

Godly Living

1 Peter 2:11-12

60-23

Let me invite you, if you will, to open your Bible now for our time in the study of God's Word. We're looking at 1 Peter chapter 2. The text we have before us from verse 11 through 20. That is a unit of thought. We'll obviously not cover it all tonight. But 1 Peter 2:11 to 20 is a very important portion of Scripture. Let me read it to you because I believe in understanding the whole you will better understand the part we'll look at tonight.

Beginning in verse 11, Peter writes: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves of God. Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable, for this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

Now the key phrase in this section, I would draw to your attention, is found in verse 15. It is this, "By doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." "By doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." The word "silence" is used often to speak of muzzling an animal, figuratively, of reducing an adversary to silence, as it were, taking the very accusation out of his mouth. You will notice also that it speaks of ignorance and foolish men. These are people who are willfully ignorant of God's truth, foolishly disobedient to God's Word, and they are critics or critics of Christians. They take a foolish position, they take an ignorant position and they attack the truth. And Peter says the way to silence them is not by what you say, but by doing right. And so we're going to entitle this series through these verses, "Silencing the Critics," "Silencing the Critics." And let me put it to you as simply as I can, the main point that you want to understand is this, the single greatest tool for evangelism is how you live, it is doing right. The single greatest tool for evangelism is doing right. That's how you silence the critics. To put it in the terms of verse 12, that is how you, in keeping your behavior honest among the Gentiles, bring them to the place where they will actually glorify God in the day of visitation. In other words, you not only silence their criticism, but you bring them to the point where they glorify God by what you do, not what you say. So I say it again, the foundation of all Christian witness is what you do, not what you say. The single greatest tool then of our Christian testimony and of evangelism is doing right. It is how you live.

Now obviously we live in a society today not unlike that of Peter where people criticize Christianity as well. We have our critics, for sure. In fact, they are widespread, far-reaching, very vocal, and for the most part have captured the institutions of our society. The critics of Christianity are many. And the point of our greatest vulnerability and the point of their greatest accusation is what we do. It is the scandalous conduct of Christians that fuels the fires of critics. It is the purity and godliness and virtue and righteousness of Christians that silences the critics. And so again I say, the single greatest tool of evangelism we possess is doing right, living right. And that's what Peter wants us to understand.

Commentator Robert Layton had some poignant words. Listen to what he said. "When a Christian walks irreprovably," or free from need to be reprov'd, "his enemies have nowhere to fasten their teeth on him, but are forced to gnaw on their own malignant tongues." Fairly graphic. He then went on to say, "As it secures the godly, thus to stop the lying mouths of foolish men, so it is as painful to them to be thus stopped as muzzling is to beasts and it punishes their malice. And this is a wise Christian's way, instead of impatiently fretting at the mistakes or willful miscensures of men to keep still on his calm temper of mind and upright course of life and silent innocence. This like a rock breaks the waves into foam that roar about it," end quote. That's good. Rather than fret at the censures of critics, we keep still in our calm temper of mind and upright course of life and silent innocence, beautifully said.

The German philosopher Heine posed this to Christians, he said, "Show me your redeemed life and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer." Alexander MacLaren, the great Scottish preacher wrote, "The world takes its notions of God most of all from the people who say that they belong to God's family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. In fact, they see us, they only hear about Jesus Christ." And we know this. The bottom line then in evangelism is not what we say, it is what we do. And as someone said many years ago, some of us speak so loud by what we do that no one can hear what we say.

How right Peter was. And the principle for his discussion here really comes from his Lord Jesus, who said in Matthew 5, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." That is precisely what Peter is saying in verse 12. It is as they see your good works that they will glorify God in the day of visitation. And so we are called then to a kind of life. This is an encouragement then to a godly life, which is essential to evangelism.

Now, the group to whom Peter was writing needed to hear this because they were in a very stressful situation. Chapter 1 and verse 1 tells us they were scattered. They were Christians scattered throughout hostile pagan places, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Not only were they scattered but they were being persecuted. First Peter chapter 4 and verse 12 says, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing." Verse 13 says they were sharing the sufferings of Christ. Verse 19 says they were suffering according to the will of God. They were suffering persecution. Not only were they scattered, dispossessed, as it were, out of their own homes, but they were under severe persecution. They were feeling the pressure of the society's hostility. And they needed motivation to carry on living the Christian life in the midst of a difficult time of trials and a difficult experience of persecution.

Now Peter has already told them about their spiritual privileges. Do you remember there in chapter 2 verses 4 to 10 how Peter outlined all the spiritual privileges of knowing Christ? And now in the light of those spiritual privileges, he calls them to faithful witness. And that faithful witness is really built on the life they live. That life must be a life that silences the critics. That life must be a life that convinces

the unbelievers of the validity of the Christian faith. So in combination it is both a negative and a positive impact that a righteous life leads. On the negative, it silences the critics because there is nothing to criticize. On the positive, it brings men to believe in the validity of the Christian faith because its transforming power can be seen in the life of a Christian and consequently it becomes an attraction to Christ. So on the one hand we silence the critics, on the other hand, we convert them.

Our text then, focuses on the fact that we are to live a kind of life that makes our evangelism believable. I remember when Sam Ericsson was in our church before he went to Washington to be involved in the Christian Legal Society. One day, Sam, when he was a part of our church staff, prior I should say to the time when he was a part of our church staff, he was working for a law firm in Los Angeles, a large law firm, and as he was having lunch with a group of attorneys in the city of Los Angeles, he was very active as an elder at our church already and it was his custom and habit to invite men to come to the church and hear the Word of God, and he said to one attorney that he had met. He said, "I would like you to come to my church with me. I'd...I'd like you to be my guest."

And the man said, "What church do you go to?"

He said, "I go to Grace Community Church out in the San Fernando Valley."

And the man hesitated for a moment and looked a bit shocked and then said, "I would never go to that church under any circumstances."

And Sam said to him, "Well what makes you say that? Have you been there?"

He said, "I've never been there and I will never go."

And Sam said, "Well how can you make that kind of judgment about the church?"

He said, "It's very simple. The most crooked attorney I know of in this city goes to that church."

And I remember when Sam told me that how distressed I was. So the following Sunday I got in the pulpit, told the story and said, "I don't know which one of you attorneys is that one, but I wish you'd get your act together or quit saying you belong to this church, because the character of your life is making evangelism impossible."

We lay a platform of credibility, we lay a platform that speaks of the validity of our faith when we do what is right, when we live a righteous life. So Peter here is calling us to that righteous life in a hostile environment. He calls us to that in verses 11 to 20, and then in verses 21 to 25 he gives us a perfect example of it, who is Christ. In verses 21 to 25 he shows us how Christ lived a perfect life in the midst of a hostile environment. But before he gets to the example of Christ, he talks about what we are to be. And basically as we think about our obligation to live godly before the watching world, he divides it into three identities. We in the world have in a sense three perspectives through which, as it were, to look at our obligations. First of all, he says we are aliens in verse 11, we are aliens. Secondly, starting in verse 13 and running through verse 17, he discusses our role as citizens. We are aliens but at the same time we are citizens. And then thirdly, he discusses our obligation from verse 18 to 20 as servants. And all of us fall into that kind of role. We are aliens, yet at the same time we are citizens, and we all serve under someone somewhere. And so as Christian aliens and

Christian citizens, and Christian servants, we have three arenas in which we are to demonstrate our influence for Christ. And by the way we live we will either feed the fires of criticism or we will extinguish them. We will either affirm disbelief, or we will confirm the validity of faith.

Now this can be as practical as the home if you'll look at chapter 3 for a moment, verse 1. He's been talking about how everyone has a role to play as a servant and he picks up the wives and he says, "You're to be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word," and I would assume they're unbelievers here, "they may be won," that is won to Christ, "without a word by the behavior of their wives." Now here is a very simple, homey illustration of the impact of how you live. A wife will have her greatest impact on her unsaved husband not by what she says but by what she does. Verse 2 says, "As they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." As a wife is pure and as a wife is respectful toward her husband, and as she has that excellent behavior that is not preoccupied, verse 3, with what she looks like on the outside, but verse 4, what she is like on the inside, she will make an impact on her unsaved husband. And Peter here is illustrating that this idea of influence starts in the home and spreads beyond that. So we are to live, whether in the home, in the school, on the job, in the neighborhood, in our recreational environment, wherever, in such a way that we may without a word by the behavior of our lives demonstrate the viability of the Christian gospel and put to silence the attacks of Christianity's critics. This we do in those three arenas as aliens, as citizens, as servants.

For tonight, let's look at this idea of aliens, just two verses, verses 11 and 12. We are aliens. "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." Boy, those are two great verses, absolutely foundational to the matter of evangelism.

Now in those two verses you have two points, all right? The Holy Spirit here by the apostle Peter is calling us to two considerations. First, He calls us for discipline that is inward and private. He calls for discipline that is inward and private. That's point number one of two, and that's verse 11. And this is where it starts. If I am to live a godly life on the outside, it doesn't start on the outside, it starts where? On the inside, and I will only work out, as Philippians 2 says, what is on the inside. And so the issue of verse 11 is clearly inward and private. That's what he's saying. So this matter of living as an alien in the world with an evangelistic mission attempting to silence the critics on the one hand, and to win the unbeliever on the other hand, begins with integrity of life and integrity of life is all about the inside to start with. So notice verse 11, "I urge you as aliens and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." That's where it begins.

You see, our...our testimony on the outside is really gained by our integrity on the inside. It starts there. It starts there. By the way, Peter uses the word "beloved," and he loves to use it, he uses it eight times in the two epistles here, and he uses it to remind his hearers, his readers, that God loves them, that they are beloved of God. That has a way of warming up his exhortations. That has a way of sort of affirming that they, being the beloved of God have a duty to perform to one who loves them. Since you are the beloved of God, your being so loved should elicit an obedient response. That's what he's saying. Based upon your being the beloved of God, he says, "I urge you, I beg you in a passionate way. It's the same word Paul used in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you by the mercies of God." And so Peter has a plea here, it's an urgent, passionate plea to people who are the beloved of God to reciprocate that love with obedience and it starts on the inside.

Now notice that he identifies us as aliens and strangers. It isn't the first time he's done that. Back in chapter 1 verse 1, he used the word "alien." He said, "I'm writing to those who reside as aliens." So this is simply re-identifying those who have already been identified as aliens. Now what does he mean by this. Well he means that you don't belong in the society you're in. You don't belong there. You are a foreigner. You are an outsider. In the words of Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Our citizenship is in heaven, we are aliens here. Do you remember the little chorus we used to sing when we were kids in Sunday school: "This world is not my home. (I'm what?) I'm just a passin' through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue." This world is not my home. I am just passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.

Our status then in this world is as those who do not belong. That is why John says, "Love not the world, neither the things in the world." They're not even a part of your dimension. And by the way, beloved, that is the price of our privilege. It is a privilege to be exalted and taken out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is a privilege to be redeemed. It is a privilege to be made a citizen of heaven and the price of that privilege is to shun the things of the world. The price of that privilege is that while you are a citizen of heaven, you are a stranger here. You are not an illegal alien. The world has not come to the point where they've made Christianity illegal. Although in some places it is. We can thank God in America we are aliens but not illegal aliens.

Now I just want to mention about the word alien, if I might. It's a very interesting little word, *paroikos*. *Oikos* means "house," *para* means alongside the house. And what it basically says is you're somebody who lives alongside the people who belong here. You come in alongside the homes of the people who belong here. You're not really family. You're just alongside the family. You happen to be living near those who are at home in a certain place, but you don't belong there. You're a non-citizen. The word came to mean a person who is a foreigner in a land that is not his own.

And then there is the word "stranger," which is really a synonym of sorts. And it simply refers to a visitor who makes a brief stay, a sojourner who is just going through the country, a traveler who is just moving around in it, someone passing through. So we are non-citizens who don't belong, we're just passing through. And the song was right, this world is not my home, I just happen to be an alien here and I am just passing through. I'm a stranger and a sojourner. I don't belong in this world. I am in the world but I am not of the world. I am distinct from the world.

Listen to Hebrews 13:14, "For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." This isn't our place. This isn't our world. We are people who in whatever country we might be on the globe feel that our true home is somewhere else. So as Christians, the people to whom Peter wrote, and we as well, are scattered among people of other beliefs, people of other values, people of other morals, people of other standards of life and frankly, we are just not a part of this world. But Christians have always had to live among pagans. We've always had to live among people whose habitual intents are rooted in the lower order of things above which Peter exhorts us to rise.

So he reminds us that we are aliens and strangers. Now, as such, we must, first of all, be disciplined in an inward and private way if we're going to have an impact on the world in which we must live. To do that, a simple command, abstain from fleshly lusts. Folks, that sums it up. That is a

comprehensive, simple statement. Abstain, that's exactly what it means, stay away from, keep your distance from. From what? Fleshly lusts. What's that? The desires of your fallen nature.

You see, because our souls are saved and because we've received a new heart and because we've been washed, and because we've been regenerated, there is a newness in us. But we have noted in the past, it is incarcerated in our unredeemed human flesh. That's why we have a spiritual battle because the new man in us is battling the flesh. And the flesh is where lust comes from, and so we are called to, literally the Greek word is, hold oneself away from fleshly lusts. Boy, that is tough. That is tough enough because the fleshly lusts are in us. It is especially tough in our society because we live in a pornographic society and in a pornographic society our fleshly lusts are fed constantly by the visual images of pornography, and the verbal expressions of pornography that are all around us all the time. And so for us, this is a great challenge for the Holy Spirit in us, to give us victory.

What does he mean by fleshly lusts? Just a general term. He doesn't just mean sexual immorality, that's part of it. He means strong cravings of our depraved nature, strong cravings of our depraved flesh. That's what he means. Not just sexual sin, but anything that is the expression of the craving of our fallenness. Fleshly lusts show up in a number of things. Galatians 5:19 gives you a list. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident." Here they are, here's what fleshly lusts produce, "Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities," that's hatreds, "strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these," which makes the list almost endless. That's sort of a supernatural etc. The list is very long. Fleshly lusts are simply all of the strong cravings of the depraved flesh.

This is opposite of what we saw in verse 2, the desire for the pure, spiritual milk of the Word. This is incompatible with verse 4, and 5, that duty of offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. So here we are on the one hand called on to desire the Word and to offer up spiritual sacrifices. At the same time we've got fleshly lusts attached to our unredeemed humanness. And by the way, it will be redeemed some day when we see Christ. Romans chapter 8 says, "We wait for the redemption of our bodies." And at that point we will be whole in our purity. Until then, we are a redeemed soul in an unredeemed flesh. And so we must abstain from fleshly lusts.

Why? Look at verse 11 again, because "they wage war against the soul." They wage war against the soul, that's a very serious matter, my friends. That little simple term "which" literally means in the Greek, it's *itinēs*. It means "which by its very nature." Fleshly lusts and their cravings by their very nature wage war against the soul. And so it is the very nature of your unredeemed flesh to war against the spiritual new life that God has placed in you. That's why Paul in Romans chapter 7 is so distressed as he finds himself in the middle of that horrendous spiritual battle and he says, "I see a principle in my members, the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind." I have war in me, same expression. The principle of God's truth and holiness and purity, and waging war against it is my flesh, the members of my body, my unredeemed flesh.

And then James sees the very same warfare in verse 1 of chapter 4. He says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" There's a war going on. There's a war inside of you. And that war is a raging war. James makes it very clear that it's a serious, serious war, lust battling your soul, lust conceiving its fantasies, drawing them into your mind, and leading you into sin. This is spiritual warfare.

What does he mean by the soul? He means the person, that's all, you as a living being. That's not

some compartment in you, that's you. When man was created he became a living soul. That's the totality of man, the person himself. By the way, the word, the verb "wage war" is a very strong term. It's a military term. It means to carry on a military campaign. It isn't the idea of a skirmish or a battle or a one-time shot, it is a long-term campaign. And the idea here is a very interesting personification. Fleshly lusts are personified. That is they're made into persons in the imagery here, as if they were an army or rebels, as if they were an army of guerillas who intend to capture, enslave and destroy the human soul. And the term implies not just antagonism, but a continual aggression that is malicious and ongoing and doesn't stop. It's an incessant search and destroy mission fleshly lust wages against you. So Peter says, "Stay away from fleshly lusts." When you give them any space, you give them the advantage in their malicious aggression against you. Do not fall to that assault.

Go to chapter 4 for a moment. In chapter 4 he says, verse 2, "We are to live the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of God." We lived long enough in the lust of the flesh, read Ephesians 2. "But now" verse 3 "the time is past for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles." That's over. You already pursued a course of sensuality, lust, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. That's in the past. That is over with. It's time for you to abstain from all of that. In the words of John, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world, for the world passes away and the lust thereof. But the one who does the will of God abides forever. And all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life is not of God but is of the world." So you stay away from all of that, all of it. Now we realize that the world allures us and the flesh is the beachhead by which its allurements takes place. And Peter simply says stay away from it, don't pander your fleshly desires. They want to destroy you.

Do you remember the classic allegory, "The Holy War"? John Bunyan pictures a city and he calls the city Mansoul because it represents the soul of man? And he pictures the city as surrounded by high walls. And the enemy wants to assault the soul of man. But there's no way over the walls. There's no way through the walls. The only way the enemy can get to the soul is through the gates. And, of course, Bunyan has, I think, four or five gates, but you can reduce it down and simply say there's only one gate. The only way that Satan can get into the otherwise impregnable soul of a believer, the only way he can get in is through the gate of fleshly lust. It's through the gate of fallen desire. And, beloved, if you keep the gate closed, you can't lose, you cannot lose.

You say, "How do you do that?" Galatians 5 says, "Walk in the Spirit and you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh." It's all about living in the spiritual dimension. It's all about walking in the Spirit's power. So it all begins with an inward and private discipline. If those preachers and those spiritual leaders who have so terribly and treacherously scandalized the church with their immorality on the outside had been abstaining from fleshly lusts on the inside, the sin would never have existed on the outside, right? That's where the battle starts. You wage war on the inside. And the weapons of your warfare are spiritual, not fleshly. We're in war, folks. And you must put on the armor, Ephesians 6, if you're going to stand.

So we're aliens in the world. We are strangers in the world. We must testify to this world of the viability of Christianity and the validity of the gospel and that starts with a disciplined life on the inward, private side. But there's more. The Holy Spirit not only calls for discipline that is inward and private, but He calls for deportment that is outward and public. He calls for deportment or behavior that is outward and public. Verse 12, and this is so simple we don't need to spend a lot of time on it. "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of

visitation." What He's saying here is just keep your behavior noble. Behavior means your daily conduct, your manner of life. "Excellent" is the word *kalos*. It's one of those almost untranslatable Greek words that is so rich in meaning it takes about six or seven English words to give you the sense of it. It means lovely, fine, winsome, gracious, fair to look at, noble, excellent; it is the purest, highest, noblest kind of goodness. So now He's talking about the outside. Having been disciplined in the inward and private side, you are now to have a deportment on the outward and public side that reflects that inward discipline. He says that your behavior is to be excellent among the pagans, the *ethnos*, the ethnics, the nations, the peoples. He means the unsaved world. And by the way, *ethnos* is often used for the unsaved world. First Corinthians 5:1, 1 Corinthians 12:2, 3 John 7, if you're going to try to witness to the unbelieving world, then you've got to have your behavior honest, your behavior excellent, your behavior lovely, fine, winsome, gracious, fair to look at, noble, righteous. In other words, the quality of our transformed life must be visible to the unsaved world. There are no secret disciples. This is the heart of evangelism, my friend. This is the heart of evangelism.

There must be inner purity and there must be visible fruitfulness. There must be inner purity and outer fruitfulness so that... What's the purpose of this? Verse 12, "So that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God." You're going to turn the tables on them. In the very things that they discredit you, you're going to prove them wrong and you're going to even lead them to the believability of the gospel. In the thing in which they slander you, He simply identifies the hostility and animosity of the unregenerate world. In using the word "evildoers" He uses a word that is very strong. It expresses the idea of a very wicked person who should be punished. It's used that way three times here in 1 Peter. It means someone who is worthy of severe, serious punishment. It is... It is really from the standpoint of the pagans in ancient times a term of abuse or contempt. They threw it at Christians when they called them an evildoer, they were abusing them verbally. It was a contemptuous term.

And by the way, the pagan world commonly abused Christians verbally. They were despised, they were distrusted and they were hated. In fact, if you study any of the persecutions from this time in the first century up until say the second century, the end of the second century, you note all kinds of slanders against the Christians. It's a fascinating study. They accused them of all kinds of things. They accused them of insurrection. They said they were guilty of rebelling against the Roman government and all other human authority. They accused them amazingly enough of atheism. Can you imagine Christians being accused of atheism? The reason they accused them of atheism is they wouldn't worship the Roman gods and they wouldn't worship the Romans' emperors who claimed to be gods. The Roman gods and the Roman emperors expected worship and when the Christians wouldn't worship them, they said they failed to worship the true gods, therefore they're atheists. They accused them of cannibalism. By about 177 A.D. they had prescribed that the Christians were eating the flesh of human beings, that one of their delicacies was human flesh. There was accusation against them that they killed and ate children at their feasts. They were accused of immorality. They were accused of Oedipean intercourse, which is incest. And you can read about that in some of the ancient writings. They were accused of damaging trade and social progress. They were accused of wrecking homes. They were accused of leading the slaves into a rebellion because the slaves who came to Christ had a new dignity of life and this threatened the social structure. They were accused of hating men since they were opposed to the world system. They were accused of disloyalty to Caesar since they would not declare that he was lord and they would not offer him incense. And they were being accused and mocked and slandered in every possible direction.

And Peter is saying there's only one way to do away with all of that and that is to live an excellent

life, an absolutely excellent life. That's what the apostles did. You never read, says Horace Mann, you never read about the resolutions the apostles passed, you only read about the acts of the apostles.

Now how effective can this be? Verse 12, it can be so effective that on account of your good deeds as they observe them, present tense verse, as they go on continually observing them over a period of time, as they observe them, they will glorify God in the day of visitation. They will glorify God in the day of visitation.

Now you say, "Well, what does that mean?" And I want you to catch this and we'll wrap it up with this. What is the day of visitation? Very wonderful phrase, very wonderful phrase. If you go into the Old Testament, you find that is a common phrase, a very common phrase. The fundamental sense of the term is simply visitation. The obvious indication here is the visitation of God, or the time when God visits them. In the Old Testament God visited man in a number of ways, but basically for two reasons, blessing or judgment. He visited them to bless. He visited them to judge. In Isaiah chapter 10 verse 3 where this phrase comes from, there is recorded a visit of God for judgment. In Jeremiah 27:22 where the same idea occurs also, God visits for blessing, for deliverance, for rescue, for salvation. In the Old Testament God is said to visit His people to bring them out of Egyptian bondage. God is said to visit His people to bring them also out of Babylonian bondage. In 1 Samuel chapter 2 it says, "God visited Hannah" to rescue her from barrenness, and thus it was a visit for blessing. And then there are other times, several of them in the Old Testament, when God visited sinners and enemies for judgment.

But all of the New Testament usages of visit refer to a visit for redemption. Listen to Luke 1:68, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He visited us and accomplished redemption." In Luke chapter 7 and verse 16 we also read similarly. It says regarding Christ, "God has visited His people," and this obviously for redemption. And as you move toward the end of Luke's gospel, in chapter 19 and verse 44, it talks about the time of the future when judgment will come, and the end of the verse says, "Because you didn't recognize the time of your visitation." That is, you're going to be judged because you didn't know when God visited you to save you. You rejected the visitation of salvation, He'll come in judgment.

So, all of those visitations of the New Testament have inherent in the expression the idea of a visitation for salvation. That's a very important point, a very important point because I think that's exactly how Peter understood it. What he is saying is simply this, that because of the ongoing observation of the character and quality of a Christian's life, an unbeliever will glorify God in the day when God visits him to save him.

In other words, at the time when the marvelous grace of God begins to move on the heart of an unbeliever, he will respond with saving faith and glorify God because he has remembered the tremendous testimony of believers that he saw. That's what he's saying. At that time, when the Lord moves on the heart of the unsaved and enables them to discern the truth of sin and the gospel and opens their heart, they'll remember the lives of faithful Christians. What a beautiful thought. What a marvelous thought. And that is exactly what God has called us to, to live that kind of life. Someone says, "We are the Bibles the world is reading, we are the truths the world is needing, and we are the sermons the world is heeding."

In our latest edition of "Masterpiece" magazine, there's a wonderful article about Herb and Ruth

Clingen and the time that they spent in a terrible internment camp in the Second World War in the Philippines under Japanese tyranny. They tell about the people that were murdered. They tell about the deprivation, the people who starved to death. They tell about the horrors of that camp. And in the diary, Herb describes those three years in that camp and he names a man, Konishi, and he says Konishi was the fiercest and hated of the Japanese authorities, a ruthless, brutal, murderous torturer who starved people to death, who shot people through the head, who did all kinds of unbelievable things. He writes, "Konishi found an inventive way to abuse us. He increased the food ration but gave us *pele*, which is unhusked rice. Eating the rice with its razor-sharp outer shell would cause intestinal bleeding that would kill us in hours. And we had no tools to remove the husks and doing the job manually by pounding the grain or rolling it with a heavy stick consumed more calories than the rice would supply. It was a death sentence for all internees." And then he goes on to tell how that before that could be consumed because out of hunger you eat anything, and thus the people would die. They were liberated by General Douglas MacArthur on February 24, 1945 and it was the very day Konishi planned to kill them all. And Herb closes the wonderful testimony by saying this. "Years after the war we learned that Konishi had been found working as a grounds keeper at a Manila golf course. He was put on trial for his war crimes and hanged. Before his execution he professed conversion to Christianity, saying he had been deeply affected by the testimony of the Christian missionaries he had persecuted."

Isn't that a marvelous story? In the day when God visited him for salvation, he remembered the observation of the testimonies of those whose lives he had seen. And by their honest behavior before pagan slanderers and accusers, they became the means, the silent means of the man's salvation. I say it again in closing. The most effective tool of evangelism we possess is the power of a righteous life.

Father, thank You for our time tonight. What a rich time in Your Word. And now as we bring this evening to a close, may we give again a fresh commitment of ourselves to You. Make us into the kind of servant that You want us to be, faithful. May we have discipline in the inward and private place and may our deportment in the outward and public place be such as not only to silence the critic but to save the critic. Oh God, give us such grace for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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