

## Living as Exiles

*1 Peter 2:11-12*

### Introduction

Part 1 of Living as Christians in a Secular Age – To Reorient Our Priorities (U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia)

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### Read 1 Peter 2:11-12

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### Background

The chief command in verses 11-12 is the command to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which means “stay away from” or “be far away from” the desires that originate with our fallen, broken, sinful nature. However, Peter frames this call to obedience in terms of the Christian’s identity as “exiles and sojourners” in the world.

### Exposition

#### I. Living as Exiles means “Not Living According to the Desires of the Flesh”

Peter’s readers need to realize that they are called to living according to the standards and patterns of Christ’s kingdom, not this world. *They are obligated to live in light of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.* This is exceedingly clear in passages like **Acts 5:29** where we read about Peter and the apostle challenging the authority of the Roman empire to silence their witness about Christ. When the governing officials told Peter and the apostles that they must stop speaking about Jesus, they responded, “We must obey God rather than men.”

We, like Peter and the apostles must remember that above everyone and everything in this world, we answer to God. We belong to God. This world is not our home. America is not our homeland. It is the land of our sojourning. It is the land of our exile. We are longing, or at least, should be longing for home! This is never more evident than in the lives of older saints who have endured great loss in this world. I have lost count of how many times I have sat down with older believers and been told about how they are ready to go home. Sadly, many of those who are not in the later stages of life have grown comfortable here in this world. But Peter, like our dear brothers and sisters who are nearing eternity, we must remember that we do not belong to this world. And because we do not belong to this world, we must abstain from the fleshly desire that characterize this world.

#### II. Living as Exiles means “Recognizing that we are in a Spiritual Battle.”

Peter’s audience needed to understand that not only were they expected to live according to the standards of Christ’s kingdom, they also needed to see the danger of living according to the standards of this world. Paul writes about this same reality in **Galatians 5:17**, which says, “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.” **James 4:1**, likewise, states “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”

We, like Peter’s audience, must realize that this world is no friend of the gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus. When we indulge in the sinful desires of the world, whether it be lust, gluttony, greed, laziness, anger, or pride, even when we do not realize it, our indulgence of such sin is waging a war against us. As such, sin is slow but certain suicide. The refusal to turn away from sin always leads to death. But fortunately, in God’s mercy, He has provided us with a means of escape in Christ that we “might walk by the Spirit, and not gratify the desires of the flesh” (**Gal. 5:17**).

In other words, we are waging war against the sin that seek to destroy us by walking in the newness of life that the Holy Spirit has both revealed in Scripture and is at work to produce in us. We are not fighting this fight against sin on our own. We are fighting to abstain from sin by the very power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead! We abstain from the passions of our flesh by living according to the Spirit who indwells us!

**Someone here today might feel completely enslaved to sin this morning, and if you are not careful, you will misunderstand what I am saying. I am not saying that you simply need to develop more “willpower” to overcome the “desires of your flesh.” I am saying that you need supernatural power from God above to overcome the “desires of your flesh.” This is why Jesus appeared, “to destroy the works of Satan” that hold men and women in their sway. He came to set you free, and if you would turn away from your sin to Him this morning, He promises to save you. To deliver you. Would you ask Him to have mercy on you this morning? Would you ask Him to give you faith? To empower you to turn away from the sins that wage war against you?**

**Friends, if our greatest need as a society was political, God would have sent a politician. But instead, He sent a Savior, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to set us from the condemnation that we deserve on account of our sin and rebellion. This means that biggest question before us is not who you intend to vote for in November, but rather, who will serve you today? Who will you place your hope in today?**

But it is not simply for our good that we abstain from the desires of our flesh, we do it for others also, which is Peter’s final point...

### III. Living as Exiles means “Testifying of Jesus Christ through our words and deeds”

Peter wants his readers to see that there is an inextricable relationship between the lives of God’s people and the message of salvation that they proclaim. Peter’s aim is to produce a consistency between the message of salvation and the messengers of salvation. If you look at 1 Peter 2:9-10, you will see that we were saved to proclaim that excellencies of the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Peter continues that idea here in verse 12, noting that some people in society will accuse followers of Christ of doing evil. From the discomfort of their own darkness, they will look at the way Christians raise their children, conduct themselves at work, and care for one another. They will hear Christians speak about how Christ is the only sufficient Savior of sinners. They will be repulsed by the message regarding the justice and holiness of God. They will consider things like the Christian sexual ethic or the way that Christians speak of the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. And at times, they will revile us, speak evil against us, and even persecute us. But we, as those who have followed Christ, as those who have been saved to proclaim, we will not grow weary in doing good.

For we realize, we are a: Transformed people proclaiming a message of transformation. Forgiven people proclaiming a message of forgiveness. Loving people proclaiming a message of love. Hope-filled people proclaiming a message of hope. Reconciled people proclaiming a message of reconciliation.

But, of course, all of this is condition upon us living lives that are in fact truly different, which leads me to say this in the midst of our current political climate: **As Christians, if our neighbors and co-workers hear more from us about our political opinions than our convictions regarding the power of Christ to save sinners, then we are guilty of spiritual insubordination for ignoring the Great Commission. And we need to repent and reprioritize the Gospel in our lives.**

## Conclusion

How we live matters because it reflects which world we belong to!

How we live matters because we are spiritual battle!

How we live matters because our actions impact others!

Is this not exactly what the apostle Paul meant when he said, “You are not your own. You have been bought with a price, therefore, honor God with the entirety of your being.”

You may say, “But, that’s legalism!” No, it is not! It’s liberty! It’s freedom! It’s not legalism! I’m not saying that you have to do the things in order to be saved, which is legalism! I’m saying that saved people do these things! They abstain from fleshly desires for the very reasons that Peter gave his readers!

You may say, “Well I don’t want to live like this. I want to live how I want. Jesus can’t rule over me like that. Who does He think He is?” Well, He is LORD! And what you are doing is exactly what the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day did! You are stumbling over the lordship and authority of Jesus and the end of your unbelief is a stumbling unto your own destruction! Your fleshly desires will kill you!

So, what will it be? What will you choose?

Today needs to be a day of repentance and faith! For some, you need to repent and believe for the first time! For other, you need to resume the work of repentance and faith that God began in you some time ago!