

Christ Reformation Church

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Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

(Part 9 – Living in the Light)

September 4, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:13 - 2:12

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:16-26

Hear our text for this morning. We will not be looking at all of it in detail today, but we want to get a firm hold on Peter's primary message to us here:

1Pe 1:13-25 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, (15) but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) since it is

written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

(17) And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, (18) knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

(20) He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you (21) who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

(22) Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, (23) since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and

abiding word of God; (24) for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, (25) but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1Pe 2:1-12 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (2) Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— (3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

(4) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (6) For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (7) So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," (8) and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

(9) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for

his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him **who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** (10) Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

(11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, **which wage war against your soul.** (12) 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.

Last time we heard Peter call us to:

- Prepare your minds for action
- Be sober-minded
- Set your hope fully on the grace coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ

Now he gives us very practical ways of doing this, reminding us of more of the truth we must prepare our minds with, such as:

(1:18) knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood

of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

And –

(1:23) since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Because these things are true, surely we must live in light of them. How? Well, Peter’s primary emphasis in this section is this:

1Pe 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, (15) but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

And this is what I want to talk to you about this morning. *Why should the Christian live a holy life, rejecting sin, putting away, as Peter says, “the passions of your former ignorance” – “all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander...the passions of the flesh?”*

There is more than one answer given here and in weeks ahead we will look at each one. We call God our Father, for example. Well then, as obedient children we want to emulate Him. Since He is holy, we want to be holy.

But there are two statements Peter makes in this section that I want to focus on today. They are:

- ...Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light
- Abstain from the passions of the flesh, *which wage war against your soul*

Here is the thesis I want each of us to get a firm hold on and never lose it:

You cannot break the Law of God, you cannot choose to sin, without suffering definite, inevitable consequences. When we yield to, as Peter calls them, “the passions of our former ignorance” or “the passions of the flesh,” we are permitting the enemy to attack our soul and inflict damage. There is no harmless sin. Sin does something to us, and that something is never good.

In contrast, walking in light, choosing to be holy as our Father is holy, brings healing, health, and growth to us, and glory to God.

Don’t Return to darkness

The unbeliever lives in darkness. This present world is in moral and spiritual darkness. Scripture speaks of this many times, just as Peter does here –

“proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Where sin reigns, there is this darkness. What is the fundamental aspect of darkness? *Absence of light. Blindness. And therefore danger, deception, and death.* So the devil’s kingdom is known as the kingdom of darkness.

But God is light and Christ came into the world shining that light –

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John 1:4

In the light we can see. In Christ’s light we see truth and deception is exposed. In His light there is life, not the death which is in the darkness. His kingdom is the kingdom of light.

So, before we were brought into the light of Christ’s kingdom, Peter says *we were conformed to the passions of our former ignorance.* That is to say, we walked in sin, we believed the lie, we were unholy and we lived unholy lives.

So when a Christian yields to “the passions of the flesh,” that is to say, when we yield to sin, we are to a degree returning to the realm of darkness and deception and death. Sin, Peter says, *wages war against our*

soul. When I sin, I am taking down my armor and letting the enemy bullets hit my soul. It is damaging. I cannot sin without harming someone, including myself.

Let me give you some examples. Here is one that a lady wrote to me last week and I think it is very insightful and sobering:

My personal theory is that men who are given over to porn will always see women as secondary beings. If they view a woman as an object to be used and then sear their minds with that thought and feeling with the oxytocin that flows as a result, then the brain is actually altered and bonded with that thinking.

This is why 1 Cor 6:16 reads: Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”

God created this very strong bond. And, that "one flesh" for the porn user is with himSELF, and he can't see nor feel beyond that. After objectifying so many different women for his use or gratification, he becomes unable to value them otherwise. He learns this from Dad.

The general belief in our culture is that immorality, pornography, and all sorts of perversions *really are not harmful to the person who practices them*. It is all seen as a matter of personal choice. But as is true with all sin, a human being simply cannot violate God's law without consequences upon others and upon himself. The "it doesn't hurt anyone. It is a victimless act" simply is not true. *Sin does something to my soul.*

1Pe 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

And one of the ways it harms my soul if I yield to sin is this *darkening, blinding, deceiving effect upon me*. Because sin, you see, these "passions of our former ignorance" that we used to be characterized by, is of the realm of darkness. Have you ever tried to reason with someone who has chosen to pursue sin? If so you may well have witnessed the effects of this darkness.

You cannot break the Law of God, you cannot choose to sin, without suffering definite, inevitable consequences. When we yield to, as Peter calls them, "the passions of our former ignorance" or "the passions of the flesh," we are permitting the enemy to attack our soul and inflict damage. There is no harmless sin. Sin

does something to us, and that something is never good.

In contrast, walking in light, choosing to be holy as our Father is holy, brings healing, health, and growth to us, and glory to God.

A Violated Conscience

Still another way sin wages war against our soul and inflicts damage upon us is in regard to our *conscience*.

Let's consider for instance a Christian who has chosen to sin. They have yielded to the "passions of their flesh." And *even if they have truly repented of it and thus have been forgiven by the Lord*, the lingering effects of the damage done to their soul is often evident in the form of *torments of their conscience*. If you genuinely know Christ, then you know something of what I am speaking of here.

One of the favorite and most common avenues of attacking the Lord's people that the devil uses is *accusation*. I don't know how he does it, but he does it. And it is not fun to be on the receiving end. *Remember when you....*

So don't give him ammunition.

1Pe 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from

the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Let's briefly consider a few more of the 10 commandments and specifically how breaking them damages our soul. Once again, we know that the world we live in today believes that God's Law, if it even exists, can be broken without harm to anyone, including oneself. Peter says this is a lie. The sinful passions we used to be conformed to wage war against our soul. Give them an opening and they will indeed inflict injury.

Exo 20:1-6 And God spoke all these words, saying, (2) "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (3) "You shall have no other gods before me. (4) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (6) but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

First and second commandments. They concern worship of God and forbid idolatry in any form. Now, we are surrounded by people who create "God" in their own image. "I believe in God but I don't think I have to...." and you fill in the blank. They have created an idol god and think that they are free. But as Scripture says and as G.K. Beale writes in his book, "*We Become What We Worship.*"

Psa 115:4-8 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. (5) They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. (6) They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. (7) They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. (8) Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

Those who make them become like them. Blind, deaf, unfeeling, unable to speak truth.

Listen to Beale on this –

"We will look [in his book] at a number of examples [in Scripture] whereby idols are described in a certain way, and then those who worship the idols are described in precisely the same manner. I will argue that the purpose of the identical description is to indicate mockingly that the worshiper, rather than

experiencing an expected life-giving blessing, has received a curse by becoming as spiritually inanimate, empty, rebellious or shameful as the idol is depicted to be.” [We Become What we Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry]

Or consider the 4th commandment:

Exo 20:8-11 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. (11) For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“I don’t go to church. I am a Christian but I don’t think I have to be in a church. I can serve God myself.” We see and hear this kind of thing all the time, right? Harmless? Hardly. To refuse to keep the Lord’s day is to choose unholiness and to trample on that which He has made holy. It is to distance oneself from the Lord and from the Body of Christ.

The result? Well, think about this –

Heb 10:24-27 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (26) For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

The Apostle here is showing us that every one of us faces the very real danger of not finishing well. Of coming up short. Of becoming, as we say, *apostate*. A person who once professed Christ but in the end is revealed to have moved away from and abandoned that confession.

And so as a remedy Christians must gather together and encourage one another to persevere in doing good and in following Christ. In fact, as time goes along, we should do this all the more, he says.

Therefore, the person who breaks the 4th commandment places themselves in a very dangerous place, giving the enemy’s arrows access to their soul.

Eph 6:16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can

extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

Do not permit sin to have access to your soul.

You see it then?

You cannot break the Law of God, you cannot choose to sin, without suffering definite, inevitable consequences. When we yield to, as Peter calls them, “the passions of our former ignorance” or “the passions of the flesh,” we are permitting the enemy to attack our soul and inflict damage. There is no harmless sin. Sin does something to us, and that something is never good.

1Pe 2:9-11 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (10) Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Can anyone with eyes to see and a mind to understand deny that our nation and world is suffering the effects of choosing darkness rather than light? Of rejecting Christ and His truth and instead embracing sin and self-rule? In this insane quest for “freedom” whose slogan is “No God!” (a statement attributed to the fool in Scripture), men and women are increasingly regressing into moral, spiritual, and even intellectual darkness.

Peter's exhortation to us as Christians is, *don't yield yourself to any of that. Those old passions used to define you, but no more. You are born again, a new creation in Christ, a child of a Father who is holy, so you be holy too.*