

# THE PILGRIM'S CONFLICT AND CONDUCT – PART 1

## 1 Peter 2:11-12

### INTRODUCTION

- Frequently we hear stories of politicians caught out flaunting the laws and mandates that they force the rest of us to comply with
- The name we give to such people is *hypocrites*
- But the worst type of hypocrite is the *religious* hypocrite – he thinks not only to deceive men, but God also
- Many people excuse themselves from the church, claiming there are hypocrites in it, but *to hide behind a hypocrite, one must be smaller than the hypocrite*
- Yet the fact is that there are many religious hypocrites in churches, who “profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16)
- Earlier in this chapter, Peter exhorted the saints to “lay aside...hypocrisies” (v.1), and Peter himself is recorded in Scripture as having been guilty of hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-13)
- The greatest evil in professing Christians showing themselves to be hypocrites is that it brings a stain upon the name of Christ, and turns people away from him in disgust
- But contrariwise, when a Christian not only professes Christ, but displays a godly lifestyle that is consistent with his profession, it serves to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” (Titus 2:10), casting the beauty of holiness before the world, and attracting others to it
- In these verses we are exhorted to a clean and holy life in both our personal, inner life (v.11), as well as in our public, outward life (v.12)
- Peter in this epistle, having laid the foundation of the believer's new identity and glorious privileges in Jesus Christ (1:3-2:10), he now proceeds with practical remainder of the epistle, setting forth first the responsibilities of believers individually (2:11-4:11) and corporately (4:12-5:11), which is the natural and necessary outworking of souls that have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (1:19)

Why are we, as believers, called to a sanctified life, both inwardly and outwardly?

## I. BECAUSE YOUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN (11)

- A. This is a charge of both deep affection and solemn urgency
1. Dearly beloved (*agapeto*) shows Peter's love for the saints, and is frequently used in his epistles (1 Peter 4:12; 2 Peter 1:17; 3:1,8,14-15,17)
  2. "Beseech" (*parakaleo*), a present tense verb, is literally to "call near", and means to urge, intreat, exhort (cf. Romans 12:1; 15:30; 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 16:15; 2 Corinthians 10:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 5:14; Hebrews 13:22)
- B. A reminder that we are as foreigners in this world
1. This is an underlying theme that runs through the epistle, Peter having already described the saints as "strangers scattered" (1:1), and their lives as "sojourning" (1:17)
  2. Peter has written much about the believer's identity in Jesus Christ, and we saw previously that he calls the saints, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (v.9)
  3. That all presents a rather privileged position of the believer, but immediately he then calls the same people "strangers and pilgrims"
  4. This may seem somewhat contradictory, but it is because our spiritual privileges are not based in this world, but the next
  5. It is just as much a privilege to be a foreigner and sojourner in this world, as it is to be the chosen generation and special people of God
    - a. Because Christ himself was such (John 1:10)
    - b. Because all the saints throughout history were such (Hebrews 11:13-16)
    - c. Because it sets us apart from the evil of this world, and the judgment that is to come upon it
    - d. Because it testifies that our citizenship (Philippians 3:20-21), our treasures, our affections, and our King are not in this world, but in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)
  6. "Strangers" (*paroikous*) is derived from two words meaning "near" (*para*) and "dwell" (*oikos*) and describes one living alongside people – a foreigner dwelling in a foreign land among foreign people

7. “Pilgrims” (*parepidemos*) has the sense of temporariness, a foreigner who is visiting or sojourning in a place for a time, but not long enough to become settled and fixed there (Hebrews 13:14)
8. As foreigners in the world, we are different
  - a. We are clothed differently – spiritually and physically (Zechariah 3:3-4)
  - b. We speak differently (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6)
  - c. We have different laws, customs and a different King
  - d. We have a different diet (Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:13-14; 6:50-51; Matthew 4:4)

## II. BECAUSE OF YOUR CONFLICT WITH THE FLESH (11)

### A. Abstain from fleshly lusts

1. “Abstain” (*apechesthai*) conveys the idea of a putting away at a distance, and the present tense shows that this is not a one-time only abstaining, but a continual, life-long abstaining (cf. Job 1:1,8; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:22)
2. The “fleshly lusts” are those selfish natural appetites that appeal to our sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21)
  - a. The lust of the flesh is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:16)
  - b. While the natural appetites we experience in these bodies are not sinful in themselves, when we seek to satisfy them unlawfully, rather than by the lawful means God has provided, we sin (e.g. Hebrews 13:4)
3. This is a command to believers only – the unregenerate have no capacity to abstain from sin as they are slaves to sin (Romans 6:17-18)
4. The carnal, fleshly nature we inherit from Adam yet remains with us when we are saved, and is a continual enemy of our sanctification
5. The believer, however, through regeneration, has been “made free from sin”, and is able to conquer sin by the power of God within
6. The Scriptures exhort believers to mortify the flesh and sin, not by therapy programs, or a gradual weaning off sins, but by a clear rejection and leaving of it

7. All of us are afflicted by fleshly lusts, but the spiritual man refuses to yield to them as the worldlings do, but rather conducts himself according to his “home culture” of heaven, where his citizenship lies

B. Fleshly lusts war against the soul

1. The soul (*psuche*) includes not just the inner, immaterial part of man (the heart), but the whole person (cf. 1:9; 2:25)
2. The Christian life is to be regarded not only as a journey we are travelling, but a war we are fighting
3. It is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:17)
4. It is a spiritual battle with spiritual weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10-18)
5. And in this spiritual war against the flesh, there is to be no gentle toying with the enemy, but a complete, all-out engagement in battle with a view to complete destruction of it (Matthew 5:29-30; Romans 13:14)

### III. BECAUSE OF YOUR CONVERSATION IN THE WORLD (12)

#### CONCLUSION

1. Most people view this life in this world as the only true and lasting one, not realising they ought to have been fixing their hearts on the world to come
2. But Christ’s people see this present life as merely a pilgrimage before we finally reach our true and permanent dwelling-place in heaven
3. Do you confess with your mouth and life that you are a stranger and pilgrim on the earth? (Hebrews 11:13)
4. Are you engaged in the life and death conflict against the flesh and its lusts, or do you take a casual approach to sin?
5. If I am to abstain from fleshly lusts, I must:
  - ✓ Mind the things that are of the Spirit, not of the flesh (Romans 8:5-6)
  - ✓ Yield to Christ, obey his commands, follow his example, and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:13-14)
  - ✓ When temptation comes, do not linger, but as Joseph, flee from it, and escape from it (Genesis 39:12; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 10:13)