so above reproach, so godly, so honorable, so excellent, that you become a living billboard for the power of the gospel. That trusting in Jesus alone is utterly life-changing.
 2. Notice that word, "observe" or "see." It speaks of a close scrutiny of an eyewitness.

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- a. You see, when the world superficially looks at us, they find great fault with us. We are judgmental, narrow-minded, homo-phobic, etc.
 - b. It is in the present tense, so that means that these people, your co-workers, your husband, your neighbor, your boss, are observing you. And hopefully they find you consistently doing the right thing for the right reason. That you are a man or woman of faithfulness and kindness. Your ethics are different from everyone else.
 - c. But given time, though they may first accuse you of much, through your excellent lifestyle, work ethic, marriage, and citizenship they begin to change their minds about you.
 - d. They will then glorify God in “the day of visitation.”
- D. “The day of visitation,” What does that mean?
1. You may think of this as referring to when God comes and judges. But that is incorrect.
 2. The OT uses this and it is very, very common. This phrase speaks of God visiting for the purpose of blessing, for deliverance, for rescue, or for salvation.
 3. The NT uses it only one way—of salvation.
 - a. But all of the New Testament usages of "visit" refer to a visit for redemption.
 - b. Luke 1:68, *"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He visited us and accomplished redemption."* In Luke chapter 7 and verse 16 we also read similarly, it says regarding Christ, *"God has visited His people." And this obviously for redemption.*
 - c. Luke 19:44 it talks about the time of the future when judgment will come and the end of the verse says, *"Because you didn't recognize the time of your visitation."* That is you're going to be judged because you didn't know when God visited you to save you, you rejected the visitation of salvation, He'll come in judgment.
 - (1) Let me be blunt here. Some of you may be in this very situation. You are here today. You have heard the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And if you walk away, rejecting, then this day shall be brought before you on the day of judgment.

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- (2) Truly for the unbeliever tomorrow is not a promise. No man or woman should say, “but I shall wait a little longer.”
- (3) Truly today is to be the day of salvation.
- d. So all of those visitations of the New Testament have inherent in the expression the idea of a visitation for salvation. What he is saying is simply this, that because of the ongoing observation of the character and quality of a Christian's life, an unbeliever will glorify God in the day when God visits him to save him.
- e. In other words, at the time when the marvelous grace of God begins to move on the heart of an unbeliever, he will respond with saving faith and glorify God because he has remembered the tremendous testimony of believers that he saw. That's what he's saying.

III. Conclusion.

- A. As we go our separate ways now, I want to leave you with a key thought.
- B. The quality of our transformed life must be visible to the unsaved world. There are no secret disciples of Jesus Christ. (Repeat)
 - 1. You either bring glory to the Lord or you don't.
 - 2. You either show to a watching world salvation to be attractive and excellent, or you don't.
 - 3. So ask yourself right now, is your lifestyle before your unsaved co-worker, neighbor, friend, spouse, so excellent, that it becomes a tool of showing them the gospel?
- C. May each of you make the right and wise choice today.

Benediction

May the Lord remind you all of the richness of His grace and the manifold blessings that belong to you in Christ Jesus our Lord. May you walk in His promises and by the power of the Holy Spirit as you engage this fallen age for God's glory. Amen