

Live As God's People

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0:00] Verse 11. Amen.

David Helm wrote this. If human language retains within her possession a word better suited to follow chapter 2 and verse 10 than the one Peter chose.

I can't think of it. Beloved is the honored title that accompanies everyone whose spiritual identity and eternal destination are wrapped up in Christ.

I love the way he said that. I don't know that there's a better word to begin verse 11 with. Of course there isn't. It's the inspired word of God. It's the one the Spirit chose.

And it's a tremendous word. And I want you to just imagine for just a moment that you belong to one of those little congregations. Perhaps a congregation not much larger than what has gathered here today.

[1:24] In the first century somewhere in Asia Minor in one of those provinces that are named at the beginning of the letter. You belong to one of those congregations. Your life as a believer at that point.

Though filled with hope and joy. Has been anything but easy. You used to be right at home in the world.

Comfortable. And then somewhere along the way. Someone preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. And something happened. Something that you may not even necessarily be able to fully understand and comprehend yet.

But something happened. And maybe it wasn't even the first time that you heard it. Maybe you'd heard it many times before. But on that day in hearing it. It was as if God himself called you.

And transformed you. And you believed. And now though you at that point had felt at home in the world. Now really the only way to describe your existence is as a stranger here.

[2:28] As an exile here. And this new faith that you possess. And the life that follows this faith and obedience to Jesus.

Has suddenly become an obstacle to most of your relationships. You're mocked and ridiculed by people who once loved you. Those government officials that at one time you had a pretty good relationship with.

Now suddenly that relationship has soured. Your employer or in the case of some of the people in this letter. You were a slave.

And perhaps your master at that point was a kind master. And had appreciated your work. And had demonstrated kindness to you. And the arrangement that you had made with him economically.

But now suddenly as a result of this new faith. And the life that follows this faith. Now he has become a harsh master towards you. Perhaps you're a wife.

[3 : 30] And you've come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus. But your husband continues to reject him. And you're trying to sort out how can I be a faithful wife. To a husband who seems to now loathe me.

And the God that I serve. That was the distinction of the people to whom Peter was writing. They were suffering. Some were even thinking that they were worthy of death.

On account of this new way of life. But again you're in that congregation. And despite all of that you're persevering. It's hard. There's days that you're tempted to doubt.

Whether or not it's true. And whether or not it's worth it. But you're persevering in faith. You don't know exactly how. But it's as if God has just got this magnet on your heart. And he just keeps drawing you.

And he just keeps pulling you in. So on the Lord today. Sunday morning. You make your way to the gathering. Like you always do. And to your great surprise. One of the elders of the church.

[4 : 30] Stands before the congregation. And says. We have a letter to read to you today. It's from Peter. And he begins to read. Everything that we've studied up to this point.

1 Peter 1.1 through 2.10. And I can just imagine at this point. In the reading of that letter. Someone in that congregation. Maybe with tears.

Beginning to stream. Down their face. Stop the elder. And just say. Pastor. Can you just read that bit again?

You know that whole section. On that future inheritance. That's imperishable. And undefiled. And unfading. Can you read that again? That whole bit.

About. Us being God's chosen. Can you just read that again? And suddenly. Your heart.

[5 : 30] And your affections. Are warmed. Not because your circumstances. Have changed. Not because those friendships. That you once loved. Have now soured.

Are now. Beginning to sweeten again. Not for that reason. But simply because. Once again. You have been enamored. With the wonderful gospel. Of Jesus Christ.

And this new identity. That is yours. In Christ. That transcends. All of those other things. That makes all of the suffering. Worth it.

That makes all of the hardship. And the struggle. Worth the way. Yeah. I think beloved. Is precisely the right word. To start with here.

Because that's exactly who we are. In Christ Jesus. We are the beloved of God. And as strangers. And exiles in this world. As Peter reminds us of.

[6 : 27] Again. Right here in verse 11. We may be despised by the world. But he reminds us. We are chosen of God. Yeah. There may be people around us.

Who hate us. who think that our new convictions and our new faith and our new way of life is not only strange, but evil as he covers it here. Yeah, they hate us, but we are beloved of the Lord.

And we are beloved by the apostle. And we're beloved by his people. Beloved is also signaling for us here as far as the literary structure of the letter is concerned.

It's signaling for us a shift in the content of Peter's letter. He has well established up to this point our gospel identity. And now he's turning away from all of this emphasis on who we are and to whom we belong and what is waiting for us in eternity.

He's turning away from that in order that he might urge us now to live in a way that's worthy of that calling. That calling that he said in chapter 1 is to be God's children.

[7 : 41] And the calling that he said in chapter 2 is to be God's people in the world. He is now beginning to urge us on how to live in light of that.

And the point of it is simple. The point is that if we are God's people, a priesthood called out of darkness to represent God in the world, then as his people we need to take seriously our way of life.

The conduct of our lives day by day as it's lived before one another, but then even especially as it's lived before the unbelievers around us, we are to take seriously what that looks like because we are no longer representing ourselves.

I'm not representing the blank and chips ultimately. I'm representing the Lord God. That's Peter's point. And from here to the end of chapter 4, he's going to provide several specific categories and areas of life that give us instructions on how we are to do that, how we are to conduct our lives faithfully as God's people in the world.

But these two verses, as again David Helm puts it helpfully, I think, are the threshold into the house that Peter is going to begin building in the next two chapters.

[9 : 02] I want you to think of it as this house. There's a room over here that deals with how we are to live honorably in relationship to the government, civil officials that have authority over our lives.

And then we're going to move from that room to this room over here that deals with, we might say, employers. In this case, it's master slaves. We might understand that by application in our situation to be the way we relate to our employers and the businesses that we work for and so on and so forth.

Those who have authority over us in that way. And then we're going to move from that room over to this room that deals with the home and our marriages and what it looks like to be a faithful husband and a faithful wife according to God's design, but especially as it relates to those who are unbelievers in our homes.

Then we're going to move to a room on suffering. We're going to move to a room on our friends who now think we're strange because we don't want to do the things that we used to do with them.

We're going to move to all of these rooms. But before we get to any of these rooms, here stands verses 11 and 12. This is the doorway into the house. Two big principles that Peter issues here that are summarizing the overarching purpose that's going to guide us moving forward in these next two chapters, which is why we will settle just on these two for the day.

[10 : 24] If I can just say this too. Here we see Peter, the preacher, maybe for the first time, really coming through.

We, of course, see Peter, the apostle. We see Peter very pastorally handling these Christians. Now we get here. It's Peter the preacher now. How do we know?

Because he doesn't just simply tell us what we ought to do. He pleads with us to live in godliness here. Indeed, this is how we're going to thrive in exile.

So he urgently, he passionately implores Christians to hear and obey because of who they are in Christ. I want you to understand the tone now that I think Peter intends to communicate through this letter.

He is shifting now from this great comforting tone to this great plea, this imploring tone for them to obey. And he gives two exhortations, each one with a reason attached to it.

[11 : 33] One of them is framed negatively. That is, he's telling us what we must not do. One is framed positively. That is, he is telling us what we must do, what we must pursue.

Let's start with the negative one. Number one, he says, exhortation number one, abstain from the passions of the flesh. Abstain from the passions of the flesh. This is verse 11.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain, refuse, quit the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Now, it's New Year's resolution season. Perhaps some of you have joined with millions of others to determine that 2026 is going to be the year I get healthy again, right?

And you know the best way to handle New Year's resolutions, right? You just don't make them, right? If you don't make them, you can't fail on them. If you don't try to better yourself, you'll succeed, right, in not bettering yourself.

[12:37] And yet, here we are, New Year's resolution season. Maybe some of you have done that, and you've said, you know what, this year I'm going to really try to develop a healthier lifestyle physically. And even with all of the various supplements that are available, every other commercial I see is GLP-1.

And there's all of the things about gyms and things like that as well. Despite all of those things, we know that at the heart of this, a healthy lifestyle really just boils down to two things.

Diet and exercise. Diet and exercise. You can do all the other stuff, and it may work for a little while, but if you don't get control of your diet and of your exercise, that is, cut some things out and pursue other things, the healthy lifestyle is never really going to develop.

And I think we can understand these two principles kind of laying out that way. And here on the very first one, Peter's telling us some things that we need to cut out. We need to abstain from the passions of the flesh.

Well, what are these passions? Well, we might look back to chapter 2 to see some of them. Chapter 2 and verse 1, Peter tells us there, put away malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander.

[13:55] Now, that would make sense, right? We would say, yeah, those would certainly fit the category of passions of the flesh. We need to cut those things out if we're going to live in godliness. We might also look ahead if you just want to flip over to chapter 4, verse 2.

Peter tells us we are to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.

Gentiles he's using here in the sense of unbelievers, not just non-Jews. And he gives us another list, doesn't he? So living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, lawless idolatry.

He said, yeah, well, those sound a lot like passions of the flesh to me as well. We could go to a number of other New Testament passages, couldn't we? We could go to Romans chapter 1 or Colossians chapter 3 or Ephesians chapter 5.

Or we could go to Galatians chapter 5 and we can see list after list after list after list showing us all of these passions of the flesh. The works of the flesh. And we would say, yes, all of those are included here.

[15:09] And yes, Peter intends for us to think about that. But I do think it's actually important that Peter doesn't give us a list here. We need to at least notice that he's not concerned with a list at this point.

What is it that he's concerned with? The emphasis at this point is on the new life in Christ being distinct from the old way of sin.

That because you are in Christ, there should be a dramatic transformation of life. That is certainly progressive.

You will grow in this way of life. It doesn't all come at once, but the affections come at once. No longer are you living for yourself. No longer are you living for your own pleasure.

Now your affections have shifted and your priority is the glory of God and the pleasure of God. You want to live for him. You want to fulfill the purpose for which he has created you.

[16:13] In other words, your new identity should mark you out, he says. And we can talk about all kinds of ways for it to do that. But the emphasis here is just on the fact that something should be marking you in your behavior as different.

And this is his pattern, isn't it? In chapter 1, he simply says, don't be conformed to the passion of your former ignorance. Don't go back to the darkness.

We read it in chapter 4. Live the rest of the time in the flesh from here on forward, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God. Because human passions is what you once, that's all you cared about.

Well, we're not going to live that way anymore, he says. That's the emphasis. And the bottom line is that to live for God's pleasure and according to his will is the exact opposite of living for the passions that marked your life before becoming a Christian.

Remember what he's just said. God has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. And to live as his people means refusing to go back to the darkness.

[17:28] Grace then does not free us to live as we want. Grace frees us to live as God wants.

And there's two great errors that Christians tend to fall in. One is that old antinomianism. Literally, it means no law, which is to say what I just said.

That grace has set me free. Therefore, my behavior doesn't really matter anymore. Therefore, I have received grace. Grace is greater than sin. And therefore, I am free to live as I want to live.

Well, no, the Bible doesn't teach that at all. If that were true, why on earth would Peter even write this? But there's another error that we tend to fall into.

It's another blemish on our understanding of the gospel. And that's when we go to the other extreme and we embrace the law to the extent that we forget grace. This was the issue in Galatians.

[18:29] To the Galatians, wasn't it? Peter or Paul tells them, he says, having begun by the spirit, are you now going to be made complete and mature by the flesh? He says, no, that's legalism, isn't it?

It's saying, well, maybe Jesus is enough to get me in the door. But it's going to have to take a lot of works on my part to actually finish the job. Well, no, that's not the gospel either. Peter helps us here.

He says, yes, you are in Christ. But then he also says, he's called you out of darkness and it's time to live like it. As God's representatives in the world, we must abstain from the sins of the flesh.

Now, I want you to notice the reason that he supplies here in verse 11. I urge you as sojourners and exiles, abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war.

With your soul. Wage war. Don't miss the weight here. War is no small thing.

[19:34] Sin is destructive, he means. And it's destructive, he means, to the whole person.

Which I think is what he means by the soul here. Not just the immaterial part, but the whole person is affected by the pursuit of sin. But though we are quick to recognize typically that sin takes its toll on the body, perhaps it would be good for us to remember now.

That it also takes a tremendous toll on the soul. On that spiritual part of you. To be clear, those who are truly God's people are safe in Christ.

We studied that in chapter 1, didn't we? We are being guarded by God's power through faith. For a salvation ready to be revealed. That's chapter 1. But we shouldn't quickly dismiss the warnings that are ever present in the New Testament.

What are they? These passions wage war against your soul in that giving in to them will lead you to the path of apostasy.

[20:52] Of forsaking the faith altogether. It wants to destroy you. And it will destroy you.

Jesus said there's two kinds of people who profess faith at some point but eventually fall away. He said it in the parable of the soils.

The four soils. Remember, there were two of them who, upon hearing the gospel message, at first are enamored by that message for one reason or another. But it never takes root in their heart.

So for a little while, they continue with the true believers. And you can't tell much of a difference between them. But eventually they fall away. And he says there's two reasons that they fall away. One of them is through suffering.

The gospel doesn't take a real root in their life. And so when the gospel actually begins to cost them something, they decide, yeah, this isn't for me. And they leave. The other, he says, is the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things chokes out the truth in their lives.

[22:04] In other words, they are enamored in some sense with the gospel message. And for a little while, they're willing to profess that. But then when they find that it's actually going to cost them the passions that they really want most, they begin to live for those passions.

And for a little while, they may try to hold on to both things. Well, maybe I can still be a Christian. I can still live this way too. But inevitably, as you give in to the passions of the flesh, you will leave the faith.

I think that's the warning that is implicit in what Peter is saying here. And we can find this warning in a number of places in the New Testament. Yes, if you are in Christ, you are safe in Christ and God is guarding you.

But then the warnings are the instruments that he uses to guard us, isn't it? Do not give in to the sins of the flesh. Abstain from the sins of the flesh.

They are waging war with your soul. So cut them out. Peter issues this important warning.

[23:08] Sin warns against you. Wars against you. And if you're going to persevere as a Christian in exile, you're going to have to learn to abstain from them. Else you're going to set yourself on the road to apostasy.

That's a strong warning. Now do you see Peter the preacher? He's moving away from comfort here for a moment to pleading passionately calling us to obedience for our own good.

There's a second part though, isn't there, in verse 12. Not only are we to abstain from the passions of the flesh. Second, he says we are to keep our conduct honorable.

Keep our conduct honorable. Let's read the verse again. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles, that is unbelievers in this sense, honorable. So that when they speak against you as evildoers, the assumption is that they are going to do that.

If you live the way God is telling you to live, they will not understand. They will not even see it as strange. They will see it as evil.

[24:19] That was the context of these Christians. Maybe it's the exclusivity claim of Christ. Christians in that day in some places were referred to as atheists. Not because they believed there was no God, but because they believed there was only one God.

And to the context in which they lived, that was evil. This life that they're now living is going to face accusation, right? Peter's saying that's going to happen.

The world will not understand. So when they do that, you persist in this honorable living so that they may then see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Now Peter is undoubtedly quoting Jesus directly here. Your kids right now are learning the Sermon on the Mount. Remember what Jesus said right towards the beginning of it.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

[25 : 20] Now I understand as evangelical Protestants, we are sometimes allergic to those two words. Good works and good deeds and for good reason.

We stand strongly on the conviction of justification by faith alone. That there is nothing in us that earns salvation in any way. And yet, when we come to the New Testament over and over and over, we see good works.

That is obedience to God's law, obedience to God's design. We see that as one great end of the gospel. And it's working us. Can I just, I didn't have this in my notes.

Can we just look at Titus chapter 2 real quick? Can I just show you one place? There are many of them that we could look at. But just turn to the left in your Bible. Let me show you this one. Titus chapter 2.

Verse 11 to 14. Paul is writing to Titus here. He's reminding them of their gospel identity and then the outworking of it.

[26 : 24] He says, the grace of God, chapter 2 verse 11, has appeared. That is, Jesus has appeared. Bringing salvation for all people. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.

And to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. Waiting for our blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now notice this in verse 14. Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession.

Sounds a lot like 1 Peter chapter 2, doesn't it? But notice the last phrase. The result of this is that they are zealous for what? Good works.

One great end of the gospel. If you've read through that confession of faith that I handed out to you in last week's member meeting. One great end of the gospel is our obedience to God.

[27 : 26] Our obedience to his moral law. Our obedience to his design and creation. All of those things are summarized in this term, good works. Yes, we are not justified by those things.

And yet, our justification by faith, this grace that we receive of God, does this radical, gracious work in us so that the result is good works and good deeds that we must pursue if we are to glorify the Lord.

This transformation away from the passions of the flesh to an honorable way of life is part of the work of God's grace that God does in us through the gospel.

He calls us out of darkness so that we might abstain from the desires of the flesh. And he calls us into his marvelous light to live in the new way of the spirit.

And remember the context in which he's writing this. He's just affirmed their identity as God's people in the world. He said they are a holy priesthood called to represent God.

[28 : 37] And therefore, we must consciously, intentionally pursue a life that is lived according to God's will. Which he then says will in time prove beautiful and attractive.

Even to unbelievers. Now, I want you to listen carefully to what I'm about to say. If we don't get this part of it right, we're going to blow it.

Peter is not teaching us to ask this question. He's not teaching us to ask, what must I do and how must I live so that the unbelieving world around me will look at my life with approval.

That's not what he's training us to ask. Many Christians are going wrong because they think that's where we start. That we look at those we love and we look at our friends and we look at our culture and we ask the question first, what must I do in order to gain their approval and thereby somehow glorify God in the beauty of the gospel?

That is why Christians and churches are running away from preaching on legitimate sin. Becoming tolerant of sins in our culture that are so prevalent.

[30:12] LGBTQ stuff just comes to the mind because it's such a hot button. I don't mean to just pick on that one. It's just, it's such a hot button thing right now in our culture. And Christians and churches are starting with this question to say, okay, well, what must I do in order for my life to be made attractive to them?

And inevitably the answer is, well, it is to accept and tolerate what they've chosen to do in the name of love. There's no other way to get around that. If that's the approach you take with this exhortation from Peter, you will profess a faith that is then contradicted by your very life.

That's not living as God's people in the world. That does not represent God to the world as a holy priesthood. It doesn't do that. And if that's the approach we take, we're inevitably going to neglect to do the truly good deeds that God wants us to do.

We'll have a pseudo version of it, but not a true version of it. And eventually, if we're not careful, we will end up embracing rather than abstaining from the passions of the flesh. And if we embrace rather than abstain from the passions of the flesh, we lose the gospel.

And if we've lost the gospel, we've lost everything. We think back again to that confession of faith that you are reading through and studying right now.

[31:37] Why have that whole section, that biblical anthropology and article three on humanity? Why? Because if we don't get that right, we will lose the gospel. And if we've lost the gospel, we've lost everything.

So, Peter is not teaching us to say, what must I do or how must I live in order for the unbelieving world around me to look on my life with approval and with pleasure. That's not the question.

Here's the question. What must I do and how must I live to display the beauty of God's design and of God's law for human flourishing?

That reveals a life that is actually truly good and honorable, which in this case it means beautiful.

That's the word here. And attractive. Now, I think that's what Peter's teaching us to ask. And the reason I think that is because all of these different areas that he's going to follow up with after these two verses.

[32:50] It is God who has designed humans to flourish with a proper submission to authority. And God tells us in his word, there is a way that Christians are to relate to those authorities, even the unbelieving ones.

What is that? It's God's design. It's God's law for human flourishing. And it's good. And it's beautiful. We can see this happening right now in our nation.

People are dying because of this. It's God who designed humans to flourish in the complementary roles of male and female in marriage.

Our culture wants to despise that. But that's God's design. Julie and I, we had this long conversation last night.

It was such a good conversation. And think about where we are in relationship to raising our girls and what are we going to teach them? What is it that we want for them coming up? And we're just reflecting on the beauty of God's design in the home.

[34:08] A strong husband and father who will lead and protect and provide for his family. A loving and faithful mother and wife who will care for her home and train her kids to love and to flourish in life.

It is beautiful. And it's good. And the world hates it. And they hate what's behind it. And yet Peter's going to follow these two verses up by saying, look, they're going to hate it.

But in time, it will prove good and beautiful and honorable. So the question is not, what must I do for the world to approve or to find beauty in my life?

No, the question is, what is God's will? And what is God's design? And in time, trust that that will prove itself good and right.

To keep one's conduct honorable is to live as God designed and commands, even if and when the unbelieving world does not see its beauty and glory in such a life.

[35:22] Now, Peter guarantees actually that they will reject the Christian way of life. They'll see it as evil from the start. He says it plainly right here. When they speak against you as evildoers.

That is, their accusation is that what we're doing and how we're thinking is actually evil. This is why our time in this life is characterized as an exile, isn't it?

It's why you should feel like a sojourner and a stranger in this world. And if you don't, it's probably a problem with you. However, when we live as God's people, the world will see our good way of life.

And one of two things will happen. Some will see. And God will use your life and your faith and your conduct to draw them to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that in time, they will see the beauty of your faith and your life. And they will then turn to God and give him glory. And that indeed does happen.

[36:31] But there's another thing that is potential. And I think it's included here. It may even be the emphasis here. Others will continue to reject the Lord. They will continue to reject his people.

But we'll acknowledge his glory in the final judgment. Which I think is what Peter is referring to in that last phrase. On the day of visitation.

I don't think that's a visitation unto salvation. I think it's a visitation unto judgment. We just read that in Exodus 32. Did you notice? At the very end of the chapter, God uses that very language to say he will visit them in their sins.

In order that he might judge their sins. I think Peter's drawing on that language here. Which means that either our lives being lived for God's glory are either going to be used by God to draw unbelievers to faith.

And yes, indeed, we pray that that will happen and we believe that it will. And we trust the Lord to do it. But we also understand that it is the example of our faith and of our life and of our message that will condemn them in the judgment.

[37:40] They will be without excuse in the judgment. And even then, the word emphasizes every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess.

Every unbelieving heart will acknowledge that God's way is right. That Jesus is Lord. And that this is actually beautiful. Beautiful. In the next few passages, Peter is going to walk us through a few areas of life in which we are to faithfully represent God to the world.

But it's these two exhortations that provide the framework for Christian living in any circumstance. Of course, there are more categories of life than just our relationship to government and in the home and in our workplaces.

There are more than that. These two instructions, these exhortations, give us the overarching framework for how to think about our lives. We are to abstain from the passions of the flesh.

And we're to keep our conduct honorable before the watching world. And by doing these things, we will persevere to the end. And we will glorify our God and Father.

[38 : 51] Leading unbelievers to know and worship Him. In other words, knowing who we are and living according to these two principles is how we will thrive in our time of exile.