

I PETER 2:11-12
ABSTAIN!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Peter chapter 2 as we continue our in-depth study of this letter that Peter wrote to those Christians who were dispersed for their faith in the area of modern-day Turkey!

We have seen Peter speak of – *THE SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER* in I Peter 1:1-12

From there and where we are presently at, Peter speaks of – *THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER* in I Peter 1:13-2:12.

How important it is for us to live out our faith. But before we can live it, we need to come to saving faith in Jesus. We must repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives.

The moment we are saved – *JUSTIFIED* or that our sins have been paid in full and there is no record of them anymore because we have come to Christ, we move into the – *SANCTIFICATION PROCESS!*

What that means is that the Holy Spirit is working with the Word of God to transform the men and women of God into the image of Christ. Less of us and more of Him! We are set apart for Him and we are on display for the world to see!

Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

That is so important for us to understand because so many Christians hold onto their past and blame their past for their behavior today.

But you can't do that because you are a "**new creation**" in Christ and thus, don't hold onto the past, move forward and let the Holy Spirit transform your life!

This sanctification process is important for us as we grow, as we mature in the Lord!

Too often as we read the Scriptures, we make it a theoretical point or an academic point. Don't get me wrong, it should be.

But it needs to be more than just a theoretical point, it needs to be practical as well. In other words, we need to apply these things to our life not just have them in our mind!

Paul makes that point very clear in Romans 6:20-22 when he wrote, "**For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**"

As you look back on your old life, how good was it?

What fruit was born in it?

What was the end result of that kind of life?

It was bad, it wasn't good.

There was no fruit that God would accept that was born in the old life.

The old life leads to death!

Now that is not encouraging but Paul does not leave us there, he tells us in verse 22, "**But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**" Romans 6:22.

These should be very encouraging words to us. You see, what the bondage of sin couldn't do, Christ has done in us, and we are free, we are fruitful in holiness, and we have everlasting life!

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:16, "**You will know them by their fruits.**" That is so important for us to understand. There should be fruit born in our lives as we live out our faith.

Please understand that I am not saying that good works, fruit saves us. But what good works, what the fruit that is born in our lives does do is that it shows people that we are saved!

Remember what Peter said in I Peter 2:1, "**Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.**"

In other words, Peter is telling us that we are to take off those filthy and solid garments and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, the robes of righteousness!

The Scriptures tell us that the Church is the Bride of Christ, and the Bridegroom is Jesus who is coming back for His Bride!

Do you want to prepare for this wedding in clothes that are filthy, that are dirty, that are torn and ragged?

Of course not, you are preparing for your wedding!

We need to understand that because it will help us to live out our faith in a way that is more like Jesus and less like the flesh!

Here we are, a new creation in Christ but there is a battle that goes on in our life. The battle is the flesh and the Spirit warring against each other!

Let me share with you the problem from what Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 4. He wrote, **“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”** Ephesians 4:17-24.

Paul is calling for us not to walk like the world is walking, not like you did before you were saved because you are a new creation in Christ.

You see, it is not just learning about Him but making Him part of your life!

But why this battle?

Why do I want to do good, and I don't?

We have this old nature that is still with us!

Here is where some get confused. It is dealing with the idea of the ***“old man”*** and linking it to being the ***“old nature”*** or our fallen sinful nature that we inherited from Adam.

The ***“old man”*** isn't our old nature because our old nature doesn't ***grow*** corrupt, ***it already is corrupt.***

There is no way we can **“put off”** the old nature, it will be with us until the Rapture when it will be finally shed with our physical body - what Paul called ***“the body of death.”***

In fact, Paul tells us in Ephesians that our “*old man*” is our former *conduct*. (Which we can and must put off every day)

The old nature is just that - your *nature* which you inherited from Adam. It speaks of what we *are* in Adam, not what *we do*.

So then, the “*old man*” is not my old nature.

The “*old man*” is my old conduct or lifestyle, the old desires, my old habits and actions that have died with Christ and are now buried with Him in death.

In other words, the death of the old life.

And here’s the thing, and it should just make sense. We are told to “**put off**” the old man and his wicked ways, because, if you don’t, you will continue to become more and more corrupt.

The old man, that sin nature is like an ugly monster, the more you feed it the more it grows and the more it grows the more it wants to be fed!

Put it off, put it away, discard it from your life or it will control your life! Put on Christ instead!

Paul put it like this in Romans 13:14, “**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**”

And in Colossians 3:8-11 Paul wrote, “**But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.**”

Put off the old man and put on the new man, put on Christ let Him fill your life and overflow your life to touch the lives of others by what we do and what we say!

And I think we all understand that, from a physical standpoint, what we put into our bodies affects the health of the body.

But what about our spiritual health, how is that affected?

We are told in Proverbs 23:7, “**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he . . .**”

And Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, “**. . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**”

Yes, physically you are what you eat, but spiritually you are what you think!

So, Paul told us to put off the old man and put on the new man, put on Christ and he is going to begin with the transformation of our mind. Instead of focusing on the things of this world, we are to be focused on the things of God.

When we give our lives to Jesus Christ, we received a new mind. We received a completely new spiritual and moral capability. But this is a process also, that we continually renew our minds daily that we may gain the mind of Christ, (Philippians 2:5), and be more like Him.

Paul’s statement in I Corinthians chapter 2 explains this for us for in those passages Paul is simply saying that the reason we have godly wisdom and godly understanding is because the Holy Spirit has revealed them to us.

The natural man has a spirit, that is the worldly spirit that is in him and thus, he has worldly wisdom. And you can see how that plays out in the world today; it is empty for the most part!

But the Christian has the Holy Spirit indwelling him, which teaches us the “**deep things of God.**” Our wisdom comes from God. (I Corinthians 2:10)

Paul ends that section, (I Corinthians 2:9-16), by saying, “**. . . But we have the mind of Christ.**”

So, in principle, we have the mind of Christ for we have been transformed into a new creation in Christ. But in practice, it is a continual process of renewing our minds to the likeness of Christ, putting in good things so good comes out!

And in verse 24 Paul is telling us to put on an entirely new man. Not the old man cleaned up but a new man on the inside, which will overflow to the outside.

Now Paul says that this “**. . . new man which was created according to God . . .**” is better translated from the Greek, “**according to what God is.**”

When we are born again into the family of God, we are not transformed into the image of man but into what God is. Our actions and attitudes should reflect those of God. We should hate sin and love that which is good.

Here is the problem we see today in the lives of Christians. Their words don't match up with their behavior, the things that they are doing. We are becoming more like the world and less like Christ.

Now you may not agree with that but listen to this report and you will see what I mean.

This is from *The Freedom from Religion Foundation*, not a Christian sight, obviously.

But the statistics that he takes is from George Barna, a Christian sociologist who has been trending where Christianity is going for years. This is from a few years back and I think it is even worse today!

This is what he wrote,

Are Christians more moral or successful than non-Christians?

The Second Coming of The Church by George Barna (Word Publishing, 1998), reports that they are not.

The author, a born-again Christian sociologist, is founder and president of Barna Research Group (CA), which releases many meaningful survey results.

Although most of Barna's book is a sermon to Christian ministers on how the church should regain its lost status, it does contain some frank statistics showing how the present church has **"failed"** in its mission.

The numbers are based on Barna's own studies, and other national surveys.

Barna compares the behaviors and attitudes of Christians with Non-Christians . . . and concludes: ***"We think and behave no differently from anyone else."***

Examples of the Similarity of Behavior Between Christians and Non-Christians

(from *The Second Coming of The Church*, p 6, partial list)

- Have been divorced (among those who have been married) Born Again Christians: 27%; Non-Christians: 23%
- Gave money to a homeless person or poor person, in past year Born Again Christians: 24%; Non-Christians: 34%
- Took drugs or medication prescribed for depression, in past year Born Again Christians: 7%; Non-Christians: 8%
- Watched an X-rated movie in the past 3 months Born Again Christians: 9%; Non-Christians: 16%
- Donated any money to a nonprofit organization, in past month Born Again Christians: 47%; Non-Christians: 48%
- Bought a lottery ticket, in the past week Born Again Christians: 23%; Non-Christians: 27%

- Attended a community meeting on local issue, in past year Born Again Christians: 37%; Non-Christians: 42%

Examples of the Similarity of Attitudes Between Christians and non-Christians

(from *The Second Coming of The Church*, p 21, partial list)

- Feel completely or very successful in life Born Again Christians: 58%; Non-Christians: 49%
- It is impossible to get ahead because of your financial debt Born Again Christians: 33%; Non-Christians: 39%
- You are still trying to figure out the purpose of your life Born Again Christians: 36%; Non-Christians: 47%
- Satisfied with your life these days Born Again Christians: 69%; Non-Christians: 68%
- Your personal financial situation is getting better Born Again Christians: 27%; Non-Christians: 28%

Barna also sheds light on the definition of **“God”** that most Americans claim to believe

in:

“Since more than nine out of ten Americans own at least one Bible, and 86 percent call themselves Christian, you might expect people to pay homage to the deity described and followed by the Christian Church. In July 1997, we asked a nationwide sample of 1,012 adults to describe the God they believe in. Two out of three adults (67 percent) said they believe that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the universe who rules the world today. The remaining one-third described their god as ‘the total realization of personal, human potential’; or ‘a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach’; or said, ‘Everyone is God’; ‘There are many gods, each with different power and authority’; or ‘There is no such thing as God.’ The remaining 5 percent said they did not know.” [Pages 25-26]

According to Barna, a third of Americans does not really believe in **“God”** at all.

In spite of all the sermons about how belief makes a difference in life, the numbers show that Christians are not better off than unbelievers. At least one born-again sociologist is honest enough to admit it.

Or did we know this already?

- <http://bit.ly/2Kv0OeP>

Did you get that?

Barna compares the behaviors and attitudes of Christians with Non-Christians . . . and concludes: ***“We think and behave no differently from anyone else.”***

That is alarming to me and hopefully to you as well. I think for Peter, it was alarming to him and that is why he is speaking about how we are to live out our lives as Christians!

That is why I have called our study this morning – ***ABSTAIN!***

Pretty simple and we will dig more into that as we looking at these verses here in I Peter.

I have broken these two verses into the following points. They are,

THE BATTLE – I PETER 2:11

THE WITNESS – I PETER 2:12

What Peter will be speaking about is born out of what he wrote in I Peter 2:9-10. This is what Peter said, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”**

Because of all that God has given to us, Peter will now admonish us to walk accordingly and to abstain from those things that would stain our witness for Christ!

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Peter chapter 2, beginning in verse 11 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic –

ABSTAIN!

I PETER 2

VERSE 11

As this verse opens up you can see the concern, the admonition for the readers and hearers of this letter to do something. He is begging them to abstain from the flesh, and we will deal with that in a second.

First, we need to address the issue of who we are and where we are living, and Peter gives us that information.

In fact, in describing us Peter uses two different words. The two words that Peter uses are **“sojourner”** and then **“pilgrim.”**

I think Peter wants to drive this point home and it will relate to what we are to be abstaining from.

First of all, the Greek word for *sojourner* is (*paroikous*) and it literally means ***“alongside the house.”***

One writer put it like this regarding this word. He wrote, ***“The word came to denote any person who lives in a country not his own and is therefore a foreigner. The term fits Christians who do not belong to this world’s system but live alongside those who do.”***

That should fit us perfectly, and yet, so many Christians are trying to make this world their home and it is not working for them because this is not their home. And the only way to make it their home is to compromise their faith and that is what some have done!

Look at the church and look at the lives of Christians today and they have become indistinguishable from the unsaved world around it!

We want to fit in, and you can't tell where the world ends and the Christian life or the Christian church begins!

In churches, they have become entertainment centers where the goats or the unsaved are being entertained and the sheep are starving to death!

And please understand that this is not just big churches or famous people, this goes on in small and large churches and in the famous and common Christian's life.

And what is sad to me is that they don't even recognize what they are doing as they are trying to fit into the world's system which is at war with God! Or they just don't care, which is even sadder to me!

We also have the word "**pilgrim**" which translates a Greek word that applies to a person who is traveling through a country but who has settled down briefly to live among the native population.

Again, we live in this world, but this world should not live in us. And keep in mind that these two words are not two different truths, but Peter uses both of them to emphasize this single point, this is not our home!

Paul made that point very clear in Philippians 3:20 when he wrote, "**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

If this has become our home, this world system, something is wrong and if you are saved, then your witness will be compromised.

Our citizenship is in heaven and because this is not our home, we wait for the Lord to come and take us home.

That does not mean we sit around and do nothing waiting for the Lord to come. We are to be witnesses of Him, a light that shines in this dark world!

In saying that, can't you just feel the heart of Peter as he pleads with them to abstain from fleshly lusts, the things the world uses to lure you away from God.

You see, those things should not have a hold on us because we are not of this world, we are just passing through on our way home because our citizenship is in heaven.

That is Paul's point in Hebrews 11:13-16 where he wrote, **“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”**

Keep in mind that the homeland that they were waiting for was not Israel, but heaven! And they too were strangers and pilgrims on this earth awaiting that day to go home!

We, as Christians live on this earth, obviously! But we are not part of the earth, or this fallen world system. That is what I mean. When I speak of the *earth* or this *world*, I am speaking of the world system that is in opposition to God!

We are passing through where the “**earth-dwellers**” or someone who has not come to saving faith, they will be judged!

And so here we are, living in this world but not of this world, and because of that there is a battle that is going on.

To show that, we see Peter admonish us to “**abstain**” which is a word that literally is saying we are to “*hold oneself constantly back from*” these things that are going to bring us down.

Yes, there is a tug to pull us back into the world and that will happen if we take our eyes off of Jesus and let the lusts of the flesh tempt us!

That is what we are fighting against!

Remember the story of Lot who lived in Sodom and in II Peter 2:4-9 we are told, “**For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) - then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.**”

My focus in these verses is going to be Lot. We will get to the rest of what Peter is saying when we get to II Peter.

Remember the story. Abraham's nephew was Lot and Abraham was watching over him as they traveled.

But their herds were getting too big, and they needed to separate, and Abraham told Lot to pick the area he wanted to live in, and he would go to another area.

As Lot looked over the land he saw Sodom, it was beautiful, the *lust of the eyes*.

He coveted the land of Sodom, the *lust of the flesh*.

And Lot took Sodom for his home, *the pride of life*.

The problem with this city was its wickedness, sexual immorality, homosexuality that seemed to be practiced by most of the people of the city.

And Peter tells us that these conditions tormented or oppressed his soul. But that did not change his behavior.

The problem for Lot is that he failed to separate himself and his family from this ungodly living. And in the end, he lost everything because he was so closely associated with these things and his family couldn't let go!

God was going to destroy this city and the others that were around it. And as the angels warned Lot of the coming judgment, he tried to tell his sons-in-law, but they thought he was joking, "*The judgment of God, get real!*" and they died in the judgment!

His wife, as they left the city she looked back and turned into a pillar of salt.

And his two daughters who came out with him, they got him drunk and had sex with him, bearing children, who became the Moabites and Ammonites, enemies of the children of Israel.

For Lot himself, the angles had to pull him out of the city, he didn't want to let go.

In other words, don't let the world or the things of this world have a grip on your life like that!

Don't put yourself in a situation where you will be tempted because the battle is on, and you need to be wise!

You see, Peter tells us that this battle is against those fleshly lusts, and it is a battle for our soul, what will control our lives!

But we can have victory because Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16, “**. . . Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**”

But why do we have to walk in the Spirit?

Paul goes on to tell us, “**For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**” Galatians 5:17.

And when we see the word “**flesh**” it can mean the physical body, but it can also relate to our fallen nature or what we were born with, what we inherited from Adam. This fallen nature is what Peter is speaking about here.

You see, the flesh wants to control us, our mind and body so that they will obey the desires of our fallen nature, which is in opposition to God!

When we come to Christ we are born again and the sin that separated us from Christ has been taken away and we can commune with God once again!

Then what is the problem?

The problem is that the ***old nature*** is not taken away, the flesh remains and that is the battle!

Can we have victory over this old nature?

Yes, we just read that in Galatians, but that victory is a conditional one!

What do I mean by that?

If that promise is going to be seen in our lives that means we must do something to obtain it. I am not speaking of salvation here, but our sanctification.

What must we do?

Paul told us that we must “**walk in the Spirit**” and if we obey, then the lusts of the flesh will not control our lives!

In fact, the Greek word for “**walk**” is in the present imperative and all that means is that Paul is commanding us to keep on walking in the Spirit, don’t give up!

Now the big question is – “*What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?*”

Simply and at the forefront you must be saved because, then and only then does the Holy Spirit come to live inside of you!

Then you must surrender yourself to what the Holy Spirit is showing you as you read the Word of God.

And it is interesting because, like I have said, we will see in I Peter 2:13-3:12 ***THE SUBMISSION OF THE BELIEVER*** or the ***SURRENDER OF THE BELIEVER TO VARIOUS GROUPS OF PEOPLE!***

That is why we must walk day by day in the Spirit and we will make that fallen nature inoperative.

In fact, you feed the Spirit, and you will do well, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

But if you start to feed the flesh, fight against the flesh, you will lose the battle.

Abstain from these lusts, avoid them, keep them from your life and you will not give that fallen nature a chance to rise up and control you!

And I am not saying that this is easy, or it is not a battle. We are told that it is a battle that we face every day when we get up from bed.

And I do understand that some like to try and fight against the flesh, but that does not work, and it will only make you frustrated and discouraged.

Let me ask you a question.

What is the best way to get rid of darkness?

Do you fight against the darkness?

No, how can you do that?

Then what do you do?

You turn on the light and the light will expel the darkness!

That is what we are to do!

What do I mean by that?

I mean that we are to read the Bible, be in prayer, be in fellowship with other Christians, draw close to God and He will draw close to you!

I like what D. L. Moody once said and I agree with him. He said, ***“I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any man I know.”***

And I can say, ***“I have more trouble with Joe Guglielmo than with any man I know.”***

And I am sure you feel the same way, not about me hopefully, but you know what I mean.

It is that battle, the spiritual warfare that we are in, and that battle is primarily with our fallen nature!

Let me ask you this.

What happens when we are not being controlled by the Holy Spirit?

First of all, please understand that the physical drives that we have, when they are under the control of the Holy Spirit, are normal, they are beneficial.

But, when they are controlled by man's fallen nature, they then become perverted, and they are destructive!

Think about it.

Look at what is going on in the world today.

We see that thirst becomes drunkenness!

Hunger becomes gluttony!

Sleep becomes laziness!

Sex becomes immorality!

In other words, these are the works of the flesh!

And here's the thing. You can't reason or negotiate with the fallen nature.

You can't rehabilitate the fallen nature!

Then what can we do?

This is the only answer – ***YOU MUST CRUCIFY THE FLESH!***

That is what Paul said in Galatians 5:24, "**And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**And those who belong to Christ Jesus (the Messiah) have crucified the flesh (the godless human nature) with its passions and appetites and desires.**"

How do we crucify the flesh?

Don't feed it! Don't make a treaty with it! Just crucify it and walk in the Spirit, feed the Spirit, spend time with God and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh which wage war on your soul!

We have seen – ***THE BATTLE!***

As we read on, we will look at the last point – ***THE WITNESS!***

VERSE 12

Now you may wonder why this is such a big deal, the way we live out our faith!

One of the reasons is that Peter says the way we live out our faith is – ***THE WITNESS!***

One writer expounded on this as he wrote,

In one important respect, today's culture is similar to that of Peter's time - unbelievers from all quarters constantly attack and criticize Christianity.

Such opponents of the gospel are often vocal in their criticism and many have succeeded in capturing the major economic, social, and educational institutions of Western society.

Christian apologist Wilbur M. Smith at the end of World War II correctly observed that the world has opposed Christianity ever since Jesus' day and believers should not expect things to be different today:

At first one would think that a religion which exalts and seeks to follow the only perfect and righteous man who has ever lived on this earth, who never harmed anyone, whose words delivered from superstition and fear, whose works redeemed from pain, and demons, and death, and hunger, whose life was as a great shaft of light shot into the murky darkness of the Roman world, in that sensual and skeptic century, who died because He loved us, and who always sought to bring men into communion with God, to bestow upon them eternal life and a home in heaven, one would have thought that such a character, and the religion which His life and work on earth established, would have been welcomed with open arms the first moment it was announced, and would, by its very message, the good works which flowed from it, and the hope which it established, never know opposition, or attack, or denunciation, except from the demons of hell, and Satan, who is a liar and murderer from the beginning. But such has not been its history. In fact, the New Testament, itself, from the records of the birth of our Lord down to the end of St. John's vision of the era of anarchy and persecution to come, testifies in the most startling way to the fact that Christ Himself was most viciously and constantly attacked, that His apostles suffered the same opposition, and that it was predicted by these very apostles that Christianity would continue so to suffer, down to the end of this age. (Therefore, Stand [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1945], 1)

It is often the scandalous conduct of so-called Christians that provides fuel for the critics' and skeptics' vicious accusations, whereas the godliness of true Christians does the most to silence Christianity's opponents.

Commentator Robert Leighton wrote,

When a Christian walks irreprovably, his enemies have no where to fasten their teeth on him, but are forced to gnaw their own malignant tongues. As it secures the godly, thus to stop the lying mouths of foolish men, so it is as painful to them to be thus stopped, as muzzling is to beasts, and it punishes their malice. And this is a wise Christian's way, instead of impatiently fretting at the mistakes or wilful miscensures of men, to keep still on his calm temper of mind, and upright course of life, and silent innocence; this, as a rock, breaks the waves into foam that roar about it. (Commentary on First Peter [reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972], 195)

The nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Alexander MacLaren commented, *“The world takes its notions of God, most of all, from the people who say that they belong to God's family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. They see us; they only hear about Jesus Christ”* (First and Second Peter and First John [New York: Eaton and Maines, 1910], 105).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told all who would seriously follow Him, *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”* (Matt 5:16).

That is the essence of what Peter in this passage exhorted his readers to do: live godly lives, which is the single most effective foundation for making the gospel attractive and believable.

The recipients of the apostle's letter needed some motivation to persevere in their evangelism in the midst of the stressful and difficult trials and persecutions they were encountering.

Peter called his readers to fortify their testimonies with two crucial aspects of righteous living: a personal, godly discipline that is inward and private, and a personal, godly deportment that is outward and public.

- John MacArthur, 1 Peter 2:11-12

First of all, let me say this. If you don't build up the inner man, if you don't spend time with God then your outward and public witness of Him will be off, way off!

What God is doing on the inside, in the inner man, will be manifested outwardly, in the things we do and then things we say!

And here is the big problem many times and I will show you the problem after I ask you this question.

What happens when we succumb to the lusts of the flesh?

It is what Peter tells us here. When we succumb to the lusts of the flesh, we will then give the enemies of God an opportunity to mock God and the faith we claim to have. In other words – ***OUR WITNESS WILL BE DESTROYED!***

You see, people will read our lives more than they read the Bible and thus, they can learn a lot about our faith, about our God by the way we live our lives!

That, of course, can be positive or negative depending on how we are living!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Don't give the enemies of God fuel for their fire of disbelief but live in a way that will cause them to desire Christ!

Let me show you what I mean because this is a battle.

In the early church many Christians were falsely accused of great crimes.

The unbelievers or pagans said that at the communion of Christians they ate the flesh and drank the blood of a baby in a cannibalistic ritual.

Not only that but they said that Christian *“agape feasts”* were nothing more than wild orgies.

And they were also antisocial because they did not participate in society’s immoral entertainment!

And Christians were nothing more than atheists because they did not worship idols!

The interesting thing is that these false accusations, or as we would call it today – *FAKE NEWS*, fell apart.

How did that happen?

Because the people saw that Christians were not immoral people as they watched the way they lived out their faith.

Barclay put it like this, *“The striking fact of history is that by their lives the Christians actually did defeat the slanders of the heathen. In the early part of the third century Celsus made the most famous and the most systematic attack of all upon the Christians in which he accused them of ignorance and foolishness and superstition and all kinds of things – but never of immorality.”* (Barclay)

A more recent example of what godly faith can do in people’s lives is shared with us in this story. We are told,

A stirring twentieth-century example of how godly living can influence the salvation of unbelievers comes from the events in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in the Philippines during World War II.

American missionaries Herb and Ruth Clingen and their young son were prisoners of the Japanese for three years. Herb's diary told how his family's captors tortured, murdered, and starved to death many of the camp's other inmates.

The prisoners particularly hated and feared the camp commandant, Konishi. Herb described one especially diabolical plan Konishi forced on the Clingens and their fellow inmates near the end of the war:

Konishi found an inventive way to abuse us even more. He increased the food ration but gave us palay - unhusked rice. Eating rice with its razor-sharp outer shell would cause intestinal bleeding that would kill us in hours. We had no tools to remove the husks, and doing the job manually - by pounding the grain or rolling it with a heavy stick - consumed more calories than the rice would supply. It was a death sentence for all internees. (Herb and Ruth Clingen, "*Song of Deliverance*," Masterpiece magazine [Spring 1989], 12; emphasis in original)

But divine providence spared the Clingens and others in February 1945 when Allied forces liberated the prison camp. That prevented the commandant from carrying out his plan of shooting and killing all surviving prisoners.

Years later the Clingens ***“learned that Konishi had been found working as a grounds keeper at a Manila golf course. He was put on trial for his war crimes and hanged. Before his execution he professed conversion to Christianity, saying he had been deeply affected by the testimony of the Christian missionaries he had persecuted”*** ("*Song of Deliverance*," 13).

Effective evangelism flows from the power of a righteous life.

- John MacArthur, 1 Peter 2:11-12

May we live in such a way that by our actions we not only glorify our heavenly Father, but we are a witness to unbelievers of our faith, and we don't give them ammunition to shoot at us for our bad behavior!

Now what does Peter mean when he says that our good works, our good behavior that they observe will “**glorify God in the day of visitation**”?

It may be speaking of this.

A day of visitation is any time the Lord draws near, either in grace or in judgment. The expression is used in Luke 19:41–44.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it did not know the time of its visitation, that is, Jerusalem did not realize that the Messiah had come in love and mercy.

Here it may mean:

- (1) The day when God’s grace will visit the critics and they are saved, or
- (2) the day of judgment when the unsaved will stand before God.

Saul of Tarsus illustrates the first interpretation. He had shared in accusing Stephen, but Stephen’s good deeds triumphed over all opposition. When God visited Saul in mercy on the road to Damascus, the repentant Pharisee glorified God and went forth, like Stephen, to influence others by the radiance of a Christ-filled life.

- William MacDonald

Make no mistake about it, there is – ***THE BATTLE!***

We must walk in the Spirit, surrender to the Spirit’s direction and guiding so that we don’t feed the flesh and succumb to the wickedness of the flesh!

And like I have said, the importance of living righteous lives, not perfect, but striving for holiness, is – ***THE WITNESS!***

Our lives should be shining the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this dark and immoral world so that they can come to saving faith!

Next time, as we continue on in our study of I Peter, we will see – ***THE SUBMISSION OF THE BELIEVER!***

This covers I Peter 2:13 to 3:12!

Why is this important?

Because it shows us what putting on the new man looks like!