

The Call of Sanctification

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter chapter 2, we're verse 11 and 12 this morning. You know, as we've walked through 1 Peter, the thing I keep coming back to again and again and again is that Peter is writing to Christians in lots of different places because they're about to experience persecution and trials and suffering.

And as he's writing to them, he's writing in such a way as to help prepare them, to equip them, to help them to know how to handle this persecution.

And really chapter 1, beginning in the very beginning, all the way through chapter 2, verse 10, the big overarching theme of that section was your salvation.

What it is that God has done to save you and your salvation prepares you and helps you to be prepared for suffering and persecution. And he lays out in all the different ways that that happens and the things that we need to do because of our salvation.

He's now going to switch and turn from talking about our salvation, which is primarily about that justification, that conversion, that salvation brought to us in Christ.

[1 : 26] And he's going to shift and talk about our sanctification, which is a part of our salvation. But it's particularly, sanctification is that part of salvation that is, it is the Christian growing in maturity.

Sanctification is that process whereby we go from being babies in Christ to being mature in Christ. One of the things that I have done and said before is that before we were Christian, this represents our heart, right? Hard, darkened, black, of no account, right?

We trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and he covers us with the righteousness of Christ. That's conversion. That's salvation. That's justification.

That's that moment from going, going from being lost to being found, from being blind to being, to seeing, from being dead to being alive, right? That's that salvation that we almost, like all of us understand this part of it.

[2 : 32] But sanctification then is the lifelong process because this part here happens in a moment, right? This part here happens in a single moment just like that.

I go from being dead to alive, blind to seeing, right? Lost to saved. And in a moment he covers me in the righteousness of Christ. But now sanctification is a lifelong process whereby God working in me and me being obedient to him, he conforms my heart and my life to the righteousness of Christ. And so it's an ongoing process. So you've got this immediate experience and now this lifelong process. And that's what Peter does in his book is he talks about this immediate experience and how it prepares us for persecution and suffering.

But now he turns to talk about this lifelong process and how it also is shaping us and preparing us for persecution. And specifically, he's going to deal with sanctification in relationship to not the things that we necessarily do in and of ourselves and by ourselves, but how we interact with people.

A lot of people want to talk about this sanctification and they will call it another word and it's called discipleship. And that's a good and healthy word, right?

[4 : 02] It's another good word to use. But a lot of people will look at this you need to do. You need to read your Bible. You need to pray and you need to go to church, right? And those are good and right.

And that's true. And that's all a part of discipleship, but there's a lot more going on in discipleship and sanctification that sometimes is behind the scenes, if you will.

And so where he starts in verse 11 through 12 is that behind the scenes sort of place where we need to kind of get a grip on the lay of the land and the battle that we have in front of us as we are facing sanctification.

As we're facing, I've got ruts and I've got habits from being a lost person that have to change, that have to be modified, that have to, you know, be conformed to the image of Christ. And all this change that has to happen, he's helping us understand the fight that that's going to be. And so in verse 11 and verse 12, here's what he writes.

[5 : 08] Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles, 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.

Father, we thank you for your word. And we pray that even now that you would use it in us, that your spirit would take your word. You would use it in your people all for your glory. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So I hope that you notice that he basically, with these two verses, lays out two battlefronts, if you will.

That there's an internal battle and an external battle in sanctification that we're constantly fighting. And that's the way we're going to lay out the sermon. These two points, internal battle and external battle.

The internal battle he talks about in verse 11. The external battle he talks about in verse 12. These are the things we need to grapple with. This internal battle.

[6 : 22] We can see that it's an internal battle because he says it wages war with your soul. Right? It wages war with your soul. But this battle is about naturally occurring desires.

Peter says we are to abstain or we are to avoid passions of the flesh or very literally fleshly desires. Now, we've got to deal with something here because there's a lot of people who have a very wrong idea about Bible study.

It's called the first use principle. The first use principle basically says that the first time you come across a particular word or concept in the Bible, then that's what that word is from the rest of the Bible.

And that is very wrong. It's very wrong. It's very wrong. And this passage is one that helps us because Paul the Apostle uses the term flesh. And when Paul the Apostle uses the term flesh, he means the sinful nature that we have.

He means this carnal nature that we have that still resides in us as Christians. Well, Peter never uses the term flesh in the same way.

[7 : 32] As a matter of fact, he uses the term flesh to describe the body of Christ in chapter 3, verse 18, chapter 4, verse 1 and 2.

And so if you were to say that this thing is this sinful nature, then you've got some really messed up things. He goes on to use it to talk about baptism and what baptism is not.

And he says it's not the removal of dirt from the flesh. Talking about the human body. But then he also uses it to speak about the way, as humans, we tend to judge based upon appearances.

Right? You see something and you immediately make a snap decision about something. Right? So he says we are not to judge according to the flesh in that way. So when he says here that there are these desires of the flesh or fleshly desires, he's talking about passions and desires and cravings that are just simply a part of the human condition.

For example, we have desires for food, for water, for air, for the necessities of life. We have desires for pleasure, like desserts, chocolate chip cookies, temperate climates, enjoyable times with friends and family.

[8 : 49] We have desires for pleasant outcomes in an emotional vein, like we want respect, we want love, we want acceptance. All of these things are desires of the flesh.

These are things we desire. And when he says to avoid them, it is not because he says that these are bad desires in and of themselves, but it's the desires that wage war against your soul.

In other words, he's not telling us to avoid and get away from longing for craving food, except if craving food begins to make battle and war against my soul.

He's saying pretty much the same thing that James is saying in James chapter 4, that basically what's going on here is that a desire has become a demand. That's the problem.

In James chapter 4, he says, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? This is, if you have a relationship with anybody in the world, this is the passage you need, because this explains why conflict exists.

[9 : 59] This is why we end up in conflict with one another. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? So you've got two people, a husband and wife. They both have desires and passions within themselves.

And as those passions and desires rise to high, they will come in conflict with one another. He goes on to say, you desire and do not have, so you murder.

Now we can see that. That seems like an extreme kind of a thing. A person wants a certain thing, and this other person won't give it to them, so they kill them in order to get it, like Cain and Abel, right?

But murder here doesn't have to be just taking a life. It can be exactly what Jesus talks about. That if you're angry with your brother, you've already committed murder in your heart. So you desire and do not have, so you murder.

[11:01] You get angry. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and you quarrel. So not only are we willing to take somebody's life and be angry because we're not getting the thing we want from somebody, but we're also willing to covet what someone else has.

And then he says this, you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. Not only do we take it out on someone and then desire deep inside to have something, but we're willing to come to the throne of God to get the very things that we desire that have turned into demands.

When desire becomes demand, then that wages war against our souls.

You can see it in men on the job. You have a coworker, a boss, a supervisor that speaks ill of us and slanders our reputation.

Is it good to have a desire to have a good reputation? Of course it is. The Proverbs teaches that.

[12:19] But can the desire for good reputation rise so high that it becomes a demand and therefore wages war with our soul? Yes, it can. All you got to do is watch the actions of those whose reputation gets slandered.

And when they begin to burst out with yelling and threatenings and maybe even violence to that extreme, then all of a sudden the protection of that reputation has moved from just a simple desire to something that's a demand.

It's waging war in the soul and it has become their idol of the heart. Somebody maybe slanders a reputation and rather than being the outburst type, you're the cool calculating I'm going to get even type.

I mean, just because you don't have an outburst doesn't mean that you don't have an idol of the heart of the same thing. If you're cool and calculating in your mind and plotting revenge, that's really no better.

Or maybe you're more like me because this is where I land and that's the kind of person that doesn't plan revenge but goes home, sulks and pouts and visualizes your death a thousand times.

[13:43] Because the anger just eats me up. This is what's going on when you're in the line at Walmart and the child is asking for the 14th time to, Mommy, please buy me something.

And when she says no, he freaks out. That desire has become a demand. That demand rules the heart.

And anything that rules the heart is now an idol of the heart. It is now our God in that moment. This is why relationships can be ruined in churches, in marriages, in parenting, and in business because desires become demands.

They rise too high in the heart. And what Peter is saying is avoid, avoid the fleshly desires which wage war against your soul.

You see, there is a battle for your soul. And the battle is very, very close. And there's a lot of people that I think have a tendency to think about what I'm saying here and have a tendency to think that maybe you don't really struggle with this kind of a thing.

[15:02] And I do think that sometimes it's hard to see in yourself. But once you see it, you'll never be able to unsee it.

A couple years ago, I told you the story about Rocky Road ice cream and myself. And that's a funny little story that illustrates the same purpose.

If you haven't heard that story, I'm not telling you. But let me share with you something that's not quite so funny. I have a particular desire.

You could call it a pet peeve. You could call it what you want to. But one of the things that will make me more angry than anything else in the world is to be accused of something I didn't do.

Whether it's an action that I had or didn't have or whether it's motivation for action that I had or I didn't have, part of that is because even from a young age, I always tried to be very, very upfront about what I was thinking and feeling about certain things and why I would do certain things.

[16:18] I have no problems just coming right out and saying, no, this is my problem. Like the kid in sixth grade who I was so upset with and angry with that I walked right up to him in front of coach and I just punched him right in the face.

Why is that? Because I've always tried to make sure my actions are just, it's just this. It's nothing else. Am I angry with you? Yes, I am. And here it goes.

But I have people in my life, sometimes it's my family, sometimes it's been friends, sometimes it's been people that I've worked with who have sometimes in a joking manner accused me of a particular motivation.

It can be in the middle of a game and I've played the game a certain way and then I get this little sort of trickle of kidding and poking at me about my motivations and this thing is sometimes so high in my heart that I can't stand the joke and I begin to defend myself.

Now you might say, well, Brady, man, you're just like really too hard on yourself. I mean, come on, everybody's got these desires. Yes, but when this desire rules my heart in that moment, I am being a functional atheist because I'm not worshipping God.

[17:45] I'm supposed to be a Christian and my heart is to be his every single breath of my life. And the internal battle of sanctification is fought at the level of desires and cravings and longings because we have things that are legitimately right to crave but we raise them up too high.

And so we need to avoid them. So how do we do this? Let me just give you three words that I think might help. The first word is expose. First word is expose.

You need to have your heart exposed with the desires that it has. One of the best ways I have found to have your desires exposed is for you to think about what you get angry about.

When you get angry, that's a symptom that there's a desire in the heart that has risen too high.

Now, not all anger. There is some anger that could be legitimate because it's not about you.

It's about someone else and it's about an injustice being done to someone else like Jesus in the temple, right? That wasn't about himself. That was about his father and about the Gentiles. But if it's about you and that anger is there, you might want to check yourself and say, wait a minute, that could be a sign that there's an idol in my heart, that there's something I'm desiring too much.

[19:24] And what is it? You need that exposed. You can't deal with it if it's not exposed. If it's not exposed, it's just going to stay there. So you need it exposed.

So you pray. Say, Lord, please expose these things in my life. Second word is the word repent. The word repent means a change of mind. That's what the Greek word literally means.

It's a change of mind. And what change of mind do we need to have when our desires get exposed as being more than desires? They're demands and idols.

The change of mind we need to have is that having this thing I desire is better than having Christ because you can't serve two masters.

You will either love the one and hate the other, despise the one and cling to the other. And so in a moment in which your desires have risen to be demands, you cannot serve Christ in that moment as you're trying to meet your desires and demands.

[20:23] You cannot do it. And so the change of mind, the repentance comes and says, listen, loving Christ and glorifying Christ is far greater than me protecting my reputation.

But if in that moment my reputation is of greater value to me than Christ, then I have something to repent of. And I've got to change my mind to believe truly that turning to Christ is far greater than protecting my reputation.

The third word is the word grace. And just changing your mind about this is not enough. You've got to run to the cross. You've got to look at the cross and see that there at the cross, Christ has paid the price for that idolatry that you just had.

Christ paid the price for that desire turning into a demand and rising too high in my heart. He's paid the price to go ahead and be done with that. But not only has he paid the price for that, but there upon the cross he's purchased the promises of the new covenant that say that I will write my law upon your heart.

And so my ability to follow and do what it is he's told me to do, my ability to be able to keep that desire where it ought to be and not rise too high comes because Christ died upon the cross and

poured out his Holy Spirit in me.

[21 : 51] And I can't do that by my own self. I can't pull myself up by my bootstraps. I need to have supernatural power working in me to be able to keep my desires where they ought to be.

And so I need grace. And so we get exposed, we repent, and in grace we run to him. That's the internal battle.

The internal battle of those desires becoming demands. The, verse 12, tells us about an external battle. This involves our behavior and he's done the right thing by starting with internal and moving to external because the internal kind of shapes the external.

As Jesus said in Matthew chapter 15, he says, for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander. In other words, we live out of our hearts.

No one has ever made you angry. That anger came out of your heart. Next time somebody looks at you and says, you're making me mad.

[23 : 05] You can just look at him and say, pastor said no. No. No, no. Because where does that come from? Actually, Jesus said no. Where does it come from?

It comes out of the heart. We're to keep our conduct. He says, honorable. The word honorable carries with it the idea of goodness and beauty.

that our behavior among outsiders ought to be something that's good and beautiful. And the only thing that we know of that is good is God alone and his righteousness.

So how are we to be good? That good then is in conformity to what God has commanded. His standard of righteousness. But it's a battle that happens under duress.

In persecution, people are saying that you're an evildoer while the whole time you're trying to do the right thing. This is going to be the battle. This is going to be what you will experience in persecution. You will seek to be doing the right thing and you will be accused of doing the wrong thing.

[24 : 10] And in that moment, you have a choice to make. Do I continue to do what is right or do I seek to try to defend my reputation? That's a really hard thing for me because I'm just always trying to protect that reputation.

They slander us as evildoers when in reality we're just trying to obey what God's law says. But this battle is aimed at glory in such a way that it says that they would glorify God on the day of visitation. Now there's a lot of ways to think about what this day of visitation is. And without diving into the debate over this, it seems to me that Peter doesn't use day of visitation like what we would sort of understand in our minds as being the end times but instead a visitation of God to the individual person.

And that is that here's a person that when God comes to them and then rescues this person who's been persecuting me who I've had an encounter with at some point in the past, as he saves them, they're able to look over the scope of their life and see all the pathway that God took them down to get them to where they were.

Think about David, not David, not David, Stephen, Stephen and Paul. Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian church, right? He's there being stoned to death, right?

[25 : 39] Being stoned is being down in a sort of sunken place in the ground, right? Kind of in a little below a hill and everybody is up on top and they're throwing stones down on you.

We're not talking pebbles, we're not talking little rocks and skipping them across the pond, we're talking stones. And as he's there being stoned, he keeps his behavior honorable among these people who are stoning him.

And who is this standing over here but Paul the apostle before he was an apostle? Standing there holding the coats of all those who were casting stones.

And it was this same Paul that the Lord Jesus knocked him off of his horse and said why are you persecuting me? Paul as he's saved gets to look at that span of his life.

He glorifies God in that day of visitation and Stephen's life was a part of that. It was a small part but it was a part nonetheless. In other words, he's living his behavior in such a way before men that God would use it maybe for the shaping of a life somewhere down the line.

[26 : 56] Every situation in life is an opportunity for us to act godly, to act honorable among those that we come in contact with and who knows which of those actions the Lord will use as a means for bringing that one to salvation.

We never know. And so as Christians then, we have our inner life, we have our outer life, and these two things need to be in sync with one another.

What's on the inside, what's on the outside are both important. As Christians, we need to then be aimed at the glory of God for the salvation of sinners.

sinners. And you have to be convinced that your actions matter. You have to be convinced that what you do on a daily basis that it really does matter.

It's what Jesus talked about in Matthew 5, 16, to let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. And to do this, to grow and keep your behavior audible, you've got to know what God wants of you.

[28 : 10] And you know, it's pretty simple. It's actually pretty simple to know what it is that God wants from us. We've made it far too complicated by trying to gaze at our navel or some sort of, you know, pulling something ephemeral out of the sky and coming up with an idea of how to do something so that God gets pleasure.

But he's told us what's important to him. As a matter of fact, with his own finger, he wrote it in stone. It's called the Ten Commandments. And you think about that.

If you were to live out the Ten Commandments in relationship to your spouse, because, you know, oftentimes we think about the Ten Commandments just as don't do these bad things, but really, it's more than that.

It's about positive ways to live, right? Do not murder is not just simply don't murder somebody, but there's all this anger that's a part of it that Jesus talks about. There's also the idea of protecting life. And so, my closing statement to you is, you need to know the Ten Commandments. You need to know the Ten Commandments and you need to live by the Ten Commandments, because this is what pleases him.

[29 : 26] And you don't do this to earn something from him, but you do this because he's already saved you. And you don't do this in your own strength and power, you do this by the power of the Holy Spirit. You're already in the family.

You're already his child. He just wants you to act like the family ought to act. I said, do you know the Ten Commandments? Have no other gods before me.

Do not bow down to any idols. So this is commandment number two, which is what? Have no graven images, right? Three. What's that?

Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Watch your words. Four. Stop. Go to church, right? Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Five is, yes, sir, honor your father and your mother.

Six is, do not murder. Seven. Marriage is two people, not five. So be faithful to your marriage. Do not commit adultery, right?

[30 : 35] Eight. Do not steal, right? Because in some countries they cut off your thumbs if you steal. So do not steal. Nine.

Four is not five. Five is not four. Tell the truth. Do not bear false witness. Ten. Right? Do not covet. Don't take things that don't belong to you.

Right? This idea that we are to not covet. You need to know the Ten Commandments and you need to live those out as a Christian. You say, well, that may not make people in the world around me very happy.

The goal is not to make them happy. The goal is for you to honor Christ and live honorably among them. And then the Lord will deal with them. One of the benefits of the Lord's table of coming to take the Lord's Supper is that we get to be reminded of these two truths that we need over and over again.

That we deserved punishment, but he took it. And we're supposed to live righteously, but we can't. So he provides it. We need that reminder over and over again.

[31 : 49] Amen.