

Sojourners in this World

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[0 : 00] Well, I think you have seen from the screen that the screen does not agree with your bulletin. And the reason the screen does not agree with your bulletin is because of all the unpredictability with the storm and whether you're having church or not.

I was way behind in preparation and I just was not ready with the message that we were supposed to preach this morning on Christianity and slavery from the 1st Timothy series. So instead, I decided to preach a message that I preached a couple of years ago and really trusting that the Lord has providentially led me to choose it and that he will use it this morning to bless our lives.

So would you turn in your Bibles to 1st Peter chapter 2 and we'll be reading verses 11 and 12. Two verses from 1st Peter chapter 2.

What's that? Oh, that's wrong. The reference is wrong. It's 1st Peter chapter 2. I may have given it the wrong reference.

[1 : 05] Sorry, sweetheart. That's what I should have preached. 1st Peter chapter 2. We'll be reading two verses this morning. I'm reading from the English Standard Version.

If your translation is different, there will be some slight differences. 1st Peter chapter 2. Starting 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.

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.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful this morning that we have the privilege to gather. To gather as your people those whom you have saved and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

And Lord, as we are here this morning and mindful that we could have been separated by, because of a storm, and perhaps at this time in our respective homes doing various things, Lord, you and your wise providence have seen it fit that we're able to gather this morning.

[2 : 38] And we thank you for that. We thank you, Lord, for the songs that we have sung that enabled us to lift our hearts and our voices together in worship of you.

And Lord, now as we sit under the authority of your word, we ask that you would speak to our hearts. Father, I pray that you would superintend in this moment the preaching of your word. Would you help us now to all posture our hearts to be good soil to hear your word. And Lord, though we are in a group this morning, you know us uniquely and you know us individually and you know us.

In terms of our deepest needs. Would you speak to us individually and would you meet those deep needs that we all have.

We trust you now to help us, Lord, as we open your word. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, prior to verse 11 in 1 Peter, the Apostle Peter has been defining and describing what it is to be a Christian.

[3 : 55] He is describing the new life in Christ that believers have come into. And what he does in these two verses is he begins a new section in the letter and he begins to urge followers of Christ to live lives that are consistent with this new life that they have already been declared to be.

When the letter opens, he talks about them having been born again to a living hope. And now he transitions in the letter. He is saying to them, you now need to live lives that are consistent with this new life in Christ.

In other words, he is saying to them, you are to live lives in this world that reflect that you are truly Christians. And what we see in these two verses is Peter is aware of two important realities.

He is aware, first of all, of the reality of the world's influence on believers. He is aware that as we live in this world, there is an air that we breathe in this world.

There is an effect of this world on those who live in it. He is aware of that first reality. But he is also aware of the reality of the believer's influence on the world as well in terms of individuals and their sphere of relationships.

[5 : 26] And Peter addresses these two realities in these two verses. So he is aware of these two realities. And what he says in these two verses to believers is this.

As you live in this world, be watchful of your soul and live mindful of unbelievers. Those are the two realities that he has in mind in these two verses.

He is saying to Christians, as you live in this world, you are to be watchful of your souls, mindful that this world affects you. And then you need to live mindful of unbelievers, aware that they are watching.

And those are the two things that he pulls together as he transitions in this letter now to call those who have been saved to live as if they are really saved.

Peter is saying to believers that we are to be intentional to resist the negative influences of this world on our souls. And at the same time, to seek to positively influence the lives of unbelievers.

[6 : 38] Now, while Peter is speaking these words to the church as a whole, I think it's important for each of us to hear it on an individual level as well. As we live life in this fallen world, facing temptations on a daily basis.

But also to be thoughtful of the unique opportunities that God gives us to influence unbelievers in our sphere of relationships. So from Peter's concerns in these two verses, I have two simple points this morning that I want us to consider in our remaining time.

And they are, number one, be watchful of your soul. And number two, live mindful of unbelievers. Let's consider the first one, be watchful of your soul.

What is Peter saying to believers? He's saying to them, as you live in this world, be watchful of your soul. Notice that the care for our souls as we live in this world is the first concern that Peter states. He's saying that those of us who are disciples of Jesus Christ, that we cannot live carelessly in this fallen world without any regard for its effect on our souls.

[8 : 01] He's saying in this fallen world, you will face passions of the flesh and you must abstain from them. If you have a New International Version, it translates these words, passions of the flesh, as sinful desires.

It refers to them as sinful desires. Now it's important to notice how Peter grounds this command and why he says what he says.

Peter does not give us this command in a vacuum. He's not saying in a vacuum, believers abstain from sinful desires. No, he's not saying that what he does is he wisely grounds it by reminding followers of Christ that they are sojourners and exiles in this world.

You see, more than anything else, when we think of ourselves, when we consider who we are, we are sojourners. We are exiles. This world is not our home if we belong to Jesus Christ.

But so often we don't think of ourselves. We don't see this as our identity. We don't recognize that we are like Abraham. He was looking for a city whose maker and builder was God.

[9 : 16] He recognized this was not his home. And so Scripture says they built tents. They moved from place to place. They built, they affixed tents to the ground because they recognized that they had no lasting city in this world.

So Peter grounds his commands in these two words that we are sojourners and exiles.

He's saying to us, you are visiting foreigners. You are resident exiles in this world. Therefore, live as such. You don't belong to this world. It's not your home. Abstain from the passions of the flesh.

These sinful passions of the flesh are practiced by those whose citizenship is of this world. And the reason that Peter prefaces his instructions with these words as sojourners and exiles is based on the reality that we are visiting foreigners and resident exiles.

Just like in the way we understand people to be when they move to a country that's not their home. It's a temporary situation. And what we know is they generally tend to retain their identity as foreigners.

[10 : 33] And they do not wholeheartedly embrace the culture of the place where they happen to be living. And oftentimes there's a vivid contrast between them and others who are in that culture.

In some cases their dress is different. I think many of you have seen Africans in the Western world. Many of them wear their African attire the way it's elaborately designed and very colorful linen garments and they tend to stand out in societies in Western societies in particular.

Sojourners and exiles prefer the food that they have grown up with that they are accustomed to and some of them in the culture in which they live they pay a fortune to get it and they don't mind paying that extra because they desire it so much.

They're different and they're not at home. Home is another place and there's a special place in their hearts for home. But in a similar way what Peter is doing is he's reminding us that we are citizens of another nation of another country.

We are citizens with a different culture. And if you would notice in verse 9 he tells us that we are members of God's holy nation and what should mark us as holy living.

[12:01] And so he is reminding those of us who have come to Christ that we are citizens of God's holy nation made up of all those who have been born again. And he calls us sojourners and exiles in this world.

And he identifies the passions of the flesh as being of this world. And for the good of our souls he says to us abstain from them.

Again Peter is concerned for our souls. That's the reason behind his command. He is concerned for our souls.

And he tells us that these passions wage war against our souls and therefore we are called to abstain from them. If you try to keep your place at first speed and just turn to the left in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5.

Galatians chapter 5. Galatians chapter 5. And I'd like to start reading at verse 16 to help us to better understand what Peter means by the desires of the flesh.

[13:18] Galatians 5 starting in verse 16. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident. Notice he talks first about the desires of the flesh. Now he tells us the works of the flesh. These are the acts that are acted upon or acted out that flow from the desires of the flesh.

He says in verse 19 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.

[14:58] Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So here what we see is in this passage in verse 16 Paul uses the same expression that Peter uses in verse 11 of chapter 2 when he talks about the desires of the flesh.

And then Paul tells us how we can fulfill the command to abstain from the desires of the flesh. The way we do that is by walking in the Spirit. And then he begins to outline for us what the works of the flesh actually looks like.

And obviously it's not an exhaustive list. He doesn't give us every single thing. It's more of a representative list because he ends up saying and things like these. So there are other aspects of this fleshly kind of living.

So he's saying to us this is what you need to be abstaining from in terms of your desires because otherwise it's going to lead to these activities.

[16:10] And notice what he says. He says it here a little differently than he would normally say it. Normally when he would give a warning like this he would say do not be deceived.

He would say that regularly do not be deceived. God is not mocked. Do not be deceived. If you live like this you will not inherit the kingdom of God. He gives it as a warning now.

What he's saying is he's saying I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Why does he give this warning? He gives this warning because there are those who would profess to know Jesus Christ who do these very things. And Peter says I warn you you will not inherit the kingdom of God if this is your way of life.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 Paul is having a similar discourse with the church in Corinth. and he gives a similar list like this but then he says and such were some of you but you've been washed.

[17 : 22] You've been cleansed. You've been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says you used to be that way but you're not that way anymore. And therefore if someone who names the name of Christ lives a life that is marked by these kinds of activities we are warned.

We will not inherit the kingdom of God. No amount of church attendance, no amount of Bible reading, no amount of living the part will cause us to inherit the kingdom of God and so he warns us.

And Peter has the same concern. Peter has the same concern that we would not only be Christians in name but we would be Christians in deed. by our lives.

Let's turn back to 1 Peter. Peter rightly calls what is happening in this world a war.

And I think we all know that in wars battles are won and lost. Wars battles are won and lost.

[18 : 41] And the truth is if you've been serving Christ for any length of time you would know that you don't win all the battles. Our hope is that as we serve Christ and as we stay near to Christ we will win the war.

That we will in the end prevail by the grace of God and show ourselves persevere and show ourselves to be believers in Christ. But we don't win every single battle.

Peter is helping us to win the war. He's helping us to win the spiritual war. And the way he's trying to help us to do that is to help us to guard ourselves from becoming spiritually dull and spiritually damaged as we live in this world.

Listen to how Peter later describes the effect of Sodom on Lot's soul as he lived there in 2 Peter chapter 2 verses 7 through 9.

You don't need to turn there. It should be projected for you. He says and if he, he meaning God, rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.

[20 : 18] Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.

This is a wonderful promise for followers of Jesus Christ. We are not called to abstain from sinful desires on our own. God doesn't call us to do this and then fold his arms and watch to see what we will do.

No, what he says is he will rescue us in the same way that he rescued righteous Lot out of Sodom as his soul, his righteous soul was tormented.

I think the King James uses the word vexed as he lived in Sodom. Brothers and sisters, if we are going to take Peter seriously, we are going to have to jealously watch our souls.

We have to be jealous in watching our souls. If we will take these words before us seriously. And so I want to ask you this morning, are you watching your soul to abstain from fleshly lusts?

[21 : 32] Are you walking in the spirit or by the flesh? Are you placing priority on those activities that will feed and strengthen your soul to help you resist sinful desires?

Activities like reading God's word and gathering with fellow sojourners as we're doing this morning and benefiting from the preaching and teaching of God's word. Having biblical fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ where we can walk in the light, where we can confess sin and receive prayer and encouragement and correction when needed.

Instead, are you feeding the passions of the flesh? One through unawareness but also through neglecting these same kinds of activities that help to strengthen your soul and to help you to walk in the spirit?

Are you indulging in activities that fuel passions of the flesh? Activities like excessive television, watching, and movie going?

especially when we bear in mind that most of the programming, almost all of the programming was prepared by unbelievers for unbelievers!

[22 : 52] We thank God when we get an opportunity like we have right now to view a movie like War Room where you can sit and you can bring your children and not be uneasy and worried about

what's going to come next in the next scene.

But see we're not owed that. We're not owed that. We're not owed the right to go to the movies every weekend or every other weekend and so we decide well this one seems to have less cursing than that one and less sexual immorality than that one so we'll watch this one.

The world owes us nothing and therefore we don't have to compromise with it. another thing that wars against our souls is just indiscriminate use of the internet investing excessive time in things like social media much of which is not encouraging and using technology in other time consuming ways that waste our time and dull our souls.

and it is so easy in this world to be infected with materialism and be infected with greed and be infected with carnality and be infected with lust and if we're not aware we're already lost.

There has to be this awareness of the effect of the world on us and how it wars against our souls and how it dulls our spiritual senses and Peter says we must fight he says we must resist it we must abstain from that so he is right to use the language of war because it is truly a war and this morning I want to encourage us to take these words of the apostle Peter seriously and by God's grace let us commit to live by the spirit so that we can abstain from the lusts of the flesh now while watching our souls through abstaining from fleshly desires is Peter's first concern it's not his only concern Peter is also concerned about our influence on unbelievers not just concerned about the influence of the world on us but he's also concerned about our influence on unbelievers and in verse 12 he goes on to say in essence live mindful of unbelievers live mindful of unbelievers there are three important aspects of what

[25 : 49] Peter is saying here notice first of all Peter refers to all unbelievers as Gentiles all of them he refers to them as Gentiles in the same way that he refers to all believers as God's holy nation the new Israel and he calls us to ensure that our conduct before them is honorable so he calls the world Gentiles all of them Gentiles and it's important to note that when he uses this term Gentile or he calls them Gentiles which he's using it spiritually among those spiritual Gentiles would be natural Jews and among this holy nation Israel these chosen peculiar people that he talks about among them would be redeemed Gentiles and redeemed Jews so our ethnicity does not come into play when it comes down to these two nations that Peter is referring to in his letter this holy nation this new

Israel that is comprised of all born again people no matter what their ethnicity is no matter what their nationality is and then these who are Gentiles who are unbelievers no matter what their nationalities are as well so that's the first thing to see that Peter calls all unbelievers Gentiles and he calls believers to live lives before them that are honorable and the second aspect that is important from what he says is Peter reminds us that hostility often comes from unbelievers to believers they speak about them as evil doers is what he says even though they live honorable lives that's a reality in Peter's day for example believers were falsely accused of being disloyal to Caesar because they acknowledged

Jesus Christ as Lord and they were falsely accused that they were against Caesar and they had these grand plans to overthrow Caesar and they were falsely accused even though they lived honorable lives and in our day and time one of the most obvious ones today is where you have believers around the world who are taking a stand against homosexuality or taking a stand against homosexual marriage and they are wrongly being demeaned and called homophobic and hateful and other derogatory terms but they're living honorable lives they're living lives that even if they're not believers on the faith because we can't know that their lives are consistent with what it makes to be a good citizen but many of them are believers living

God-centered lives and they are being maligned by the world and then third Peter reminds us that our good deeds our honorable conduct can result in unbelievers glorifying God that they can eventually result in unbelievers glorifying God and he's almost in essence saying so don't consider what they're saying right now don't be moved by the way they malign your name right now because if you live an honorable life before them then on the day of visitation on the day that God would visit them and this is a loaded expression about the visitation of the Lord which we'll talk about in a second they'll glorify God so he says you need to bear but it's down the road that you need to be thinking about in plain language what

Peter is saying to us as believers is we must accept the reality that unbelievers are watching our lives in verse 17 of chapter 1 Peter urges us to live with reverential fear mindful that the God that we serve our father is an impartial judge and he is watching now he is reminding us that unbelievers

are watching as well behind Peter's instructions here is the reality that even unbelievers can recognize good and honorable deeds and then he tells us that we can live in hope that one day God will visit them and God will visit them whether by visiting them on the day of salvation saving them on the day of salvation or by condemning them on the day of judgment and they will acknowledge the good works of believers that were set before them in one of those ways the day of salvation on the day of judgment and oftentimes there's quite a lag effect a couple of years ago a college friend of mine who

[31 : 37] I had not heard from for more than 17 years got in touch and sent me an email and told me that he had come to Christ and shared the story about how he had started to go to this little Baptist church and met the pastor he wasn't a believer and the pastor learned that he liked to fish and took him fishing and just reached out to him over a period of time and he came to Christ and he sent me an email and he was recalling conversations we had and interactions we had that I really wasn't remembering until he began to refresh my memory and one of the things he said to me in the email was that he remembered when I called him when I told him that he was a sinner and how upset he was by that but was able to look back on it and and and see that I was seeking to reach out to him and he took the time to really thank me for my example saying that as he came to

Christ he reflected back on the Christians that he knew and I was one that came to mind and I share that this morning just to say that oftentimes there's this lag effect and we never know in the moment what God is doing in a person's life even sometimes when there's hostility and so we need to continue to be faithful mindful that God is at work in ways that we can never see now I think perhaps the best way for us to think about fulfilling this command to live honorable lives before unbelievers is to think about maybe three particular contexts that are vitally important in terms of where we have relationships to live these lives that are on display that are to be honorable before unbelievers!

And they are our homes our neighborhoods and at work! And first in the home for some of us living mindful of unbelievers is a reality in the context of our homes because perhaps there's a husband or a wife or children or parents who are unbelievers and on a daily basis we are called to live life before them in such a way that they would see our honorable life and it would position them to glorify God on the day of visitation and certainly in our homes our hope is that will be on the day of salvation when they come to see Christ that they in retrospect for the things that they may deride us for they would come back and thank us for and I think in the home it is so so difficult so difficult to do this because many times we're not mindful we're not mindful that this husband or wife or this brother or sister this mother or father is an unbeliever we tend to forget those things and we live in ways that don't display our honorable lives sometimes we forget our evangelistic duties in the midst of conflict and we often times don't handle them as we should and we act in ways that are not consistent with what it means to follow

Jesus Christ but in our homes we have this incredible opportunity in an ongoing way to put these lives on display and the only way that we will do it with any degree of consistency to have credibility is by the grace of God by the grace of God to remind us and then by the grace of God to enable us so you can do that with people that you interact with maybe here and there but boy it is so hard in an ongoing way to do this and thank God that he gives us sufficient grace to be able to do just that if we would look to him and we would lean on him and then the second context in the context of our neighborhoods perhaps you have neighbors who are unbelievers our unbelieving neighbors watch us perhaps watch this this morning getting dressed and knowing well they're going to church probably watch us seeing us come back and say they're coming from church and then sometimes if you have difficult neighbors you may have relational conflicts and disagreements and we are called to conduct ourselves honorably putting our lives on display for

Jesus Christ again only by God's grace can we do it only by God's grace can we be reminded that there is something bigger than this conflict that we may have right now there's something bigger putting our lives on display so that they may see our good works and glorify God on the day of visitation and then the third area is the area of work perhaps your boss your co-workers some of them are unbelievers you see Peter doesn't specify what it looks like to conduct ourselves in honorable ways he refers to it but he doesn't spell it out for us he doesn't drill down beyond that at work perhaps you can conduct yourself honorably by being honest and having integrity and by working hard you can conduct yourself honorably by staying out of office politics and by refraining from office gossip and other activities that tend to divide people and destroy relationships you can

conduct yourself by honorably bearing up sometimes under unjust treatment rather than lashing out and responding exactly the way an unbeliever responds and as you do that you'll be seen to be different you'll be seen to be strange but people tend to watch strangers more closely and we get to live this out in the context of work where we have unbelieving co-workers with the hope that one day

[38 : 44] God will visit them and our hope is not that he would visit them in judgment that's his prerogative to do but our hope is that he would visit them in salvation and they would remember those good works that were put on display before them and that they would glorify God and obviously there are other areas that we can consider this morning but I think these are three critical areas that we all need to consider how God will use us to put our lives on display to unbelievers in the context of home neighborhood and work so these are Paul's these are Peter's instructions sorry these are Peter's instructions to us concerning how we are to live in this world mindful of the world's influence on us and mindful of this awesome responsibility that we have to put our lives on display for unbelievers so the two things he says are as you live in this world be watchful for your soul as you live in this world live mindful of unbelievers how do we do this again only by God's help only with

God's grace that's the only way we can do this left to ourselves we will not because we cannot and it would not surprise me even at this moment there are some of us who have live issues whether it is being convicted right now about how particular practices are dulling your soul making you spiritually numb more insensitive to the things of God pulling you away from those things that would feed your soul or perhaps it's in the area of being challenged to put your life on display as honorable before someone with whom you have a conflict or some challenge who is an unbeliever and they need to see light from you for that light is being obscured by the conflict and by your response to it and all these things we can bring to the

Lord this morning all these things we can ask the Lord to give us grace for only his grace enables us to display the gospel through our words and our deeds and that's especially true in difficult situations and so we need to look to him at the beginning of this message I took the time to say that Peter was only calling believers to do this although that might seem to be something unimportant to point out it is very important to point out the reason it's important to point out is if we do not see these words connected to those who have been born again and we try to obey them in isolation what we do is we get into moralism we get into calling people who are unbelievers to do what they have not been saved to do and I can tell you this morning that on this island and perhaps all around the country there are hundreds of churches where many unbelievers this morning because it's just a traditional thing to go to church many unbelievers will be called to do things that they cannot by spiritual nature do they can't do it and I say this this morning to those who may be present as unbelievers as non-believer you cannot do this as non-believer you have no ability to do this even even though you may hear this and you may think that's a good thing to do

I'm going to really try that but if you try that you're not going to be successful at that because this only happens when God comes into your life gives you a new heart and then gives you grace to be able to live this way so if you're here today and you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior the good news is Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners he went to the cross he had no sins but he died for sin he died for the sins of sinners and all who put their trust in him he saves and he receives and they are forgiven and then they are put on a path where they're able to live in this world watching their souls and then putting their lives on display for unbelievers so I say to you this morning if you are away from Jesus Christ if you don't know him as

Lord and personal Savior I encourage you to turn to Christ today and he promises that all who come to him he will not turn away let's pray Father we thank you this morning for reminding us that we are exiles that we are sojourners in this world and I pray Lord that you would help us to remember that this world indeed is not our home that we are called to abstain from the fleshly desires of this world and we are to instead live honorable lives before unbelievers so that even though they speak evil of us they would glorify you on the day of visitation because of the honorable lives that we live but God we know that we need your help to do this

[44 : 57] I pray for those who have live issues in their lives whether the pull of the world is strong on their souls and their spiritual senses have been dulled and numbed God of mercy this morning and Lord for those who may be challenged for whatever reason to put their lives on display as honorable before unbelievers would you give much grace to neighbor them to do that would you

help us Lord we pray in Jesus name amen