

Living as Exiles

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Good morning. The scripture reading for this morning is really two passages.! The first in 1 Peter 1, verses 13-21.

! And then 1 Peter 2, verses 11-12. So it's 1 Peter 1, verses 13-21.

And then 1 Peter 2, verses 11-12. 1 Peter 1. Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

[1 : 55] He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in the last times for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Chapter 2, verses 11 and 12. 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.

Thank you very much, Faye. The New Testament is filled with metaphors to describe the Christian life and Christians.

And to remind those of us who have been out of school for a long time what a metaphor is. A metaphor is a word or a phrase used for one thing to refer to something else to show how the two things are alike.

[3 : 31] And so, for example, we would say things like, she is an angel. Or that house is a zoo. And we communicate two different things, but how they are very much alike.

A metaphor is especially powerful when we use them taking something that we know to refer to something else that we really don't know that well.

And Jesus does this in his ministry. When he taught, he had disciples, but the Pharisees had disciples, and he tried to show how his disciples were very different from the Pharisees and their disciples.

And he used particular metaphors to talk about what his followers would be like in the world, how they would be different from others in the world.

And two metaphors that Jesus uses for his disciples is he says, you are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth.

[4 : 47] And in these two passages that we just read this morning, Peter uses two particular metaphors. He uses the metaphors of exiles and strangers or sojourners.

He says, you are exiles and you are sojourners. And Peter uses these metaphors to tell us how we are to be God's people in this world and live as God's people in this world.

So he tells us about two ideas that we know, exiles and strangers. And he says, that is what you are in this world.

As I prayerfully considered this first year, and this was in last year that I was doing this, and turned my heart towards what would be these stand-alone messages that we would preach before going back into the Genesis series in February.

This is one of the sermons the Lord laid on my heart, that we are to be living in this world as exiles. And it's a truth that will be with us until the day we die or until the day the Lord returns.

[6 : 09] We belong to Christ and we are exiles in this world. And so Peter is trying to grab our attention to understand that we are to be living in this world different from the other people who are a part of this world.

He wants us to know that this world is not our home. And so I want us to consider this this morning, but before we do, let's bow in prayer. Father, would you in this moment speak to us through your word.

Lord, it is so easy to become assimilated in the world in which we live. It is so easy to forget that you have called us to be distinct from the world and separate from the world.

Lord, I do pray that as we embark upon another new year, I pray right up front at the beginning of this year that you would remind us of this truth.

Lord, renew it in our hearts and minds so that we will engage this world, living in this world, in a way that would honor you and a way that will be for our good and the good of others.

[7 : 36] And so, Lord, would you speak to our hearts now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So, the Apostle Peter is reminding us that as believers in Christ, we are exiles and sojourners in this world.

And Peter does it with two particular realities in mind. Peter is aware of the potential of this world to sinfully influence us as we live in it.

That's one of the concerns that he has. And the other concern that he has is the potential for our godly influence on unbelievers in this world.

I believe that Peter, the point that he is making can be summarized and captured in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2. And so, those two verses are going to be the focus of the sermon this morning.

And what Peter is saying, if we just summarize these two verses, what Peter is saying to us is this. He's saying, as you live in this world, be watchful of your soul and be mindful of unbelievers.

[9 : 00] As you live in this world, be watchful of your soul. Be aware of what's going on with your soul in this world. And then, be aware of how you live affects the unbelievers around you.

Peter is saying that believers are to be intentional to resist the sinful passions of the flesh while living godly lives before unbelievers with the hope that one day, likewise, they may come to serve and glorify God.

God. Now, Peter is speaking generally to the scattered saints of his day and indeed to all of God's people in the world, but I think the way we should hear this this morning as we prepare for another year of serving the Lord together, but also individually, I believe that we need to hear this in a very personal way.

We need to hear this in the context of the real temptations that we face on an individual basis, and then we need to hear it in terms of the sphere of relationships that God has providentially put us in.

So from Peter's concerns, I have two simple points, and the first one is this. be watchful of your soul.

[10 : 38] As you live in this world, be watchful of your soul. Again, look at how Peter says it in verse 11. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

So addressing believers as sojourners and exiles, Peter is in essence saying, Dear ones, do not live carelessly in this fallen world without regard for its effect on your soul.

And Peter is reminding us of something that we can easily forget, that as we live in this fallen world, we will face passions of the flesh, and we must abstain from them.

The New International Version translates passions of the flesh as simply sinful desires. And brothers and sisters, remember that Peter is addressing an audience of people whom he calls elect exiles.

These are people who are named among the people of God. Now, obviously, he wasn't necessarily saying that every single one of them was, but he was speaking to them as God's people. And what he's really saying to us is, despite the fact that we are God's people, these concerns are reality for all of us.

[12 : 11] things. I grew up in a Pentecostal church where sin was so misunderstood.

And people would get up and they would say things like they were saved, sanctified, past tense, and filled with the Holy Spirit. And they would say things like, oh, sin doesn't bother them, they're not tempted by this and all the other kinds of things.

And brothers and sisters, that's just not true. And I really believe that our first step to fulfilling the command that is before us is to be honest with the reality that in this fallen world, we will face all manner of temptations.

We will face passions of the flesh and we are called to abstain from them. We overcome not by denying them, but by acknowledging them, and then by the grace of God, abstaining from them.

Now, notice it's important to see how Peter grounds his command. Notice how he grounds his command in verse 11. He doesn't say in a vacuum, believers, you must abstain from sinful desires.

[13 : 33] He doesn't say that. Instead, Peter wisely grounds his command by reminding followers of Christ that they are sojourners and exiles.

And he uses these two metaphors, sojourners and exiles, to communicate the same reality in two different ways.

Sojourners are people who are just passing through. They don't belong where they are passing through, but they are passing through. And Peter's point is that those who belong to Christ do not belong to this world as citizens of this world.

They are sojourners passing through to the heavenly city that God has promised that he will prepare for all those who belong to him. exiles. And then Peter uses the word exiles.

This metaphor of exiles, he says you are exiles. And we're exiles in the sense that our faith in Christ results in our rejection by the world and our exclusion from the world in which we live.

[14 : 55] exiles. It's not the way, you know, someone is like banished into a corner or something like that. That's not the way he's using exile. What he's really saying to us is that as we live our lives in this world, holding on to God's values, living a life that is not engaging in the passions of the flesh the way the world around us is, he says you will be exiled.

You will be excluded. you will be canceled. That's Peter's point.

His point is that is the exclusion that we will face because of our faith in Christ, but only as that faith in Christ is lived out.

And notice how the two of these work together. The Bible tells us that we have to be in the world but not of the world.

And so when we live that way, the world responds as well to push us away and exclude us, and we are pushed outside of their circles and the way they relate to those who are like them.

[16 : 27] So what Peter is saying in verse 11 is, Dear ones, you're not a part of this world, therefore you should live that way by abstaining from these sinful desires that are part of this world and which are indulged in by those who belong to this world.

your citizenship is from another place. Theirs is here, but your citizenship, it used to be here. Later in the letter he says there was a time when you used to indulge in all the things they indulged in.

He says, but the time for that has passed. Now your citizenship is from another place. And again, the concern that Peter has as he commands us to abstain from the passions of the flesh is our soul.

Peter says in verse 11, these passions of the flesh wage war against our soul.

He uses strong graphic language. They don't just make us uncomfortable. No, he says they war against your soul, therefore abstain from them.

[17 : 38] So what are these passions of the flesh? sinful desires that God's people are called to abstain from? Oftentimes when we hear passions of the flesh or sinful desires, we tend to think of sexual sins.

And while sexual sins are certainly a part of passions of the flesh and sinful desires, others, it is far broader than that.

And to help us to get a better understanding of what Peter means, let's turn to Galatians chapter 5. And we'll look at verses 16 to 24. If you have one of the church Bibles, it's on page 975.

Galatians 5, starting in verse 16. Paul says, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

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.

[18 : 51] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now, the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Notice in verse 16 that Paul uses desires of the flesh, which is another way of referring to the passions of the flesh that Peter refers to in 1 Peter 2, 11.

And notice also in verse 17 that Paul says the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and if we give in to the desires of the flesh that will keep us from doing the things we want to do.

[20 : 25] So the desires of the flesh they war against us, they fight against us. And when we don't abstain from the desires of the flesh, they result in sinful conduct, which Paul calls the works of the flesh in verses 19 to 21.

And he gives us the list of them. Again, not an exhaustive list, but a representative list of the works of the flesh. And God's people are called to abstain from such sinful desires.

And notice the warning that Paul gives at the end of verse 21. He says, I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul had warned them He's warning them again. And this is a repeated warning that we find in Scripture. And the question should be, why is this warning so repeated throughout Scripture?

And the reason is that many people believe otherwise. Many people are deceived in believing otherwise.

[21 : 42] They put more value on the profession of their lips than they do about the evidence of their lives as to whether they belong to Christ. And Paul says, no, I warn you, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of Christ.

But those who don't believe what Paul says, they are not taking seriously this whole issue. believe that they can live a sinful life and still have eternal life, which is the same thing that Paul is referring to, inheritance in the kingdom of God is eternal life.

He says, no, they warn you, don't be deceived. That's not the way it works. Peter is giving us a similar warning. Peter is not as explicitly saying what Paul says, but Paul was addressing believers, Peter is addressing believers, and the point is the same.

And notice in verses 22 to 23, the contrast to the works of the flesh. It's the fruit of the Spirit, love and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The fruit of the Spirit gives evidence that we belong to Christ. The fruit of the Spirit in our lives gives evidence that we belong to Christ.

[23 : 10] And brothers and sisters, if our lives are marked by the works of the flesh, it matters not what prayer we prayed, it matters not what we say with our lips. We should have no confidence of a faith in Christ with a life that is marked by the works of the flesh.

And I say this to people all the time. By the grace of God, I've been serving the Lord since I was 13 years old. But if my life begins to manifest the works of the flesh, you should have no confidence to believe that I have eternal life.

And this is the concern. Peter is saying to us, he says, your very soul is at stake in this issue of abstaining or not abstaining from the works of the flesh.

And I want you to see how though we believe that those whom the Lord saves, they are eternally saved. We believe it's a work that he does and it's something we cannot do.

But notice the honesty of scripture that we are still warned. We are still warned. And those of us who truly belong to Christ, we take this warning seriously.

[24 : 37] And we try to, by the grace of God, obey the warning. But notice in verse 24 the bottom line that Paul gives about the desires of the flesh.

He says this in verse 24. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires. Now you might be familiar with this letter of Galatians and how earlier in the letter in Galatians 2.20 Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I no longer live in the life that I live. I live through Jesus Christ. Paul is not talking about the same thing here.

He's talking about something different. In Galatians 2.20, he's talking about his union with Christ and what has been done to him.

He's been crucified with Christ. He's not saying that here in verse 24. Indeed, all believers, all of us, we have union with Christ.

[25 : 52] We've been crucified with Christ. He died our death. But what we are being called to here in verse 24, Paul says, those who belong to Christ, those who have true union with Christ, have crucified the flesh and its passions and its desires.

Paul is talking about something that we do. He's not talking about something that was done to us in Christ's work on the cross, but he's talking about something that we are called to do. We are called to crucify the flesh with its desires.

And Paul chooses his words carefully. He chooses this word crucify. He said, that's what we do with the flesh and its desires. We are called to crucify it. Not to tie it up.

Not to restrain it. He says, kill it. Put it to death. those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires.

And how is this done? It's done by repentance. It's done by turning our back on sin and resisting sin and fighting sin in our lives.

[27 : 15] sin. It is done by being serious with sin and ruthless with sin and seeking to mortify it and to kill it in our lives because we know the danger of it.

I don't think any of us would envision having a pet cobra. Just getting a cobra or some other venomous snake and just having it around as a pet.

No, we want to keep our distance from that thing. We know the danger of it and we will take it seriously and do whatever we can to get rid of it. Friends, sin is more dangerous to our souls than the most venomous snake.

And so what Paul says very soberly at the end of this passage is those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh and its passions and desires.

But it's not a one-time thing. It certainly begins when we come to Christ, but it is an ongoing activity that we are called to be engaged in and if we are true to this, we will do it until the day that we die.

[28 : 38] There is no vacation from mortifying the deeds of the flesh and fighting sin and putting it to death in our lives.

And the extent to which we repent is the extent to which we will crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. This is British pastor and theologian John start commenting on this verse in Galatians 5 24 and the lack of holiness that is evident in the lives of some who profess to belong to Christ.

He explains it this way. Listen to what he says. It's an insightful comment on this verse. He writes, the first great secret of holiness lies in the degree and the decisiveness of our repentance.

If besetting sins persistently plague us, it is either because we have never truly repented or because having repented we have not maintained our repentance.

sins. It is as if having nailed our old nature to the cross, we keep wistfully returning to the scene of its execution.

[30 : 02] We begin to fondle it, to caress it, to long for its release, even to try to take it down again from the cross. We need to learn to leave it there.

Brothers and sisters, we are called to this task of repenting, of crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires, and we are called to do that in an ongoing way.

And so when Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2.11 to abstain from the passions of the flesh, he has in mind exactly what the apostle Paul lays out in Galatians 5. Peter doesn't spell it up, but he has the same thing in mind, that we would be engaged in repenting, that we would be engaged in crucifying our flesh with its passions and its desires.

Let's turn back to 1 Peter 2. Notice also in verse 11 the language of war that Peter uses to help us to see that the stakes are high.

And I think many of us would have taken in some footage from the devastation of the current war that's going on in Ukraine, and it's heartbreaking to watch. But indeed, there is a war that is going on for our very souls.

[31 : 30] We are engaged in a spiritual war. And how do we as God's people wage war and win the war against the passions of the flesh?

We do it by living with the awareness that this world is not our home, and by abstaining from the passions of the flesh, which are part of this broken world in which we find ourselves walking through.

We can find ourselves walking through picking up habits and living the way of this world, but no, we are sojourners, and we have to be abstaining from it all day by day by the grace of God.

And so brothers and sisters, this morning, let us take seriously this command, and by God's grace, let us live in this world, and by God's grace, may we abstain from the desires of the flesh, remembering it's not our home, our true citizenship is from above.

And so if we're going to take these words seriously, we have to jealously watch for our souls. And again, the foundation for watching for our souls is the conviction this world is not our home.

[33 : 00] It's the foundation for watching our souls. We are exiles. And I wonder this morning, as you think of your own engagement in this world, would exiles, would sojourners rightly describe you and your engagement in this world?

Or would you in this world be treated as one of them, as a part of this world? Brothers and sisters, we have it on both sides.

We're called not to be of the world, though in it. And Peter tells us that if we live in this world the way that we ought to, we will be exiled from it.

They will reject us. They will not accept us, this world and all of its values and all of its makeup. we would not be a part of it.

And so are you watching for your soul to abstain from these fleshly lusts? Are you seeking to walk by the spirit and not by the flesh?

[34 : 19] Are you placing priority on the kinds of activities that will feed and strengthen your soul to help you to resist these sinful desires?

are we valuing activities like reading God's word and memorizing God's word and gathering with fellow sojourners,!

Are we having our hearts affected and transformed by God's word? Are we embracing biblical fellowship with brothers and sisters where we are able to walk in the light and confess sin and be corrected and receive prayer?

Receive encouragement for the journey. Peter has all of this in view as he calls us to abstain from the desires of the flesh.

He's not telling us to go in some corner and do this all by ourselves. He calls us to do this in community. Or, rather than doing those things, are you feeding the passions of the flesh?

[35 : 38] Sometimes absentmindedly neglecting the kinds of activities that will strengthen your soul and help you to walk by the Spirit. Are you engaging in things like excessive television watching and movie going and doing it unmindful of the fact that that content was most likely prepared by unbelievers?

And it was prepared for unbelievers. And we don't get to say, oh, it ain't that bad. You could manage the few curse words in it.

You could manage the few sex sins in it. Friends, these things war against our souls, and we are deceived if we don't think that they are. We are believing that we are wiser than God if we believe that we can play with fire and not be burned.

These things war against our soul. In this coming week, we're going to have an opportunity together as a church as we consecrate together, as we pray, as we fast.

This is a wonderful opportunity for us to build a foundation for this year on which we can build throughout this year by laying aside things that war against our souls and feeding our souls the kinds of things that will cause our souls to flourish, that we will be good for ourselves and we will be good for others.

[37 : 13] now while watching our soul through abstaining from fleshy desires, is Peter's first concern, it's not Peter's only concern.

In verse 12, he says to those who belong to Christ as you live in this world that is not your home, live mindful of unbelievers.

Look again at how he says that in verse 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.

Notice three important things that Peter is saying in this verse. First, Peter refers to all unbelievers as Gentiles.

In the same way, a few verses earlier, he refers to all those who belong to God as his holy nation, as the new Israel.

[38 : 40] And he calls us to ensure that our conduct before them is honorable. And second, Peter reminds us of the hostility that oftentimes will come from unbelievers towards believers.

In verse 12, he says, they speak about you as evildoers. believers. I mean, when you really step back and you consider the way believers are treated in this world, you realize it is spiritual warfare, undiluted spiritual warfare.

The best, I mean, the people you would want to be your neighbors, the people you would want to work with, would be the people who are serving the Lord and living by God's word.

Those are people that you would really want to embrace but the world rejects us. They want no part of it. As a matter of fact, they will call our good evil. And Peter says that's what they do.

He says, though they speak about you as evildoers. Don't take it to heart, he says, but live your lives honorably among them.

[40 : 01] Conduct yourselves honorably so that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

That's the third point that Peter makes in this verse. He's saying to us that we should be mindful that because of our good deeds, because of our honorable conduct, God can use it.

God may use it to bring unbelievers to himself that they will glorify him on the day that he visits them.

In plainer language, what Peter is saying to us, he is saying to us that we need to accept the reality that unbelievers are watching us. we need to see you on the way.

We need to see you on the way. We need to on the way. I'm surprised. I never cease to be surprised when I could be in a particular setting and someone might know me or say something that just makes me aware that they were observing something.

[41 : 17] And I'm sure it's the same with you. And I think we would all agree that we are being watched far more than we know. And Peter says, let it be for the good of unbelievers.

Let our conduct be such that it would have an evangelistic effect on those who are watching us, on unbelievers around us on the day that God would visit them.

And here he has this visitation of God is in two senses. One, a visitation in salvation that they would acknowledge. the good works, they would see them for what they are, or in judgment for those who do not come to know the Savior.

But he's saying that we must make a special effort to live our lives in a way that has an evangelistic effect. When I was in college, I had quite a number of unbelieving friends.

It was a joy to see two of them come to faith and to know them as unbelievers and to be worshiping with them in a Christian group that we had and also in church and by the grace of God, both of them are still serving the Lord today.

[42 : 38] I remember there was one young man who was just hostile towards the things of God, lived a life of open, a rebellion sin and folly.

I remember it was 17 years after graduation. I got an email from him sharing with me how he had come to faith and just reminding me of some of the times that we had engagement and by the grace of God, thanking me for my example before him.

I think about that and it could have been the other way. It could have been that he came to Christ and he now understands what a Christian is like and reflects on, I don't know, perhaps I could have been maybe the only Christian in his life, but what he came to know about Christ would have been so contrary to what was represented to him.

I remember when I was in youth group at the church I grew up in, a youth pastor, he used to sing a song.

I believe they may have written it, I'm not sure, but the song was, You Never Mentioned Jesus to Me. And the idea was a person standing before the judgment and seeing believers who were in their lives and they had no evangelistic effect on them and they were lamenting, how could you see me day by day?

[44 : 23] You knew I was a straight. You never mentioned Jesus to me. Brothers and sisters, our lives can have an eternal effect on those around us who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think one of the helpful ways we should think about this call to conduct ourselves in an honorable way before unbelievers, this call to be watchful of our soul but also to be mindful of these unbelievers, I think we can think of it in three particular contexts, which is our major areas of relationships, and that's the home, in our neighborhood, and in our workplace.

And for some of us, our situation may be that we have an unbelieving spouse, or maybe we have unbelieving parents or siblings, and we need to be mindful about this call in that context to live a life that will have an evangelistic effect on them, a life that will be seen as honorable before them in the sight of God.

And I think you'd all agree with me, this is the hardest context in which we are called to do this. In our homes, there are people who know us, there are people who see us in sometimes the most difficult kinds of situations.

sometimes we have relational conflicts that arise, and we forget that our primary duty to them is to be Christ's servant, Christ's ambassador towards them.

[46 : 22] And oftentimes we miss these opportunities because we don't handle the conflict in the way that we should. But in our homes, brothers and sisters, every single day where we have unbelieving family members, we have this opportunity to live an honorable life before unbelievers.

And then in our neighborhoods, with neighbors, neighbors watch us. They watch us like on a morning like this morning, going to church, and they'll see us coming from church. church. And it's very usual that if you live as neighbors for quite some time, issues come up.

Challenges come up in being neighbors. And again, we can so easily forget that our primary responsibility is to live with an evangelistic awareness towards unbelievers.

And oftentimes we forget that. And then finally, in our workplaces, we have a boss or co-workers who do not know Christ. Christ. And we're called to live a life that is honorable before them.

[47 : 48] We're called to be honest. We're called to have integrity. We're called to work hard and be diligent and to be a good example. We're called to bear up sometimes under unjust treatment.

We're called to live as Christ's servants. And if we do that, we will be different. We will seem strange. And by the grace of God, even though there's persecution that comes our way in the midst of that, we hope for the day that they may be affected and begin to think and say, you know what?

Something is different about him. Something is different about her. And maybe they engage us in the kinds of conversations that give us an opportunity to share the gospel and to present Christ to them.

And so I asked you this morning, are you living in these primary relationships in particular, mindful of unbelievers?

Mindful of this responsibility that we have to live in such a way that we would have this evangelistic effect upon them that should God open their eyes, they would be able to see, wow, this person who I thought was such an evil person and who I hated, this person is a beautiful person.

[49 : 22] And the life that I once found repulsive, I now find beautiful. And let us be aware again that we don't want to be putting stumbling blocks before unbelievers.

this is where the Lord calls us to live in a way that profits them. So Paul calls us to live as exiles in this world, to live as sojourners in this world, to say to us, this world is not your home, and as you live here, be aware of the spiritual warfare that you're engaging in for your soul, that you are being surrounded by all manner of temptations and luring to indulge in the passions of the flesh, and it is so easy to do it because everyone around you is doing it.

He calls us to be sober, and he says, your very soul is at stake. And then he also says, but the soul of others are at stake as well.

Live mindful of them. Now how do we do this? Yes, we resist and fight sin and all the other kinds of things, but ultimately we do this with utter dependence on the grace of God.

Utter dependence on the grace of God. Without God, if he left us to ourselves, we would all fall on our faces time and time and time again. Left to ourselves, we cannot do this.

[51 : 12] We need God's enabling grace. And this morning we're going to close with the song, O Great God. But as we sing it, let us do more than sing it.

Let's pray it. And let's be aware of these two particular aspects of us living in this world as sojourners.

sojourners, the passions that perhaps are besetting us in our lives. And then also relationships that we have, and maybe some are challenged and strained, and yet God has called us to live in a way that's going to be spiritually profitable for them.

Let's ask God to change our hearts as we sing this morning. Ask him to truly grant us repentance. Brothers and sisters, repentance is a gift. It's a gift from God. We can't manufacture it.

If we try to manufacture it, all we'll be doing is trying to counterfeit it. God grants repentance. And so let us cry out to him as he convicts us areas that we need to change, and maybe by his grace, change.

[52 : 28] Let's pray together. Lord, we come to you this morning and we thank you for your word.

Lord, your word is for our good. Your word puts a hedge of protection around us. Lord, as we hear this word, as we prepare for this new year and embark upon it, seeking to serve and please you more, Father, we ask that you would help us to truly be watchful of our souls, to truly be abstaining from the desires of the flesh, and then to be mindful of the unbelievers around us, and to live our lives in such a way that on the day of visitation, whether in salvation or judgment, they will be able to recognize our good deeds as they truly are.

Father, I pray that you would cause us to truly look to you and be utterly dependent upon you to do this. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. It's time for closing song.