

September 7, 2025

1 Peter 2:11-12

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹²Keep 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.

Scriptures for further study:

Judges 21:25

Proverbs 11:6

Psalms 119:37

Galatians 5:13

John 8:31-32

“Peter conceptualizes the relationship of Christians to society as those who appreciate, respect, and value their host land but nevertheless maintain their own distinct identity within it.”

-Edmund Clowney

“Peter expects that his readers can live in a way that will be recognized as good even by the standards of unbelieving pagans, which presupposes an overlap between Christian and non-Christians values.”

-Karen Jobes



Grace and Exile

1 Peter 2:11-12

BIG IDEA: Because the world is suspiciously watching strangers, let the Church seek to be both radically different and radically identifiable in Jesus, for Jesus.

OUTLINE

1. A Suspicious and Watching World

2. The Call to be Radically Different

2. The Call to be Radically Identifiable

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Can you think of recent evidence in the media to support Peter’s reminder in verse 12 to live honorably because Gentiles (non-believers) are watching Christians to speak against us as “evildoers”?
2. Who comes to mind as someone who is recognized by their good deeds even among non-Christians?
3. Refer to 2 Peter 2:12. What are the places in the community where your interests intersect with the interests of non-believers? What does it look like for you to be involved and live in such a way that it is evident that your allegiance is to God?
4. Thinking about verse 11. What do you think Peter means by saying Christians are “sojourners and exiles” in the world today? Pastor Bill teaches that “abstain” means to “hold off”. (Read Judges 21:25) Our choices about passions of the flesh show to whom we give our ultimate allegiance; how?
5. Because Jesus lived a life that was radically different and radically identifiable, Peter calls us to a new purpose, which is to let our lives reflect the life of the ultimate resident alien by being radically different yet radically identifiable. How does your life differ from the folks around you? Do your choices clearly identify you as part of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9)?

“I freed a thousand slaves I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves.”

– Harriet Tubman

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1 Pet. 2:12 All of the descriptors in verses 9 and 10—chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God’s own possession, his people, those who have received his mercy—belonged originally to the nation of Israel. But here Peter is applying them to both Jewish and Gentile believers! The “Israel of God” and all its responsibilities and privileges are not limited to those who are descended biologically from Abraham but encompass those who are united to the Davidic King, whose throne has now been universalized.

If this is true—if we Christians really are God’s chosen people—then, as Peter says, we ought to live in such a way that our God and King will be honored among all the nations of the earth. So from here to the end of chapter 3, Peter begins to explain what this looks like in a number of different spheres—first with relation to the government and our employment, then to our families, and finally to our suffering.

- The ESV Story of Redemption Bible

Praise to Jesus – Praise God for our identity as His beloved people. Peter calls us “beloved”—a reminder that we are not abandoned strangers but deeply loved citizens of heaven. Praise God for the power of grace to wage war against sin. We are not left helpless. God gives us His Spirit to fight sin and form Christ in us. Praise God for using our lives as a testimony to the world, and that even our small acts of faithfulness have an eternal impact.

Repent through Jesus – Repent of the many ways we’ve chosen to indulge the “passions of the flesh” instead of turning from them. Confess where we’ve compromised with lust, pride, envy, anger, or selfish ambition. Repent of neglecting our identity as “sojourners and exiles.” It’s easy to live as if this world is our true home—seeking comfort, status, or approval. Repent of worldliness and spiritual forgetfulness.

Consecration for Jesus –Commit to living as a faithful exile. Dedicate yourself to resisting the flesh in the Spirit's power. Make concrete plans to kill sin and grow in virtue. Devote your conduct to the glory of God among unbelievers.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. In this week's passage, Peter once again uses a description of Christians as being "sojourners and exiles". What does this mean? (Another term for this description is pilgrim. The NIRV, which is translated at a third-grade level, puts it this way: "outsiders and those who wander in this world." Christians are not at home in this sinful world. We are on a journey back to God. This helps us when we don't feel comfortable in this world to realize that we are not supposed to feel at home. Our true Home is with God in the new heavens and earth.)

2. In the second half of verse 11, we read about a war against our soul. What are we fighting in this war? (This war is between our soul and our sinful desires or worldly desires. This describes the sinful temptations of our world, such as the desire to lie, to cheat, not to obey your parents, or to hurt someone. Our Christian life consists of us growing in our dependence on God and being strengthened by the Spirit. Our children need to understand that following Christ is difficult. In fact, it is impossible to follow Christ without His help. God never promises to take us out of all bad situations, but He does promise to be with us always to get us through all situations.)

3. How does Peter describe how we are to live in regard to non-believers in verse 12? (This verse describes living as Christians in such a way that non-believers will notice that we are different and notice that we are good. This assumes that we are not hiding from the world, but that we are engaged in the world while not living according to the world's patterns. And the goal is not to draw attention to us but to point people to God.)

4. What are some ways this week that we can try to live as Peter instructs us? What are some ideas for how and what to do?

Scriptures for further study:

John 16:33

Galatians 5:22-24

John 15:5

Matthew 5:13-16

FOR STUDENTS

1. What does Peter call his readers in verse 11? Why is the word “beloved” an important reminder for Christians? Peter could have started with a command, but instead, he started with identity and affection. Why do you think that matters? How might remembering you are “beloved” help you in your struggle with sin?
2. What does it mean to be “sojourners and exiles”? What does this tell us about the Christian’s relationship to the world? How should this shape the way you think about things like popularity, success, comfort, or fitting in?
3. What are “the passions of the flesh,” and how do they “wage war against your soul”? Why do you think Peter uses war language to describe sinful desires? Can you name some examples of these “passions” in your own life? How do they try to pull your heart away from Jesus?
4. In verse 12, what does Peter mean by “keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable”? Who are the “Gentiles” in this verse (hint: it refers to non-Christians)? What would it look like for your actions and choices to be called “honorable” even by people who don’t believe in Jesus?
5. Why does Peter say that non-Christians might “speak against you as evildoers”? Have you ever experienced someone assuming the worst about Christians or judging them unfairly? Why do you think that happens, and how does Peter say we should respond?
6. According to verse 12, what’s the purpose of living this kind of life? Peter says our conduct can lead others to “glorify God on the day of visitation.” What does this mean? How can your daily life — even when no one notices — become part of God’s mission to save others?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Take a moment to re-read 1 Peter 2:9-10 and see again our new identity as Christians. Now add to this verse 11, which begins by telling us we are “beloved” (of God), and that we are “strangers” in the world.

Question: How does knowing and understanding our identity inform how we conduct and live out our lives?

2. Verse 11 speaks of “abstaining” (i.e., distancing ourselves) from sinful desires, which Peter says “war against our souls” (i.e., impact the well-being of our whole lives).

Question: As a new believer, have you already begun to experience the conflict between your old nature (“flesh”) and your new desire to live for God?

Question: Do we as Christians realize that we have entered into a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil? That the Christian life is no easy matter? In what ways are you currently facing a battle? How would you respond to those Christians who say we should just “let go and let God”?

3. You have probably heard the expression: “be in the world but not of it.”

Question: What does this passage have to say regarding this notion?

4. Peter urges us to live “such good lives...” The idea is that our lives are to be lived in a morally beautiful and attractive way for non-believers to see.

Question: One author wrote that Christians stand out best when we live lives that are characterized by compassion and also selfless service to others. Would you agree? How else can Christians live in a morally beautiful and noticeable way?

5. The missional purpose of declaring his praises (see again v.9), and doing good deeds among the pagans (v.12), is that non-believers might “glorify God on the day he visits us” (v.12). One way of understanding this is that our words and actions will often lead to non-believers becoming converted to faith in Christ.

Question: Is it a driving motivation for you as a Christian to endeavor to see God glorified by people becoming saved?

Scriptures for further
Matthew 5:13-16

Peter 3:15-16

Living Hope: How God's Glorious Grace in Jesus Shapes and Empowers Us by the Spirit to Live with Gospel Grit in a Foreign Land.



Daniel in the Lion's Den by Briton Riviere, 1872

About the Artist: Briton Rivière, a British painter known for his animal paintings, particularly those featuring dogs and wild animals with deep emotion and dramatic flair, came from an artistic family. His father, William Rivière, was a drawing master and art teacher. Rivière initially studied at the University of Oxford, drawn to literary and historical themes, but later developed a fascination with animals and became renowned for his ability to imbue them with emotional depth and narrative presence.

About the Artwork

"Daniel in the Lion's Den" (1872) depicts the biblical story with lifelike lions, a popular and symbolic theme in Victorian England. It explores faith under trial, divine protection, and moral strength against tyranny, themes that resonated with Victorian audiences during a time when Christian values and moral courage were emphasized.

In Riviere's painting, Daniel's calm, unarmed demeanor symbolizes absolute trust in God. His gaze suggests prayer, hope, or spiritual communion, not fear. He represents the righteous man steady in the face of evil. The lions, though fierce, are subdued, a miracle of restraint. Riviere doesn't show angels or supernatural intervention; the restraint is invisible, spiritual. Some lions are relaxed, others alert, suggesting the tension between nature and divine command. Each lion has a distinct personality, reflecting the mystery of creation. The focused light on Daniel recalls God's presence in darkness. The murky den symbolizes the unknown, death, or temptation, yet Daniel remains untouched. Unlike dramatic biblical scenes, there's no movement or violence. The silence emphasizes Daniel's victory through trust, countering 19th-century action-heavy storytelling with a meditation on spiritual endurance.

1 Peter and Daniel in the Lion's Den

This painting, based on a biblical scene, helps us understand the overall theme of the New Testament letter. 1 Peter teaches Christians that as God's elect, they are called to live holy lives of faithful witness, enduring suffering with hope rooted in God's grace, while embracing their Gospel identity as a holy, royal priesthood in a hostile world. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, we are strangers in a distant place. Jesus told his disciples and us in the Gospel of John that we are "not of this world." Hebrews reminds the church that "this world is not their permanent home." Even within 1 Peter, God's people are called "sojourners and exiles."

Like Daniel, the darkness of this broken, sinful, and fallen world is always present. While we may never face a physical lion, Peter's first letter tells us that our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, and the spiritual forces of evil are ever present. Yet, like Daniel, we must face the opposition with a Gospel poise, knowing that which is unseen is more powerful than what is seen and against us. Peter uses the language of "standing firm" in God's grace as we encounter all forms of darkness.

Church, may we see the beauty of 1 Peter in its overall message: God's glorious grace leading us to Gospel grit as sojourners in a dark world. But may we not just perceive its beauty but also embrace God's unique calling in these words: stand firm!