

1 Peter 2:11-12

“Keep Your Conduct Honorable”

Most of us (before Christ came into our lives) were at a place whereby our lives were a wreck, we were at the end of self, felt like we could fall any farther down we'd made a complete mess of things. A better life wasn't what we needed, we needed a new life altogether; and we thank God that the bible declares, “...*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17 Far from simply fixing our old life God does away with that guy/gal for good and gives us *new* life, it's like when we were born initially, we're “born again” spiritually. We're given a new lease on life, a fresh start, a clean slate, our sin has been cast as far as the east is from the west and though our sin was as scarlet we've been made white as snow, though they were red like crimson we've been made white as wool before the Father.

But here's the deal; the *new life* doesn't do things the *old way*, you've been transformed by the renewing of your mind, you think different, you act different, the truth of the matter is that you *are* different. In Christ you're not the guy, you're not the gal that you used to be, Jesus has changed you, He's called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light, you once were blind but now you see, you were lost but now you're found, you were confused but now things are clear.

Here in 1st Peter, Peter has been instructing us concerning the nuances of the new life, the fingerprints of the life of faith, the principles and the practicalities of holiness. What *is true* holiness? Where does it come from, why is it necessary and what does it look like? Those are the kind of questions that Peter has been dealing with and opening our understanding to so far throughout these 1st couple of Ch's. He's spent time sharing how holiness is to show itself in our lives *personally*, how it displays itself in our midst as we interact with one another as a body *collectively* and in the section that's before us today how it's lived out in (or before) a *secular society*. 1st and foremost he tells us that we're to have different priorities because we're only in this world temporarily, this world is not our home, we're just passing through as we're heading for home being absent from the body and present with the Lord. Paul told the Colossians with regard to this new life, “*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*” Col 3:1-2

You see if we're *in* the world but not *of* the world than we shouldn't concern ourselves with worldly objectives, or prioritize worldly pursuits. In the book of Philippians we read, "... *brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.*" Phil 4:8 Yet how ez is it to slip into that place whereby we spend time thinking about things that pollute our minds, and from the mind that pollution sifts down into our heart polluting our heart. Those are the fingerprints of the fallen man, not the man of faith. We're to reject that, repent of that and be careful to bring our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Remember; if holiness is to be a reality in our lives than not only to the positive are there things that *should be* happening in our lives, to the negative there are other things that *should not* be happening in our lives. There are certain things we should engage *in* and other things we should abstain *from*. with that we read beginning in Vs 11 of 1st Peter Ch 2.

Vs 11-12

I brought this Vs to your attention last week but it seems appropriate here as well. Peter says that our conduct (and we've spoken of the word "conduct" before it includes every arena of our lives, there is no aspect of your life, [be it private, personal, or public] that this word "conduct" doesn't touch) should be honorable. Which is to say that we should conduct ourselves in such a way so that when people see the way we lead our lives there's a distinction, there's a difference between what they see in us Vs what they see in the unbelieving world around them so that God is glorified. Peter here is simply reiterating and expounding upon that which he heard Jesus say when He said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*" Matt 5:16

We learned last week that there's a reason that God has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. It's found in Vs 9 and it's so that we might proclaim His praises; that we might make known His matchless mercy and grace in this otherwise dark, decaying and dying world around us. Well, how are we to do that? Through singing hymns and worship choruses? That's one way I suppose though I have a feeling that if you're always singing praise songs around people you may be occasionally getting on their nerves. The way that God's praises are publicly proclaimed through your life is by your separation from the works of the flesh, we've spoken about that as it pertains to the body (laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking). Now Peter is building on that by saying take your separation from the works of the flesh, your consecration over to God beyond your home personally, beyond these 4 walls congregationally, into the secular society around you. You see, you publish God's praise by the attitudes and actions that are displayed through you that have been shaped by the Word of God.

He says, “*Beloved*”, we’ve been touching on the fact these last couple of weeks of the necessity of love. How that holy living is really incomplete if the love of God is not a part of the equation, how that regardless of how spiritual or how self-sacrificial I may be if I don’t have the love of God in me, motivating me and flowing forth from me it will profit me nothing eternally. Peter has been laying it on the line *for* his readers and pulling no punches *toward* his readers throughout this his 1st epistle. Yet he’s careful here to encourage his readers in the fact it’s not because he’s seeking to lord *over* them, or lay some sort of legal trip *on* them but because he’s concerned *for* them, he’s being compassionate *toward* them, his exhortation is out of love for them. However this word “Beloved” carries connotations beyond *his* love for them, it includes *God’s* love for them as well. God has loved you and given Himself for you in the person of Jesus Christ He has laid down His life for you, now in response you and I are to lead our lives in a manner that’s pleasing *to* and a reflection *of* Him. Jesus loves you and He demonstrated that love for you in the pouring out of His blood and the laying down of His life for you. We read in the book of Romans, “*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” Rom 5:6-8 That’s how God demonstrates His love toward you. Now, taking for granted that your heart belongs to Him how is it that you’re to reciprocate that love, how is it that you are to demonstrate your love for Him? Jesus said, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” John 14:15

Your love *for* Him will be demonstrated in a life that’s set apart in obedience *to* Him, to His word. It’s not a matter of duty; it’s a matter of devotion.

So he says, “I *beg* you” or “I *beseech* you” there’s sense of urgency about this word, and it’s an ongoing ever present sense of urgency that he’s seeking to impart to us. This isn’t a, “Hey, now’s not the time for these things, maybe later” kind of exhortation. It’s a, “Hey, it’s imperative that your life be continually and perpetually set this direction” kind of exhortation. “You are a sojourner, a pilgrim in this place upon this planet, you are not *of* the world, therefore abstain from the various lusts of the flesh that are *in* the world.”

Now I realize that the word *abstinence* is almost taboo in the world we live in today. We live in a “if it feels good do it” type society, if it seems right it must not be wrong. Yet the bible says, “*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*” Prov 14:12 Believe me when I tell you that there are things that you do well to abstain from. The word “abstain” here literally means to “hold oneself constantly back from.” The idea being that as believers we are to resist the “sinward” pull of worldly desires or fleshly lusts. No one is denying that temptation is real, that the flesh dies hard, that there are desires with in your being that long for things that though they feel good or seem fun *temporarily* will destroy you *ultimately*. The bible is clear that the wages of sin is death.

That's the urgency with which Peter is seeking to strike you and me, why abstain from fleshly lusts? Because they (listen) they *war against the soul*. They will destroy your life, the lust of the flesh will destroy you physically, it will destroy you spiritually and can impact you gravely concerning eternity. Well, why the war? What creates the conflict? The conflict comes in because the flesh and the spirit have 2 different appetites, and the one that you feed is the one that will grow stronger and begin to dominate and destroy the other. To add more difficulty to the dilemma it's our natural inclination to want to feed the flesh, the very thing that will destroy us. Paul portrays the struggle between the flesh and the spirit vividly in a few different places. We read in Gal 5, "*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*" Gal 5:16-25 Which is what Peter is saying here, if you been given new life, than walk in the newness of that life. Don't give in to the desires of the flesh but rather hold yourself constantly back from them, walk in the Spirit rather than flirting with and falling into the flesh. We read in 2 Cor, "*..beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" 2 Cor 7:1 How do we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (that is our spirit, not God's)? Through obedience to the word of God (Vs 22 Ch 1). I'll give you one more, 1 John 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 lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*"

The lusts of the flesh war against your soul, you and I are to fight the good fight of faith, we're to wage wise warfare being strong in the Lord and in the power of *His* might, not your might. You can't win that battle on your own, I can't win that battle on my own. It's not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts. Regarding spiritual warfare I'd encourage you to read Eph Ch 6, and 2 Cor 10:3-5 on your own time. You don't have to give in to the draw and desire of your flesh, you've been equipped in Christ to overcome, to pull down strongholds and cast down arguments...so abstain from those things that will damage you, that will destroy you. Make no provision for the flesh so as to fulfill its lusts.

You see, our real battle doesn't really lie in the *people around* us, but rather it lies in the *passions with in* us. D.L. Moody once said, "I have more trouble with D.L. Moody than with any man I know." I can relate with that, I'm sure you can as well.

2 more things before we tackle Vs 12 #1 I want to underscore one final time that these fleshly lusts war against the *soul*. Now as long as we're in the flesh we'll have to fight against the lusts *of* the flesh, it's not until we *see* Him that we will be *like* Him. But it's ez to see how the fulfilling of the fleshly lusts can destroy our body physically. Ask an alcoholic dying of liver disease, or one who through poor health choices is suffering from heart disease, one who smokes stricken with lung cancer, someone sexually immoral whose contracted AIDS or one of the over 300,000 people on this planet who contracted a sexually transmitted disease with in the last 24 hrs. But Peter wants us to understand that fulfilling fleshly lusts will do damage to far more than our physical body. Some may escape disease or some damaging fallout physically when they sin, but the disease and death of the inner man is inescapable by anyone who gives themselves over to the lusts of the flesh. So Peter says, "Abstain from them" not, "know your limits or get a designated driver" avoid them altogether.

The 2nd thing I want to draw your attention to is the word "war" there in Vs 11. It's the word "Strateuomai" which speaks of soldiers, it speaks of strategy. The enemy has a strategy in this war against your soul, odds are he's not going to approach you on the street and ask if you'd mind if he destroys your soul. He's subtle, he's strategic, he's like a lion who stalks his prey looking for weak points to pounce on. He's strategizing in his military campaign to expose your vital areas and strike where you're weak, and don't be fooled into thinking that if you win one battle that the war is over. As long as you live upon this earth there will be spiritual warfare that you will engage in and you need to be on guard. But be encouraged greater is He who is in you than he that is of the world.

Vs 12

Paul told Titus, "...*in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.*" Titus 2:7-8 That's the same basic gist that Peter is getting at here. The idea being that people are watching your life, and the things you share *with them* should match what you show *to* them. We say, "Your walk should match your talk." There should be nothing in the way that we conduct ourselves that will arm others with ammunition with which to attack the person of Jesus Christ or the gospel message. Our good works should back up our good words.

Now, as a quick little side note here back in Vs 18 of Ch 1 Peter reminded us that we've been redeemed from our *aimless* conduct. That's life with out Christ, aimless conduct, no real purpose *in* life, don't really know the point *of* life, it's aimless and empty with out hope being with out God in the world. In Christ we're to lead lives of *honorable* conduct, from aimless to honorable, the word "honorable" more literally means "beautiful to behold" it's something noble, commendable and admirable. I think the bottom line here is that as believers people should have nothing but respect for the way we lead our lives. Oh they might not respect us, but it shouldn't be because we've given them reason not to, but perhaps simply out of spite or whatever they've chosen to. But as for the way our lives are led, there should be honesty, integrity, humility, and a sincerity, or genuineness about you that's noted in the lives of those around you who are in the world. If they never come to church, or read the bible, what will they learn of Jesus by what they see in you, that's the idea here.

The bible tells us (Acts 10) that Jesus (empowered and anointed by the Spirit) went about healing all who were oppressed by the devil and *doing good* for God was with Him. Now, what do you think will be the result of Christ in you? Fulfilling fleshly lusts? No, good works for unbelievers to observe. We read in the book of Eph, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" Eph 2:10

Our witness to the lost isn't only in what we share, it's in what we show, we might consider our good works to be sort of a "pre-evangelistic" tool that God wants to use to till up and soften the ground in the hearts of the unsaved so that as His word is implanted in their heart it'll take root and bring forth the fruit of salvation in their own lives. Oh, they may speak evil of you, point you out as the problem. Jesus said, "*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" Matt 5:11-12 But you've got to let what people say about you *presently* roll off realizing that it will serve to glorify God *ultimately* because when God knocks on the door of their heart the impact you've made on them by the things you've shared *with them* and shown *to them* will encourage them to receive the Lord themselves.

Understand that when Peter speaks of them "observing" your good works, the word "observe" means to "view attentively" or to "inspect carefully." And when they see the grace of God exhibited *toward* you, abounding *in* you, how real God is *to* you. Even though they've said what they've said, it will encourage them when God begins to deal *with* them and speak *to* them concerning their own need for Christ.

You see people aren't stupid, they know when something is real, and when something is a joke. They sense the genuine article Vs a counterfeit/hypocrite. Peter says your conduct is critical as it pertains to their response to God in the day of their visitation.

“What do you mean, ‘the day of their visitation’?” Some believe that Peter is speaking of the day when Christ returns and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father; I suppose that's certainly possible.

However to me it seems more fitting to the context concerning a good witness and the impact it makes on those around us to understand this as the time that God will visit them so as to save them by His grace. There will come a time when that individual will be confronted by the reality of Christ, they'll be brought to a crossroads of sorts and a decision will have to be made. For Christ, or against Him, there's no neutral ground; and when they come to Christ, they will glorify and thank God that even though they made life difficult for you, you shared and showed the love of Christ with them.

So keep your conduct honorable, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against your soul, not only for your sake, but for the sake of those *around* you who will be encouraged to receive Christ because of the genuine work of grace that they've seen *in* you.

If you're here today, you don't know the Lord (that is you've never given your heart *to* the Lord) but God has been dealing with you, seeking to get a grip on you, on your heart, you've seen Him in someone else, you've heard of what He's done in them or are seeing what He's doing in them, He wants to work in you as well. He wants to make you a new creation, He wants to give you a new heart, a new life, a clean slate. If today is the day of your visitation, your salvation, don't harden your heart, do resist it, receive it. For God has so loved you, that He gave His only begotten Son for you that if you will just believe upon Him, you'll never perish but have everlasting life. The forgiveness of sin, wholeness of heart can be yours, call upon the Lord today.

Prayer Points:

Father would you help us, we want to lead lives set apart *to* you, consecrated *before* You, that our conduct might be honorable. Useable in the illustration of who Christ is to others around us. Empower us that we might abstain from fleshly lusts which are warring against our soul, seeking to do damage to and destroy us, may we fight the good fight, wage wise warfare to the glory of Your name.