

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 2:11-12 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Living That Impacts Non-believers Around Us

READ: 1 Peter 2:11-12, with vv.2:1,5,9 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has designed and intends that we true believers are to be living in holiness, possessing a deep sincere brotherly love for one another, spiritually maturing in the faith, and serving God effectively. (vv.1:15,22; 2:2,5)
 - - True believers have a continuous active personal relationship with the living Jesus, which Jesus intensely desires that non-believers would have as well. (v.2:4)
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v.11 - READ

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe each phrase in verse 11, while considering and integrating corresponding realities that are listed in previous verses 5, 9, and 10.]

SECTION POINT: True believers are now estranged from and even at war with the ways of the world.

"as aliens and strangers in the world,"

- - In addition to all of the substantial blessings and benefits that God has bestowed upon us true believers, as cited in verses 9-10, a consequent characteristic is that now we are also "aliens and strangers" in our neighborhood, in our country, in the world.
- - Whether or not we have been dispersed from our homes and our country due to persecution, like those to whom this Book of 1 Peter was addressed (v.1:1), nevertheless each of us true believers is in reality a "resident alien", a "resident foreigner" in this world - no matter what country we live in. (Strong's #3941, #3927)
- - Every day we live alongside and among non-believers, interacting with them in various ways.
- - But, we true believers have been given the high honor of being granted as "royal" members or citizens of "a holy nation" that "belongs to God". (v.2:9)
- - Conversely, non-believers remain being regarded and classified by God as His enemies, and their indulging in "sinful desires" therein results in them earning and accumulating more and more of God's wrath and corresponding severe punishment, to be eternally inflicted upon them when they face God on Judgment Day. (Romans 5:10,9; 2:5)
- - So, intrinsic to our new blessed standing and status before God, we true believers are now vastly and contrarily different from the countless numbers of non-believers that we live amongst.
- - Consequently, we should no longer fit in suitably or smoothly or amicably with their cultures, their values, their ways of thinking, their indulging in "sinful desires". (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:2, James 4:4)
- - We should now be foreigners to them - "aliens and strangers", which is what God intends, and has designed, and has designated for all of us true believers.

- - Our new membership in God's "holy nation" overrides and negates our previous membership "in the world". (1 Peter 2:9)

"urged... to abstain from sinful desires,"

- - Upon our being made a true believer, we are now given a mandate to abruptly turn around and "abstain from sinful desires", which is in stark contrast to and reversal of our former readily indulging ourselves in "sinful desires".
- - In this new life of being a royal member of God's "holy nation" (v.9), we are to exert self-control, "refraining our-self" from acting upon and engaging in any and all "sinful desires". (Strong's #0567; cf. v.1:13)
- - And furthermore, by implication we are to quickly achieve success and thereafter consistency in comprehensively "abstaining [our-self] from sinful desires".

"which war against your soul."

- - Engaging in "sinful desires" is destructive to living a "holy" life (v.1:15), being counterproductive to holiness and instead producing the fostering, nurturing, and growth of even more sinfulness in our life.
- - "Sinful desires" have an attractiveness to them, seducing, tempting, and "luring us with a promise of pleasure or reward". (AHD - 'lure')
- - Some sinful activities may not be much of a threat or temptation to us personally because we solidly have no "desire" to engage in them, particularly even more so if we staunchly oppose them personally or are repulsed by them personally.
- - However, in areas where we personally have a predisposition or innate propensity towards being vulnerable to certain "sinful desires", then we are seriously at risk in becoming open to try them, which thereupon will likely result in being captured and enslaved by them, due to our personal predisposed weakness in those areas of sinfulness. (cf. James 1:13-15)
- - So we are at "war", already battling "sinful desires" in the temptation stage, even before we have engaged in the sinful desire for the first time.
- - Then after we have engaged in the sinful desire, we are at "war" battling whether or not to engage in the sinful desire again - and again - and again... .
- - And simultaneously, we are at war with the morality of the world, which continuously bombards us with enticements and exhortations to join in with the world in engaging in sinful desires.
- - Each time we fail to resist engaging in a "sinful desire", we move farther and farther away from holiness and even wanting to live in holiness.
- - For us true believers, this "war" against engaging in "sinful desires" continues throughout our entire life on this earth.
- - From observations, typically nearly all true believers live a life in which their living in holiness is significantly adversely impacted, hindered, stagnated, impaired, overwhelmed, and essentially defeated by their engaging in sinful desires.
- - Essentially, they live defeated lives - their holiness is compromised and neutralized by the "sinful desires" they engage in, thus defiling and corrupting their "soul", their spirit, their relationship with God, their interactions with other believers, their ministry activities, and thereby they are not properly and "acceptably" fulfilling the assignments that God has given them, as cited in verses 5 and 9, for examples.

"Dear friends, I urge you,"

- - Apparently, Apostle Peter has personally encountered and experienced during His life this ongoing war that "sinful desires wage against [a believer's] soul".
- - His adding of a personal touch and appeal to his readers, "I urge you", implies that Peter has personally experienced this war and the adverse consequences inflicted on the soul or spirit when failure to abstain occurs.
- - In addition to presenting a mandate directly from God, Peter is personally attesting to and endorsing that "abstaining from sinful desires" is the better way to proceed in life, the way that will enable believers to produce "good deeds and glorifying of God" that are "acceptable to God" and not corrupted or tainted by the effects of "sinful desires". (vv.2:12,5; cf. v.5:12c)
- - By addressing the readers of the Book of 1 Peter as "Dear friends" or "beloved", Peter is saying that he loves the believers like God loves them. (Strong's #0027)
- - And by means of his designation as a high-ranking authority, "an apostle", who speaks from direct authority on behalf of God, Peter is "urging" and "exhorting" them, which is actually coming from God to them - through Peter's writing. (v.1:1; Strong's #3870 in v.2:11)

v.12 - READ

[Lesson Question: What is God saying in this verse about the visibility, the quality, and the impression we true believers impact on people through how we live our life? Describe the dynamics of what effect our goodness with good deeds can have on non-believers who are even critical of us.]

SECTION POINT: Non-believers can become attracted and open to hearing about God by true believers living in comprehensive goodness and producing good deeds.

"Live such good lives among the pagans"

- - In verse 11, the emphasis is on now living in holiness, which is conversely different than how we previously lived like the non-believers do.
- - Next, in verse 12, the emphasis goes a step further, pertaining to impacting the non-believers or "pagans" that we live among.
- - We true believers are to "live such good lives", suggesting that our lives are to be comprehensively "good" - both in public and in private.
- - The "goodness" in our lives is to be pervasive, "being present throughout" all aspects of our lives. (AHD - 'pervade')
- - Of course, any engaging in "sinful desires" (v.11) would contradict and seriously damage the genuineness, the comprehensiveness, and the credibility of the "goodness" that we are trying to attain and maintain.

"though they accuse you of doing wrong,"

- - Non-believers are watching us true believers, especially if we claim to be followers of Jesus.
- - They are looking closely, trying to determine if there is genuineness or if there is hypocrisy within our claim to be a follower of Jesus.
- - If non-believers see or detect our goodness, they will make a mental note of it but will remain skeptical of its genuineness until they accumulate a large quantity of instances in which our goodness is clearly genuine.

- - If non-believers see or detect or suspect any hypocrisy in our supposed goodness, then the credibility of our goodness immediately sinks to zero and they label us as a hypocrite and a pretender.
- - Therefore, unbroken consistency of our goodness is critical to gaining their favorable opinion of us and of all of the religious content that we stand for.

- - Non-believers' skepticism of the goodness of true believers naturally dominates their perspective and their opinion of true believers.
- - Thereby, we true believers will certainly incur and perhaps suffer at least some persecution from the non-believers, the "pagans", because they naturally will "accuse [us] of doing wrong".
- - They assume that true believers are just like them - outwardly striving to project an aura of goodness while inwardly holding and acting upon selfish, or scheming, or hurtful ulterior motives.
- - So, our existence here as "a holy nation" that aspires to the self-denying discipline of living in goodness will not usually be initially received with accolades from non-believers. (v.9)
- - We should expect the non-believers, the pagans, to substantially oppose the goodness and holiness that we live and proclaim.
- - Matter of fact, they will generally regard us as a threat to their self-indulging and sinful way of life, which they enjoy and are happy with.
- - Non-believers like the sinfulness and "sinful desires" that they engage in, which is why they continue to engage in their sinful desires profusely, defending them adamantly and promoting them vigorously.
- - "Living such good lives among the pagans" will incur their "accusations of doing wrong".
- - So herein, God is calling us to be and to behave in a manner of goodness, which will incur for us the enduring of unjust suffering.
- - Notice that this intention of God matches the suggested theme for the Book of 1 Peter: 'Called to Endure Unjust Suffering'.

"that... they may see your good deeds"

- - God wants that non-believers "see" the goodness in our lives by seeing our "good deeds".
- - "Living a good life" should produce the tangible fruit of doing "good deeds", which in return testifies to the "living a good life" and to some source that provides incentive and/or empowerment to accomplish long-term consistent "living such a good life" with corresponding doing "good deeds".
- - Both aspects of this phenomenon are a form of bearing witness to God - an indirect, or non-verbal, or lifestyle witnessing.
- - By implication, God regards this as good, appropriate, beneficial, and warranted for His true believers to be doing and to experience.
- - But obviously, our motives and approaches need to be pure in order to properly impact non-believers and in order to be "acceptable to God". (v.5)
- - So, in doing good deeds, we need to avoid harboring and/or acting from self-seeking motives, sinful motives, or spiritual contamination due to our engaging in "sinful desires" and the internal "war" those "sinful desires" are 'waging' "against our soul". (v.11, 'waging' - from Strong's #4754 "make war")

- - Logically, then, we should go about our lives always doing good deeds and always living in goodness, and the visibility of our doing good deeds and of our living in goodness we should leave to God to make visible and through which to vindicate us.
- - The approach and objective here is to silently and willingly endure the unjust suffering from invalid accusations, holding this course of action, and waiting for their opinions to change by means of them witnessing our goodness and testing our goodness to ensure that it is genuine. (cf. v.2:15)

- - On a side note, doing good deeds can be contagious for some people (believers and non-believers), inciting them to join in or to invent their own ways of doing good deeds.

"and [that they may] glorify God on the day he visits us."

- - As non-believers see and watch a believer's good deeds and analyze the integrity of the believer who is doing those good deeds, over time some of those non-believers may change their opinion to a more favorable regard towards that believer.

- - Somewhat baffled and yet intrigued as to what is causing that believer to be and behave in this virtuous manner, those non-believers may gradually become more open to hearing about the source that incentivizes and empowers that believer.

- - The implication here is that God can and does use the good deeds and the genuine goodness of the believer to get the attention of non-believers and to soften their spiritual hearts.

- - Then eventually, God draws some of those non-believers into placing their "trust in [Jesus]" (v.6) for "salvation" (v.2), who and which "glorify God", and especially so "on the day he visits us" - the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- - So, the "living such a good life" with the corresponding producing of "good deeds" prove to be attention-getting, opinion-changing, attractive, and spiritual heart-softening to some non-believers, which God can use in His efforts to eventually bring them to salvation.

- - God honors individual true believers when He involves them in His activities that He uses to bring non-believers to salvation. Praise the Lord!!

BIG IDEA: Even though we true believers are essentially foreigners to the non-believers around us, our living in comprehensive goodness and producing good deeds can have a substantial impact upon them becoming open to hearing about God.

APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who are a true believer, are you distinctly living as an "alien and stranger in the world"? Consistently? Even when other believers are not present?

- - Are your values, your perspectives, your mindset, your motivations, your priorities, your desires, your thought-life, your speaking, and your behaviors in alignment with God and therein incompatible with and contrary to the world? In total alignment with God? Consistently?

- - Are you readily and willingly accepting this mandate from God to be an "alien and stranger in the world"?

- - Furthermore, are you readily and willingly accepting this mandate from God to "abstain from sinful desires"?
- - Are you successful at exerting self-control in refraining yourself from acting upon and engaging in any and all "sinful desires" that you have? Completely? Comprehensively? Consistently?
- - Do you see and acknowledge that "sinful desires" wage "war against your soul"?
- - Do you have any "sinful desires", that you engage in, that need to be terminated? If so, what are you going to do to terminate it (or them)?

- - Non-believers who are around you, how do they evaluate your goodness?
- - Do non-believers see purity and consistency in your goodness?
- - Or do they see a façade or hypocrisy in your goodness?
- - Before non-believers get to know you fairly well, do they initially erroneously gossip and "accuse you of doing wrong", but then later on, as they "see your good deeds", they change to a favorable opinion of you?
- - How do you react when non-believers and even believers "see your good deeds" but they then whisper and gossip and "accuse you of doing wrong" or accuse you of having sinful motives?
- - Is your life nevertheless exuding goodness, which is positively impacting for God both the non-believers and the believers around you?

- - For those of you who are not a true believer or are a believer reacting in a worldly manner, is it possible that you have misjudged the "good deeds", the motives, and the goodness of a true believer?
- - Rather than immediately draw a negative conclusion about a person, who is not well-known to you, who has done a "good deed", would it be better to withhold hasty judging along with gossiping and "accusing" reactions, and silently wait until more and substantial evidence clearly exposes what the actual character and motives and actions of the person are?
- - A phenomenon commonly and frequently occurring in churches and ministries is that upright dedicated servants of the Lord are ministerially murdered and driven out by means of being "accused of doing wrong" or evil, when in fact they were doing appropriate and even excellent ministering work.
- - It would be wise for both non-believers and believers to avoid being used by the Kingdom of Darkness to tarnish or damage the good that true believers are appropriately doing, and even destroy or permanently murder their ministering functioning that God has assigned them to be doing. (see v.5)

- For those of you true believers who, in your service to the Lord, have been accused or persecuted or abused or verbally assaulted or ministerially murdered for doing wrong or evil in a ministry situation that you are completely innocent of doing anything wrong or evil or inappropriate, then be aware of the following applying implications from verse 12:
 - - - - God has allowed and even ordained that you experience this unjust suffering. (cf. v.2:19)
 - - - - God wants you to appropriately endure this unjust suffering. (cf. v.2:20)
 - - - - You are to continue to "do good deeds" and "live [an exemplary] good life".
 - - - - Despite the severe devastation, major setback, and perhaps even ministerial murder that was unjustly inflicted on you, you are to continue to fulfill the ministerial

calling God has on you (v.2:5), unless you have since disqualified yourself. (cf. v.27 in 1 Corinthians 9:23-27; see in John 21:1-17 the experience of Peter and the other disciples right after His denial of Jesus and then the crucifixion of Jesus)

- - - You are to wait upon, trust in, and "entrust" yourself and your situation to God to restore you to ministry functioning, which may be a somewhat different type of ministering functioning or role than what you were previously doing. So be watchful, willing, and flexible.

- - - By God's design, in this life you may never receive the vindication that you rightly deserve, but rest in the assurance that God will vindicate you and "commend" you in His presence in heaven one day. (1 Peter 2:20)

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - How do the concepts in verses 2:11-12 fit in with relating concepts in verses 1:1-2 regarding "God's elect, strangers in the world"? Be sure to consider their respective contexts. If you want to proceed deeper into this topic, then you can identify and integrate additional relating concepts in Hebrews 11:9-10,13-16.

- - From 1 Peter 2:11-12, as we true believers encounter non-believers in our job and community, what should be our understanding and approach as to how we relate to non-believers? Why should we refrain from compromising our goodness and morally blending in with society around us?

- - List specific ways or situations in which a true believer who is obedient to these verses would be an "alien and stranger in the world".

- - What are the dynamics of outer or external war, in which "sinful desires war against [our] soul"? What are the dynamics of inner or internal war? Describe.]

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File name: 1Peter2_11-12-SermonOrLesson.____ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

Source: www.BelieverAssist.com