

Living Beautifully Before a Watching World

1 Peter 2:11-12

Peter is turning a corner as we turn to verse 11. As those who are now God's people by God's mercy, we are to now live for God's glory. Because of God's saving work in our lives, we now have a radically new identity. We now belong to God. We are His chosen, precious people (2:9-10).

And that means that we are now displaced persons (spiritually). The original recipients of this letter may have been exiles both physically and spiritually (1:1). Our exile status is simply a spiritual one. We're spiritual misfits. We don't belong to the world that is hostile toward God because we now belong to God. We've got "a different passport in our pocket."

The merciful, saving God we now belong to is holy, and we're called to be like Him (1:14-19). We're to be about proclaiming how excellent He is. We're to be singing His praises. We're to spend the rest of our days showing off His goodness to others (2:9-10).

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Peter reminds us that we're dearly loved by God before he commands us to continuously keep our distance from the passions by which we once operated (1:14). Those strong desires (cravings, longings) used to sit in the driver's seat of our lives every day. But now that we've been brought to life spiritually (1:22-2:3), we have a new nature and new desires which are at conflict with our old ones (which are still present within us and still want to control our lives—they're not giving up without a fight).

The command is to "abstain" from these passions. We are called to continuously step back/keep away/withdraw from these strong, sinful desires. This internal war is being fought every day "on the turf of your own heart." The enemy is within you. Peter gets specific in 4:3 about these desires, and Paul helps us further understand in Galatians 5:16-24.

- ✓ Do you believe that the greatest spiritual enemy you have is not outside of you but inside of you?
- ✓ Do you see your own sinful desires as a very real and ongoing threat to yourself? Do you recognize that your own sinful nature has declared war against you?
- ✓ Are you aware that your heart is an active battlefield all week long?
- ✓ Can you specify which evil desires are especially warring against you?
- ✓ Are you actively fighting against these internal enemies by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God?

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.

Next Peter tells us that we're being watched. It can be hard to be under the watchful eye of a hostile world, but it's also an opportunity for us to fulfill our purpose as God's people (2:9-10). What are we to do? We are to live holy, respectful, good, beautiful, loving lives before an ever-watching world. Live every day in the way that shows off the goodness of God and His Gospel. Live in the way that faithfully points other people to the Lord Jesus.

In other words, be the kid whom others would want to have as their friend, be the neighbor whom others would want to live next door to, be the student whom teachers would want to have in their class, be the athlete whom coaches would want to have on their team, be the employee whom bosses would want to have in their department, etc. Peter gets more specific about this as he continues to write in 2:13 and following.

- ✓ How do you care for your own family members?
- ✓ How do you conduct yourself as a student?
- ✓ How do you work as an employee?
- ✓ How do you treat your neighbors?
- ✓ How do you handle your business dealings?
- ✓ How do you respond to mistreatment?
- ✓ How do you relate to the government and to other authorities?

"On the day of visitation" may speak of "a time when God intervenes directly in human affairs, either for blessing (Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:44) or for judgment (Isaiah 10:3; Jeremiah 6:15). This phrase may be a quotation from Isaiah 10:3, in which case judgment is in view here. But blessing seems to be the point, since part of the motive for good behavior is winning the non-Christian over to the faith (as in 3:1; also apparently in 3:15; cf. Matthew 5:16)." (NET Study Bible) See also Acts 15:12-18, especially 15:14.

Live every day in the way that shows off the goodness of God and His Gospel. Live in the way that faithfully points other people to the Lord Jesus. How God's people live matters and makes a difference!!