

Text: 1 Pt 2.11-12

We move into a new section of 1 Peter with our text tonight. I was thinking about the emphasis of the first part of the book:

Our glorious salvation (1.3-12)

Consequent imperatives (1.13-2.3)

- Hope for heaven
- Be holy
- Walk in fear
- Love one another
- Crave spiritual food

The description of our transformed life: the Living Stone made us living stones, giving a whole new way of life (2.4-10)

All the requirements and descriptions so far have to do with the inner life of the Christian. God calls us to attend to our own spiritual development.

But now we move to an outward focus.

- Live as aliens and strangers (2.11-12)
- Live in good order under human governments (2.13-17)
- Submit to social regulations (master/slave relations) (2.18-25)
- Live out your salvation in good marriage relations (3.1-7)
- General appeal to good conduct (3.8-12)

Our passage today transitions from the inward to the outward focus.

Read 1 Pt 2.11-12

Proposition: The way we live as Christians involves working the gospel into our lives so we can work the gospel out of our lives under the witness of the world.

I. The nature of the instruction

A. It is an appeal addressed to “the beloved”

1. Word not used in secular Gk for personal relationships
2. Yet very common in NT epistles (reflects the web of love that connects Christians)
3. Some trans. give us “dear friends” (NIV) — doesn’t carry the same weight as “beloved”

B. The opening verb: “beseech” (κῑν)

1. This is the same word as in Rm 12.1 (“I beseech you therefore brethren...)
2. The verb is indicative (a statement not a command)

C. The infinitive “to abstain” completes the instruction

1. “I urge ... to abstain” (“you” not in the Gk)
2. The construction sounds imperative in English, but this is an appeal, not a command

“True holiness is not procured by the application of a compelling external authority, but by awakening and strengthening the personal desire and will of those appealed to.”¹

D. One last distinction of this instruction: how to read “aliens and strangers”

1. Two options
 - a. Is it the object of urge? (I urge [you] as aliens and strangers)
 - b. Is it the subject of abstain? (I urge [you], as aliens and strangers, abstain...)
2. The grammar can go either way, essential meaning about the same
3. A little more emphatic if we join it to “abstain” — “this is the way you abstain, as aliens and strangers”

II. Adjusting to the spiritual culture shock**A. The reality of our alien status**

1. This is the beginning of the outward focus of our spiritual life
2. Salvation makes a real difference
3. The culture of the world (of the old self) is foreign to us now

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 154.

B. Peter's appeal: abstain from fleshly lusts

1. The way we do it is as "aliens and strangers"
2. The idea is that we are taking a new look at these things
3. The fleshly lusts aren't just immorality – any inordinate satisfaction of any human desires
4. These desires aren't "native" to the new spiritual life
5. The fleshly lusts: they belong to a class or category

"which" = ἀτινες, or "which are such as" [Hiebert], in other words, a categorizing word "undetermined person [or thing] belonging to a class or having a status, *who, one who*"²

6. They also wage war internally against our souls

"The verb 'war' (*strateuontai*) indicates an attitude of enmity and active hostility. The figure is not that of hand-to-hand fighting, but of a planned military expedition against a military objective. Those lusts constitute an army of soldiers engaged in constant warfare against the soul, aimed at capturing the believer and making him useless to God."³

This attitude is a new way of looking at the world, and at ourselves.

III. Display this change in public

- A. This new behaviour (cultivated in the inner man) is on display before "the Gentiles" (the world)

1. Lit. "the behaviour of you among the Gentiles having the good"
2. Good = beautiful, noble, praiseworthy

"The readers' behavior must be 'good' (*kalēn*), beautiful, morally noble, and praiseworthy—conduct that commends itself to the moral judgment of those around them."⁴

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 156.

⁴ Hiebert, 157.

B. The world attacks believers, even for their good things

1. In the Roman empire about this time, or shortly after, the Romans justified their mistreatment of Christians by telling lies about them

“Unbelievers viewed Christians with suspicion and hostility because the latter did not conform to their way of life (4:3–4). Since believers did not honor the typical gods of the community, they were naturally viewed as subversive and evil in that social context.”⁵

“Suetonius (born c. A.D. 70), in his life of Nero, with unconcealed approval recorded that the Emperor inflicted punishment ‘on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.’”⁶

2. Yet Peter calls us to live out our lives on the public stage nonetheless

“When Christians are misunderstood and slandered, the proper answer is not withdrawal from the world, nor contemptuous disregard of the opinions of one’s opponents, but manifest purity of conduct.”⁷

C. The effect of the pure testimony: glorifying God in the day of visitation

1. This could be a reference to the final judgement (Constable and others)
2. Yet Hiebert and others argue strongly for the present time
 - a. If men only glorify God at the last judgement, it is a forced response
 - b. Rather, as men investigate your deeds (“observe them”), they will change their minds
 - 1) Peter uses this term in 3.2 speaking of unbelieving husbands “observing” the behaviour of their believing wives

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 122.

⁶ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 158–59.

⁷ Hiebert, 159.

2) Peter suggests such men can be won to Christ by the behaviour

3. Example: church father Justyn Martyr

“For I myself, too, when I was delighting in the doctrines of Plato, and heard the Christians slandered, and saw them fearless of death, and of all other things which are counted fearful, perceived that it was impossible that they could be living in wickedness and pleasure.”⁸

Conclusion:

Proposition: The way we live as Christians involves working the gospel into our lives so we can work the gospel out of our lives under the witness of the world.

So we come to our text and find the apostle urging us to go on with the development of our spiritual life — first in the internal war against sinful desires; second in the public testimony of a transformed life.

⁸ Justin Martyr, Second Apology, xii in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, electronic ed. (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software, 2000).