

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expository Journey Through 1Peter 1Peter 2:11-25

### 19 How to Live as Aliens and Strangers, Part 1

---

---

May 13, 2018

#### 1Peter 2:11-25

**11** Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

**12** Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

**13** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

**14** or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

**15** For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

**16** *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

**17** Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

**18** Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

**19** For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

**20** For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

**21** For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

**22** *WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;*

**23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;**

**24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**

**25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**

To the Glory of God

Now this morning we are going to examine what I consider to be the Apostle Peter's main thrust in this entire Epistle. In the verses that Brother Andy just read to us, Peter is discussing the issue of just *how* persecuted believers are to behave themselves in a land that has become very hostile to them, individually, and to Christianity, in general. So, he is teaching the "scattered aliens" of the world, both then and now, what God expects out of them.

Now up until this point, Peter has been basically focusing on Who God is, and all that God has done for us *in* Jesus Christ. So, Peter has been focused mainly on "Orthodoxy", what we are to "believe", what we are to "trust and hope in", and what we are to "confess". So, basically until now, Peter has been focused on what God has chosen to reveal about Himself and Salvation in sacred Scripture. But now, in this Passage, Peter is teaching how people, who *believe* rightly, should translate that correct "Orthodoxy" into "Orthopraxy", which is how a person, who believes rightly, should live in this broken and fallen world.

And Christianity has *always* been based on *both* aspects. Biblical Christianity has *always* been built on the premise that the belief and trust in Divine Truth *always* leads to a radical change of behavior. So, in the Church, over which Jesus is "Head", "right believing" always leads to "right living".

So, first of all, we must understand that it is not *hard*, it is *impossible* for a person to live long-term in submission to the Authority of Scripture in their daily lives without understanding two things:

1. *What* he is to believe
2. *Why* he is to believe it

So, while it is absolutely possible for someone to *temporarily* modify his behavior (based on any number of reasons), sooner or later *who he really is* will “shine through” the outward attempt at “acting like a Christian”.

But when a person is simply “going through the motions”, Prayer Meetings will be of no affect, the Bible will become boring, personal time with God will cease to exist, godly times of fellowship will wane, and it won't be long until even gathering together on the Lord's Day will become a burden too heavy to bear.

And nowhere is that more true than in a culture like ours that appears to have infinitely *more* to offer an individual than the straight and narrow Path. Truly the Words of Jesus ring loudly in our ears, when He said:

#### **Mark 4:19**

**... the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

So, where there is no genuine love of God or the things of God, that was mercifully granted through the miracle of the New Birth, trusting in and finding joy in the false promises that the world offers becomes too strong to ignore. And so, the ongoing rigors of living “counter-intuitive” to the ways of this fallen and broken world are such that the average person of the modern Church, who has been deceived about their Salvation, simply sees no purpose in pursuing Holiness on purpose. So, they don't.

We have to understand, dear friends, that nobody sins out of a sense of “duty”. We sin because we have believed the lie that sin promises. We “buy into” the lie that if we would only turn away from God, if we would only stay away from Prayer and the Scriptures, if we would just get off by ourselves, away from God's people, if only we would eat the forbidden fruit, then we would be happy and we would be satisfied and we would be more fulfilled. And that is when the precious “Means of Grace” that God has wondrously provided for us lose their luster. Things like:

- ✓ Prayer
- ✓ Bible Reading/Study

- ✓ Godly Fellowship
- ✓ The Sacraments
- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Service

... and even the Church itself becomes just another tiresome labor to perform, and ceases to be the pathway, the empowerment, and the enabling to, not only honor God, but to possess the fullness of Joy ourselves. The Apostle John wrote about this phenomenon, when he said, in **1 John 5:3**:

**For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.**

Yet, in far too many cases, when asked, the Commandments of the Lord are nothing *but* "burdensome". It is rare today to hear the words "Love" and "Joy" mixed in with other words like "Obedience" or "Service" or "Commandments". Mostly, when speaking about the Commandments of the Lord, you hear words like "Obligation" and "Duty" and "Discipline".

But, several years ago, the Lord brought great conviction into my life over this issue. And I began to realize that by saying that it is my "Duty" to obey God, or that I have an "Obligation" to serve the Lord, or that the path toward Obedience is a path paved with the "exercise of human discipline" and of "making my mind up" and of "choosing properly", I was not really honoring the God Whom I love. To really honor God requires me to go way beyond Obedience based in duty or Obligation, and to get to the place where I truly *delight* in obeying my Savior. And I can't work that up. Delight has to be real. And yet, I can't manufacture it. It has to be something God gives to me. And that is exactly what the New Birth is all about.

You see, if *anybody* should have obeyed God, it was the Jew who lived under the Old Covenant. God graciously gave them their land and their Government and their Language and their Culture and their Civilization and their Religion. God gave them His Law and His Commandments, and He sent them His Angels and His Prophets. And God Almighty made a Covenant with them.

But 4,000 years of history teaches us that they threw away their Blessings as fast as they could. And they embraced the idols and false gods of the pagan world. And they built great shrines to the gods of the unbelievers and they broke the Covenant. Why? Are we to assume that God didn't give them enough information? Was there some *misunderstanding* on the part of the Jew? Was there a lack of giving on God's part, or a lack of trying on the part of Israel? Did God not *repeatedly* promise them *unbelievable* Joy, if they would obey? And did God not clearly *guarantee* to them unspeakable Damnation, if they didn't?

So, if it wasn't a "lack of information" or a "lack of understanding", or even a "lack of effort" that led to Israel's downfall, what was it? Because, manifestly, they did fall. Something vital was missing from everything that God gave under the Old Covenant. And that missing ingredient was the Cause of their failure.

And as I pondered these things, I saw that I was, in fact, simply going back *down* the mountain into Pharisaical Judaism, the perversion that taught that the expense of lots of human effort in pursuit of Obedience pleased the Lord and got me into "right standing" with God. But, then I realized that the people who exemplified this dynamic the best were the only group of people on earth that Jesus never said anything Good about.

So, I realized that if all we have under the New Covenant was a different set of Rules we are supposed to obey, then we are no better off now than we were under the Old Covenant, because *nobody* kept the Commandments perfectly under the Old Covenant. Nobody. Everybody, who was saved, under the Old Covenant, was saved the very *same* way that we are saved today, by the Grace of God and through the gift of "Saving Faith".

The truth is that Abraham didn't obey God very well. He *dishonored* his wife, horribly. Twice. And he really didn't believe all that well, either. He and his wife both doubted God. Repeatedly. But Abraham was graced by God with the *Gift* of "Saving Faith", and several thousands of years later the Apostle Paul said this about him in **Romans 4:2-5:**

**<sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**

**3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."**

**4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.**

**5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,**

... so, the reason that Abraham is referred to as "The Father of Faith" is *not* because his own *inherent* ability to trust God was spectacular, because it wasn't. His own human ability to believe God wasn't any better or worse than any other fallen sinner. He is given that title because he is the biblical Example (given before God gave the Law to Moses) of how lost people are justified before God.

So, rather than mimic the weak and fleshly and unproductive examples of Israel under the Old Covenant, as I seek to live under the New, I need to be reminded that the whole reason God gave the New Covenant was because it is there that I am given a *new heart*! And it was this new heart that was the missing ingredient under the Old Covenant. Under the brilliance of the New Covenant, it is no longer an agreement between me and God (*If I would do "this", then God would do "that"*). Because that *guarantees* that I will fail. The New Covenant is infinitely superior to the Old because God has now made a Covenant with *Himself*. So, the New Covenant is all about what God has done for me, in, by, and through Jesus Christ.

And in that New Covenant, God has promised to give me a new "nature" that would allow me to *delight* in God. And with this new nature, that would enjoy God, I would be able to see the many *restrictions* that Scripture places on my flesh, *not* as a prison to regret, but as the pathway to everlasting Joy.

So, the very *essence* of the New Covenant is a miraculous, supernatural, and gracious *transformation* of the human nature through a sovereign Act of God, rather than a different set of Commandments. And with that new heart, with that new nature, I can actually *love* God. I am gifted with the ability to *enjoy* God. In the *infinitely* superior New Covenant, I am graciously given the gift of being able to behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, and then *delight* in what I see. And then be changed into what I see.

And that means that all my service, all my obedience, all of the determination that I can muster to pursue Holiness on purpose is really nothing more nor less than a loving, joyful, and delightful *response* to the Beauty and infinite Value of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Image of God. But that also means that my standing with God is not determined by the success of my performance. My standing with God is based on an unbreakable Covenant that God has infallibly made with Himself!

And so, as my vision of Jesus increases, as the Value that I place on Jesus expands and enlarges, as my desire to literally treasure Jesus Christ grows, based on how I behold Him, my Service and my willingness to Sacrifice, and my ability to struggle against the lusts of my flesh, my propensity to Obey, also increases and actually becomes a pathway to the fullness of my own everlasting Joy.

So, I was *forced* to go back into the Bible and *rediscover* Who God is. And as I studied what God revealed about Himself in sacred writ, an amazing thing happened to me. As I saw the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, through the pages of the Bible, my King and Lord and Master grew larger, and more important, and more lovely, and more beautiful, and more valuable, and more wonderful than I had ever known.

But something else happened. And as I began to see God, *biblically*, I also changed! And I saw the mystery clearly. And I understood the dynamic that a God, Who has need of nothing, does not *need* my service. He doesn't *need* my efforts. He wants me to simply see Him as He is, and *love* what my eyes behold. He wants me to understand Him in His magnificence, and *enjoy* what I see. He wants me to stand in awe of Him, and *delight* myself, *not* in what I can do for Him, but in Who He is.

And after experiencing this, after tasting and seeing that the Lord is Good, me serving God for no other reason than I am terrified of hell became the *worst* of all possible reasons. Me, obeying God to supposedly "prove my love for God", became nothing but yet another way I was promoting my *own* value and my *own* worth. Me, thinking that, even though I was saved by Grace through Faith, the road to Sanctification, was paved with nothing but a lot of human effort and human discipline. Because, after all, being Holy takes a lot of work. Go ask any Pharisee. And then God was good to let me realize that, in

spite of my efforts, *I* was the one I was glorifying. And Jesus sat over in the corner, unnoticed and not treasured.

So, what we are seeing today, in the *disconnect* between what people say they believe and *how* they live their lives, is an *anomaly*, an *aberration*, and a *perversion* of Christianity. And that aberration, that perversion should *never* become “normalized” or “accepted” by the Leadership of the Church, because it isn’t normal. It is rebellion and an attempt at *dismissing* or *minimizing*, or even outright *eliminating* the “Lordship Demands” that Jesus makes on every single soul that He has purchased with His Own Blood.

We must understand, dear friends, that the radical transformation of the human nature through the miracle of the New Birth always, always, always produces an equally radical Love *for* and unspeakable Joy *in* God and the *things* of God. And this Love and Joy are *not* inherent in the human being, they are gifts from God. And that new Love for God and that new Joy in God produces both a *desire* and an *ability* for the three things that Peter has been teaching us:

1. A continual and very powerful *Longing* for the Word of God.
2. The ability to “Taste” the Kindness of the Lord.
3. An ongoing and relentless “Coming” near to God in worship.

And *all* of our Obedience, *all* of our Service, *all* of our Doing, and *all* of our Labor, for the Glory of God, flows out from those three gifts. Which means that everything we do, after we are saved, is simply a *human response* to the sovereign Work that God has already done in our lives, and the gifts that God has graciously given to us.

And that means that our standing with God is not based on what we do for God, but on what God has done for us, in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and our *understanding* of that, and our *appreciation* for that.

So, the reason there is so much compromise, so much worldliness, so much lawlessness in the modern Church, is two-fold:

1. **Because of real bad theology:** there is a sea of people, in the Church, who think they are saved, but who are deceived about their standing with God.



2. Those who are truly saved either do not behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, at all, or their vision is clouded by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And the first problem is solved by the leadership of the Church first getting deeply into the Word of God themselves, and then heralding the Biblical Gospel without fear or fail. And the second problem is solved by the leadership of the Church first getting deeply into the Word of God themselves, and then heralding the Biblical Gospel without fear or fail. The Biblical remedy is the same for both Problems.

So, as we begin to look deeply at what Peter is teaching here, the biggest mistake we could make is to think that all Peter is doing is giving us more rules to live by, that we have to expend yet more effort and use more discipline to achieve. No. Listening to Peter will give us insight into how we may escape the tyranny of Legalism, and how we can avoid the trap of Pharisaical Judaism, and how we may be set free from the snare of an Old Covenant mentality, and break free into the dynamic of responding to the God we see in Scripture, by loving what we see. So, let us begin. Look again at verse 11:

**Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

Now here are five different things that we find in this verse:

1. We are *Favored* by God
2. Peter's Apostolic Urging
3. Who We Are
4. The Danger of Unholy Desires
5. The Real War

... so, let's look deeply at all five.

## **1. We are *Favored* by God**

**1Peter 2:11a**  
**Beloved...**

Now this is a term of endearment that has been used by both God and Man since the days just before God killed Moses and buried him in an undisclosed place (**Deuteronomy 33:12**). There are three different Hebrews words that have been translated as "beloved" in the Old Testament, about 44 times, mostly notably in the **Song of Solomon** (32 times). These words were used to describe something as common as friendship to an intimate love between husband and wife.

But, when we get to the New Testament, there is only a single Greek word (and one derivative of that same word) that was translated as "Beloved". And this single Greek word means: "Favorite" or "Favored one". So, for example, for God the Father say to God the Son:

**Matthew 3:17b**

**... This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased**

... He was literally saying,

This is My *Favored* Son, Who pleases Me, *perfectly, completely, totally*

... and it is because of the unique and total Love that God the Father has for God the Son that allows those, who have experienced the miracle of the New Birth, and who are now "in" Jesus Christ, to "know" and "abide in".

**Ephesians 3:16-19**

**16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,**

**17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**

**18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,**

**19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

**John 15:9&10**

**9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.**

**10 “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”**

So, what Peter wants these persecuted believers to know is that, even in their horrific suffering, that God has set His Love upon them. He is re-enforcing the amazing Reality that before they were ever born God chose to make them to be His “purchased possession”, so that they would be able to:

**1Peter 2:9b**

**... proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

And that means that their struggles are *not* some random, or accidental expression of evil that has no meaning, but rather a pre-determined part of God’s Plan to save them and allow them to be glorified.

And this also means that the trouble these beloved saints are going through is *not* a Divine Punishment for some failure or sin, but rather a very important *demonstration* of God’s Love. Peter is restating the beautiful Truth that God loves these suffering saints so much that He is not about to leave them as they are. But God is *determined* to change them through the fires of their Sanctification, so they may share in the very Holiness of God.

**Hebrews 12:10b-14**

**10 ...He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.**

**11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**

**12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,**

**13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.**

**14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**

If God did not love these people, He would not be interested in molding and shaping them into His Image and Likeness. The absence of Love from God would cause God to simply leave them to themselves. But by using this word, Peter is reminding them, not only have they *not* been forsaken by God, and not only that God loves them. But Peter is telling them that, because of their faith and trust in Jesus, and in His finished Work, they are *the loved, the favored ones* of God!

## 2. Peter's Apostolic Urging

### 1Peter 2:11b

**... I urge you...**

Now the word that Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to write down here is the Greek word that means: *to beg; to plead; and to admonish*. So, this word is associated with an *earnestness*, a deep and pervasive and overwhelming *desire* to see the people of God obey what he is teaching.

What is interesting is that this word is *not* illustrating an "Apostolic Command", but Peter is literally *begging* the scattered aliens of his day, and us, to pay attention to what he is saying. So, this "urging" gives us an indication of two things:

1. The seriousness of what Peter is talking about
2. The love that Peter had for God's sheep

## 3. Who We Are

### 1Peter 2:11c

**... as aliens and strangers ...**

Now back in the very first verse of this inspired Letter (Epistle), the Apostle calls these people:

### 1Peter 1:1b

**... To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen**

... and here, in **1Peter 2:11**, he calls them:

### **aliens and strangers**

... which is simply another way of reminding them that this world is not their home, and that whatever Evil God has allowed to fall on them is:

- ✓ Not Random or Accidental
- ✓ Not Without Purpose
- ✓ Not Permanent

So, while satan has received Permission from God to do much damage to them, he has *not* received Permission to do all that he wants. Satan cannot steal their souls or harm them eternally. To whatever degree satan is allowed to hurt them, he can only do his damage in this life. And God is carefully and strategically *limiting* satan's ability to be able to do only what will accomplish two very important tasks:

1. God will be glorified
2. Their Joy will be full

So, from that *eternal* perspective, satan is merely a tool that God uses to bring Glory to His Own Name and to purify His elect. And as one of God's chosen Leaders, Peter is boldly and repeatedly teaching that Suffering is one of the most common and important ways in which God sanctifies those He has already saved.

Now this is probably the area where, what the Bible actually teaches, and what many in the modern church believe, is at the greatest separation from each other. Because, even though the Bible is filled with very clear and very precise Teaching about the issue of "Why Believers Suffer", most church members today have no idea why a Good and Loving God would want His Own people to suffer. And so, they are left to try to make sense of this on their own, which is why there is so much confusing and contradictory Teaching about this subject among so many in our day.

Now several years ago, God impressed upon me to prepare you for what is coming to America. I see the larger American culture radically and negatively changing away from the historic biblical ethic, what we

have called “Western Civilization”, to a culture that is based primarily on subjective aspects that cause us to become more and more divided and splintered.

So, the Church of Jesus, here in America, is on a collision course with the larger culture around us. So, I perceive that the United States will become a more secularized nation that is going to be increasingly hostile to Bible-believing Christians individually, and the Christian Church as a whole. So, we’re migrating from a nation that has historically respected the Church and been favorable to it, to one that will become more and more at odds with us and what we believe and teach from Scripture.

So, we need to listen to Peter as he tells us how to navigate through this life as “scattered aliens”, as people who will be increasingly marginalized in our own land. And so, I began the year of 2013 by teaching *extensively* on the subject of “Suffering and the Sovereignty of God”. And you may want to get copies of that series.

But suffice it to say that the mystery of Suffering is part and parcel to being in right standing with God. The most godly people, who had the most faith, have historically been the very people who have suffered the most in this life. And so, we need to know that the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity “gospel” is a lie, and we need to reject any Teaching that would say that Suffering is somehow a Judgment or a Punishment for not having enough faith, or that people in right standing with God don’t need to suffer. That simply isn’t true, and Peter is reminding the people of his day, and us, about that.

#### **4. The Danger of Unholy Desires**

##### **1Peter 2:11d**

**... to abstain from fleshly lusts ...**

Now what is amazing is that the word “lust” comes from the very same root word from which we get other word like “desire” and “love”, and even “joy”. So, we need to understand that, as human beings, we *crave* certain things. We *desire* certain things. We *want* them, we find *joy* in them, and we *love* them.

And, contrary to popular opinion, the Bible not only does NOT condemn what Jonathan Edwards called “Affections”, the Holy Bible

actually *promotes* them. For example, we are told, repeatedly, to not simply obey God, but to “love” God, and to “love” our wives and husbands, to “love” our children, and to “love” the Truth. Peter himself said:

**1Peter 2:2**

**Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,**

... so, Peter is telling us here to *crave* and to *desire* the Word of God. The sons of Korah were “moved along” by God the Holy Spirit to say:

**Psalms 42:1&2**

**1 ... As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.**

**2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?**

... and this “panting” and this “thirsting” are not describing some dry, stoic, intellectual assent about a particular Biblical Truth. These are not aspects that we are to merely read about and “believe in”, but “affections” that we are to personally *experience*.

So, we must understand that, while it is true, that some people are unemotional and others are emotional, that neither the “abundance of” or the “lack of” human emotion is the same thing as being spiritual.

We have been created as beings who have emotions. And they have a very large and important place in our lives. What kind of sad world it would be without laughter and joy! And while some people seem to “have a handle” on their emotions, all people have them. So, it is a fallacy to think that being emotional means that somebody is more interested in something, or that a lack of visible emotion signifies that he is unconcerned. We display our emotions *differently*, and God works in it all.

But while it would be an error to allow our human affections to *govern* or *dominate* our walk with God, it is equally unbiblical to strive to serve God without any passion or joy or desire or love at all.

So, what is condemned in the Bible is not all emotion, but rather *ungodly* emotions. And this is what the Bible calls “lust”. Unbridled, human desire that operates contrary to the Will and Word of God, to the

glory of Man. And so, even though, many times, the word “lust” is associated with *sexual* sins, we actually “lust for” or sinfully “crave” or “desire” for much more than sex.

The Word of God tells us that, as fallen creatures, we have the capacity to “set our affections” on this broken world and things that do *not* honor God. So, we can “want” sin. We can “crave” iniquity. And we can genuinely and fully “love” what does *not* glorify God. Look at what Jesus said in **John 3:19**:

**This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.**

Here, Jesus gives us the insulting news that human beings don’t simply “do” what is dark, we do not simply *act* sinfully, but that we actually *love* the darkness. And this goes much deeper than our actions. Our hearts *delight* in sin. We find *joy* in iniquity. We experience *pleasure* in seeking after things and possessing things that God said were dishonoring to Him.

So, it is a waste of time to merely seek to put all of our desires into a box so that we will not act on them. Jesus said that *wanting* to do something sinful is as bad as actually *doing* it.

**Matthew 5:27&28**

**27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';**

**28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

Since it is impossible to live in this life without any display of love, desire or enjoyment, the only sure way to escape the tyranny of *unholy* desires is to replace them with *godly* desires. So, for example, to escape “loving the world” requires that we “set our affections” on what is infinitely *better* than the world, namely, Jesus Christ.

But, *before* we are willing to attach our loves and desires and enjoyment to Jesus, we must become convinced that He is *worthy* of that. And so, the same formula works here, too. As we behold the magnificent Glory of our God in the Face of, or in the Person of, Jesus Christ, through Scripture, He becomes more and more worthy of our



love and our desire and our enjoyment. And as we continue down this path, God changes us so that we may agree with the wisest man in the world when he said in the **Song of Solomon 3:1-4a**:

**1 "On my bed night after night I sought him Whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him.**

**2 'I must arise now and go about the city; In the streets and in the squares I must seek him whom my soul loves.' I sought him but did not find him.**

**3 "The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, *And I said,* 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'**

**4 "Scarcely had I left them When I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go...**

.. and this is simply another way of illustrating our Sanctification. This is Solomon's 3,000 year-old description of how we are to *pursue after* and *seek for*, and then *treasure* Jesus Christ as the Darling of the Trinity. And the *reason* God the Holy Spirit included this in the Canon of Scripture is because this tells us how perfectly normal human beings, who have every desire and every craving that everybody else has, can walk through this life *unshackled* by the domination of unholy lusts.

## **5. The Real War**

**1Peter 2:11e**

**... which wage war against the soul ...**

And that brings us to the Real War. And the *Real* War is what everything is *really* all about. Peter says here that fleshly lusts actually "wage war against the soul". And this is why human lust, sinful desires, that seek to rob God of His Glory, and that seek to seat ourselves on the Throne of God, must be dealt with.

And so, this is the titanic struggle that is going on, *every day*, in *every heart* that has experienced the miracle of the New Birth. And this War is *not* about "limited Government" or a "reduction of taxes" or of the "ever-expansion of a runaway Federal Bureaucracy". This is a war over the Will of God being done on the earth, and in our lives, to the very *same* degree and with the very *same* urgency that the Will of God is done in Heaven.

This broken world is constantly whispering in our ear to eat and to taste and to enjoy and to believe things that God has forbidden. We are constantly being bombarded with false promises that if we would only “do this”, or if we would only “say that”, or if we would only “put our hope and trust in something else”, we would be happy and content and fulfilled.

But thanks be to God that He has given us a way out. So, we must understand, dear friends, that the Bible is filled with all sorts of language and terminology, and all sorts of examples. We have the language of farming and the language of sports and the language of business all throughout the Bible. But when it comes to sin and when it comes to temptation and when it comes to our Sanctification, the language in the Bible is the language of War. For example, look at how the Apostle Paul told us to separate ourselves from evil influences in **2Timothy 2:3&4**:

**3 Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**

**4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.**

... and listen to the Words of Jesus Himself as it pertains to our war against fleshly lusts in **Matthew 18:8&9**:

**8 "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.**

**9 "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.**

Now Jesus is not recommending to us that we make ourselves cripples here. What He is doing is illustrating the seriousness of sin. The point that Jesus makes here is that unbridled lust will send you to hell. So, for example, when somebody tells me that they're saved, and therefore, they *can't* go to hell. My response to them is, "*If you're saved, then why do you have no power over your lust?*" Because the same Bible that says that the Power of God will keep us saved has also promised to give us victory over lust. And that is the Real War.

The language of the Bible is *not* that we may freely engage in our sinful lusts, without any eternal Recourse. The language of the Bible is that someone who simply *cannot* control himself and his own heart and his own mind, by the invincible Power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, working through the Scriptures, and who continually and blatantly allows his lust to roam free, is proving that his conversion experience was a lie.

### **Romans 8:10-15**

**10** If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

**11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

**12** So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh —

**13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

**14** For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

**15** For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

### **Colossians 3:4-10**

**4** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

**5** Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

**6** For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

**7** and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

**8** But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

**9** Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

**10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him —**

**Psalms 141:3&4**

**3 Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

**4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.**

So, this is the Real War, the War against desiring and enjoying and craving those things that bring God no Honor, and that work to destroy us. So, the Apostle Peter is teaching us here, in Chapter 2, that by *longing* for the Word of God and by *tasting* the Kindness of the Lord and by *drawing near* to Jesus, we will be able to break free and live lives that delight in surpassing affections that focus on the Treasure of the Universe, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2017-2018 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse “journey” through the **Epistle of 1Peter**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.