

Christian Conduct as Gospel Witness

1 Peter 2:11-12

Introduction

Like Paul, Peter combines doctrine with practical exhortation.

“Beloved, I urge you...”

“It costs something to be a true Christian. It will cost us our sins, our self-righteousness, our ease, and our worldliness” (J.C. Ryle).

I. *Good People: An Internal Exhortation* (v11)

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

“Beloved”

“sojourners” Gk *paroikos*; ‘one dwelling near’

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Hebrews 13:14-16).

“exiles/aliens” Gk *parepidemos*

“abstain” ‘to continually hold yourself back from.’

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

“which wage war against your soul”

We are engaged in spiritual warfare.

“So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Romans 8:12-15).

Christians are to resist the inward pull of the flesh to engage in things that are at war with their soul.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (Galatians 5:16-17).

This is where the battle lies.

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?” (James 4:1).

Axiom: The inner disposition of the heart generates the outer behavior and lifestyle choices.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Know your weaknesses then, Satan does, and he wants to expose and exploit them.

“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life” (Deuteronomy 4:9).

II. **Good Witness: An External Exhortation** (v12)

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.

A strong exhortation to conduct your life *publicly* in way that is commensurate with your new life in Christ *internally*.

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3; also 5:1-12).

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9-11).

Who we really are on the inside will ultimately be revealed on the outside.

“You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:16-18).

We are first to be people who are made good on the inside by true conversion.

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil” (Matthew 12:33-35).

“Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!” (Psalm 125:4).

We are saved by faith - an *internal* work of God - so that His Spirit in our hearts can produce *good works*.

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18).

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:3-6).

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). This is God’s intention with our conversion.

True conversion leads to genuine good conduct. Good conduct only comes from a heart made good by God.

“The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people” (Titus 3:8).

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

“Oh, brethren, the good in us is God in us. The inwardness makes the outwardness, the godliness the beauty” (Charles Stanford).

Barnabas: “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith,”

“a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:22-24).

In Acts 10, Peter said: “you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10:37-38).

The greatest, most effective evangelistic tool we have is the testimony of our lives, or how we conduct ourselves in this world as professing believers.

Heinrich Heine, “Show me your redeemed life and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer.”

People read us far more than they read the Bible.

“good deeds” Gk *kalon*; means ‘goodness and beauty.’

“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— when they see your respectful and pure conduct” (1 Peter 3:1-2).

“glorify God”

“the day of visitation”