

## Week 10 - The Sojourner's Style - 1Peter 2:11-12

### Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11-14

#### Introduction

This morning, we come to a turning point in Peter's letter as he pivots from a largely theological presentation that contained some application to more practical teaching sprinkled with some theological statements added at key points

And whereas we saw Peter issue some general exhortations to holiness in the first part of his letter, in what remains of his letter he will be giving very specific instructions about how Christ-followers should live in real-life situations

And the two verses we will be studying today serve as both a transition to the latter part of the letter and a synopsis or short summary of what he will teach in detail from here to the end of his letter

I think most of you are aware that I had a 30-year career in manufacturing before I was called to vocational ministry

I am a journeyman toolmaker and I worked primarily in the metal-stamping industry as a toolmaker and tool designer

In my last manufacturing role, I was the manager of a small Tool & Die company

I had been associated with the owner of the company for a number of years before he hired me to run his business as he was one of the vendors I worked with when I was employed at another company

And one of the reasons he said he wanted me to run his business was my honesty which he had seen demonstrated during our association

Then one day, he discovered I had been honest with one of our customers about how far along we were in constructing a tool we were making for them and he was furious that I had not lied to that customer

It seems he wanted me to be honest but not *too* honest

Frankly, it would have been less painful to have lied to the customer because being honest about being behind on his tool caused the customer to be unhappy and my boss was very unhappy

Let's just say a lot of negativity was poured out on Ol' Bill that day at high volume and harsh tones and rough language

All for giving an honest report

Somehow, I think Peter and his original audience would not have been surprised by what happened to me that day or the temptation to lie to make life easier

In general, those are the themes of this morning's passage and as we look at the verses before us we are going to see how Peter says a Christ-follower should live in this world and what it takes to live that way

If you are taking notes, we will first see that we need to have **the proper mentality** if we are going to live as we should

Then we will see that we must have **a pilgrim's private life** and **a praiseworthy public life**

Those are foundational characteristics that should define a follower of Jesus Christ and they are the basis of all the instructions Peter will give in the rest of his letter

So let's turn our attention to **1Peter 2:11-12** and see what we can learn from them

Peter writes:

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

The first thing we want to make note of that our identity in Christ should result in a certain way of looking at ourselves and that there is a proper mentality that the Christ-follower should have

## **I. The Proper Mentality**

According to Webster, mentality is the habitual or characteristic mental attitude that determines how you will interpret and respond to situations

And the first characteristic Peter reveals in verse 11 is that we are “beloved”

We know from the gospels that Peter was a rugged fisherman and the image we have of him is that he was a real man’s man so it’s kind of interesting to see him call his original audience “beloved”

But the fact is that Peter uses the word 8 times in his epistles with 6 of those being in direct address of the audience he was writing to

The other two were in reference to “our beloved Paul” in one case and quoting the Father’s declaration that Jesus is his “beloved Son” in the other

And, of course Peter is letting his readers know of his own love for them

As Mary Poppins sang, “A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down in a most delightful way” and, as we read in **Ephesians 4:15**, we are to speak the truth in love

It’s a good policy to remind people you love them before you set out to urge them to do something

After all, I suspect you, like me, are far more willing to be pushed by a friend you know has affection for you than you are to be pressed by a stranger

So Peter begins by reminding them of his love for them but, even more importantly, he is reminding them once more that God loves them as he prepares them to hear the exhortations he is about to give

And I suspect that Peter reminds them of his and God’s love for them to cause them to want to comply

The recognition that we are beloved by God should serve as sufficient motivation to do what God requires and we should want to please him and bring honor to him by our obedience

Notice also that Peter doesn’t command his original readers

Rather, he ‘urges’ them and the word Peter uses means literally to call someone to your side to give them aid or help and it indicates an earnest entreaty to do what is being encouraged - it’s more of an appeal than a demand

Then Peter once again reminds his readers that they are “*sojourners and exiles*” again as a motivating factor for what he is about to urge them to do

The Greek words Peter uses for those two terms provide some interesting nuance

On the one hand we see a person who is just passing through somewhere that is not their home but on the other hand we see someone who dwells alongside those to whom he is a stranger

So while every person who has ever lived is merely passing through this world on their way to eternity, Christ-followers are doing so in the midst of a people who are not truly their people

If you’ve ever had the opportunity to travel internationally, you’ve likely experienced what I’m about to describe

When Kathy and I travelled to Mexico to spend some time with our daughter, Michelle, who was going to university there, we were very aware that we really didn’t belong

The Mexican people all looked and dressed and behaved much the same as we did

Our living accommodations, the taxi cabs, the shopping centers, restaurants, and so forth were all familiar

But we were just passing through and our attachment was to home

And, let’s face it, there’s something about needing a passport to get in and out of a place that makes you quite aware you aren’t at home

As Christ-followers, we always need to keep the fact that we are travelers who are just passing through this world and not allow ourselves to get attached to the things of this world

And that's what Peter turns his attention to next

## **II. A Pilgrim's Private Life**

When we read in verse 11 [**1Peter 2:11**] that we are "*to abstain from the passions of the flesh*" our minds tend to go straight to sexual sins

And the fact that the King James Bible and other English translations use the term "fleshly lusts" where the ESV uses "passions" further fuels that understanding but that isn't Peter's meaning here

Actually, the word Peter uses is a neutral term that denotes the presence of strong desires or impulses or cravings of any kind whether they are good or evil with the aim of the desire being determined by the surrounding context

Many desires are God-given and therefore proper and God wants us to enjoy what he has provided as we give him thanks for them

**Psalm 37:4** tells us if we delight ourselves in the Lord he will give us the desires of our heart

We just saw two weeks ago in **1Peter 2:2** that we are commanded to desire the pure milk of God's Word

In **Psalm 20:4** we see the psalmist pray that God would grant our heart's desire and fulfill our plans

And so forth

But what Peter is talking about here are the desires of the flesh or the desires of our earthly existence such as possessions, position, power, and pleasure - things that are self-serving or self-promoting - that become strong drives

And also the way the world thinks and acts

The ideas, priorities, strategies, values, attitudes, and the conventional wisdom of the present age are an ever-present siren song that seeks to lull us into compliance and conformity

Pause for just a moment and consider all the things surrounding us that seem "normal" but, upon even the merest reflection, show themselves to be contrary to the kingdom of God

What Peter is talking about here involves the inner person - one's private thought life

And we may well think that what we think is of little consequence as long as it doesn't lead to sinful action

But therein lies the rub doesn't it?

To entertain such desires may appear momentarily attractive and entirely harmless but we know that how we think often becomes how we behave

In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin writes that he was a vegetarian, refusing all animal flesh, for a while in his youth

Then one day he was on a boat when the wind died away leaving them temporarily becalmed

With nothing else to do, the sailors decided to fish and soon had caught a number of cod that were soon frying and putting off the most delightful aroma

When the smell of the cooking fish met young Ben's growing appetite his vegetarianism was put to the test and he found himself in the midst of a battle between his desire and his will

Then he noticed that as the fishermen cleaned the fish a number of the cod had smaller fish in their stomachs and he reasoned: if fish eat one another, why can't people eat fish?

And satisfied with his logic he ate some fish adding, "So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."

And, sadly, Ben Franklin continued to live by that principle for the remainder of his life - much like most people do

We are people of reason and the desires of this world that seek to draw us away from the path of righteousness are enticing so we can always find a reason for entertaining them if we notice them at all

But Peter says the desires of this world “*wage war against your soul*”

By that he means that they are enemies that seek to inflict harm on the Christ-follower by making him spiritually weak and ineffective

They are continually doing battle against us and we should expect to engage in the struggle against compromise and the adoption of them until we see the Lord

We must be ready to fight against our misdirected physical appetites and to combat ill tempers, evil ambitions, and unsavory emotions

As sojourners and exiles we cannot allow ourselves to become too comfortable in this world because comfort leads to complacency and complacency leads to conformity

Sadly, I think we are prone to compromise currently because we have things pretty good compared to Christ-followers throughout history and those in much of the world today

In what other time and place do we find people complaining of ‘freezing to death’ when the temperature drops below 67 degrees or ‘being cooked alive’ when the temperature gets above 73 degrees in the sanctuary?

The relative ease we’ve enjoyed has made us soft and caused us to forget that we are involved in spiritual warfare

The enemy wants nothing more than to render us ineffective through adopting the desires of the age and making them our own so we must constantly be living the life of a pilgrim as we refuse to become attached to the things of this life

We do well to remember John’s words in **1John 2:15-17** –

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

It pays for us to remember that it’s not the water outside the ship that sinks it - it’s only the water that gets inside

The world around us is an ever-present threat to our walk as sojourners but, if the water can be kept out, our ship will remain afloat

We are in the world but not of the world and we cannot afford to let the world and its desires find a way in

This world is not our home; we’re just a passin’ through and we dare not let ourselves be encumbered by the things of this world lest they take us down

That’s the negative side of Peter’s argument and next he turns to the positive side and says that we should not only have the private life of a pilgrim but that we must also lead a praiseworthy public life

### **III. A Praiseworthy Public Life**

Look with me again at verse 12 [**1Peter 2:12**] –

*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.*

If you pay attention to the news or social media it seems that one of the greatest evils in the world today is when a Christ-follower dares to share their faith

And many Christ-followers are just fine with keeping their beliefs to themselves and not talking about their faith because, for them, their beliefs are personal and they’d just as soon not talk about them anyway

Biblically, though, we aren’t permitted to only have a private, personal piety - we are meant to have a positive influence in the world - our faith must be lived publically

Our conduct here refers to our open, overt, public walk or manner of daily life that those around us witness - our behavior

There are two Greek words that Peter could have used here that would have conveyed roughly the same message as both mean to be morally or practically good

But the word he chose also carries the idea of being aesthetically good or beautiful - appealing to those who see it

And Peter says the character of the life of the Christ-follower should be this kind of good it should be admirable or praiseworthy

There is an almost universal standard for what people consider admirable - traits such as:

Honesty, politeness, generosity, well-mannered, consideration for others, humility, kindness, gentleness, being good humored, thankfulness, consistency, industriousness, perseverance, and the list could go on and on

But we can generally agree that a life lived according to biblical principles will be an attractive life, right?

Perhaps you could name someone who you know who is such an absolutely lovely person in their character that everyone who knows them can find only good things to say about them

Scripture tells us that Jesus was perhaps the most winsome person who ever lived and that people were just naturally drawn to him and we can easily say he sets the standard for the kind of life his followers should live

We touched on this last week but I need to mention it again in this context - when people learn you claim to be a follower of Christ they will be watching you and how you conduct your life to see what they can learn about Christ

How we conduct ourselves is an advertisement for Christianity and our actions either cause others to think of it more highly or lowly

As Scottish theologian William Barclay put it: The strongest missionary force in the world is a Christian life

The unsaved watch how you handle problems that arise; they note how you talk about others; they watch to see what your work habits are like; they note how you treat the people around you; they see how you react to current events

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "Ugly American" before

It's a stereotype that depicts American citizens traveling abroad and engaging in behavior that is offensive to the people who live there

Sadly, it's a pejorative that's been fairly earned for the most part and people judge all Americans by those they saw behaving badly

And that's the opposite of how Peter says Christ-followers should live as sojourners and exiles on earth

Now we do need to understand something here

Living a praiseworthy life doesn't mean you can expect to be praised for it - at least not directly and not invariably

After all, Jesus lived the most praiseworthy life that has ever been lived and he was still put to death in part because his life was such a contrast to the lives of wicked men that they simply couldn't abide it

Just last week when we looked at 1Peter 2:8 we saw how Jesus is a rock of offense and a stumbling block to many

And people who love the dark are going to hate the light so there will undoubtedly be trouble in store for the one who truly seeks to follow Christ

Peter alludes to that as a virtual certainty when he writes in verse 12, not "if" but "*when they speak against you as evildoers*"

When you live as a sojourner and a follower of Christ you can expect to be gossiped about, lied about, joked about, spoken ill of, treated unkindly, and put down - you may as well count on it

In fact, Paul writes in **2Timothy 3:12** *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”*

The insults and derisions we face in this country today because of our Christianity is minor compared to what the early church faced

As pastor David Guzik put it in his commentary on 1Peter:

“Christians were falsely accused of great crimes in the early church. Pagans said that at communion Christians ate the flesh and drank the blood of a baby in a cannibalistic ritual. They said that Christian “agape feasts” were wild orgies. They said that Christians were antisocial because they did not participate in society’s immoral entertainment. They said that Christians were atheists because they did not worship idols.”

But Peter says it won’t always be this way

He writes that *“in the day of visitation”* the *“Gentiles”* or the unsaved that currently slander believers, *“may see your good deeds and glorify God”*

And pastor Guzik continues that:

*“...over time, it was clear that Christians were not immoral people - and it was shown by their lives.”*

When exactly Peter had in mind when he mentioned the “day of visitation” is debated and either or even both sides of the debate are possible so I will just lay them both before you and let you determine for yourself what he means

The first option is that there may well come a day when the Lord stirs the heart of the unsaved slanderer and enables them to discern the truth of the gospel and opens their hearts to accept it

On that day, they will remember the example of the lives of the faithful Christ-followers and praise God for their testimony

In Luke 19:44 Jesus refers to visitation in the context of God offering salvation to Jerusalem

The other thought is that Peter is referring to the day of judgment when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father as we read in **Philippians 2:10-11**

**Personally, I think the first option presents the best answer to what Peter had in mind - but I could be wrong**

However, it seems more likely that Peter had in mind the voluntary praise of the converted rather than the compelled confession of the unconverted

Also, in the 61 uses in the New Testament of the word translated “glorify” it is never used to speak of unbelievers who are forced to admit that God or his people have been right all along

In fact, **Revelation 16:9** goes so far as to say they won’t do this even in the midst of the plagues that come at the end of the world

Like I said, I think this is the best interpretation but I could be wrong and I am holding my opinion loosely and I am willing to be shown differently

The bottom line that we can all agree on is that God will at some point receive praise because of the honorable conduct of believers as they sojourn on this earth

## Conclusion

In this letter, Peter wrote to several congregations who were in need of a way to describe, explain, and even defend their Christian faith to their unbelieving neighbors

And, while we might expect Peter to have given them a logical argument so that they could verbally spar with their neighbors and convince them of the right he didn't teach them how to debate

Instead he instructed them how to think and how to live so that, by their example, their neighbors might well be convinced and come to Christ

The bottom line of our passage this morning is this:

God's desire is for his Son's followers to remain among those who are still unsaved but he doesn't mean for us to be perfectly at ease in this place and he expects us to live as model citizens of heaven while we sojourn here

And while God desires for us to enjoy our time here - he doesn't expect us to live as ascetics but wants us to enjoy the good gifts he provides and give him thanks for them

Christ-followers living in an unbelieving society are to live as strangers in a strange land not allowing themselves to be beguiled by the attractions of this world and maintaining exemplary patterns of life so that unbelievers will be saved and glorify God

We must be transformed from the inside out by first correcting our inner, private life and then allowing it to control our outer, public life so that our lives will serve as an evangelistic message to those who surround us

**Titus 2:11-14 (page 998)**

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.