

## 1 Peter 2:11

The Apostle has been exhorting the Christian converts to live in accordance with their identity in Christ. He has reminded them of their value (precious in the sight of God, v. 4,7; chosen, v. 9), what they have been saved to (the purity of the gospel, v. 2; offer acceptable spiritual sacrifices, v. 5; God's promises, v. 6, a royal priesthood, v. 9; God's mercy, v. 10), and their responsibility to share their faith (to proclaim the excellencies of God, v. 9).

Considering the gift God's children have received, there are expectations to live according to God's commands. Peter goes on to highlight how they should conduct themselves – reminding the Christian converts what to avoid and what to pursue. In verse 11 they are to abstain from fleshly lusts, verse 12 reminds them to keep their behavior excellent, and verse 13 says they are to submit to governing authorities. These actions of what not to do and what to do are not to procure their salvation but to act in a manner which speaks of their new identity in Christ. The testimony of who they follow is at stake.

In 1 Peter 2:11, Peter calls them to beware of the pull of sin.

**1Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.**

First, notice this urging is addressed with affection – **beloved**. Peter is calling upon them as friends, he cares about their soul health, and he identifies with them in the same faith. There is fellowship among believers, a movement towards a common goal.

It is sometimes easier to listen to the appeal of those who understand your struggle because they personally relate. Consider the difference between sharing your struggle with sin with someone who is a believer versus someone who is not a believer. Compassion, care, and concern would be quite different with both individuals.

For instance, say someone was verbally rude to you in a store and you responded in like manner. You then feel ashamed and ask your friend who is a believer to pray for you to have a loving attitude towards everyone no matter what. Your believing friend would see the problem, agree that you should have responded in kindness, and they would share your concern and pray. If you were to share this same struggle with a friend who does not know Jesus, it is almost certain that they would respond with the idea that the person who treated you rudely deserved the terse words they received from you. It would be difficult for them to understand why anyone would desire to be kind to those who do not 'deserve' it. They would be unable to recognize your action as sin. They would be unable to understand the seriousness of an offense towards God. Your confession of sin would seem trivial.

None of us have 'arrived' as Christians; this means we are all seeking to move forward towards our future in heaven. Our fellowship with one another is incredibly important. We are to care for one another's soul health. We have many examples of the importance of relationships and spiritual affection amongst believers in the Bible.

**Acts 2:42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

**Romans 1:12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you [while] among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.**

**Romans 15:24 whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—**

Romans 15:32 so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find [refreshing] rest in your company.

1 Corinthians 7:4-7

2 Timothy 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

3 John 1:3-4

How can you encourage the relationships you have in Christ?

Notice again Peter's language in the next few words – I urge you. From *parakaleo*, the idea is calling others near, to invite them. The *KJV* uses the word beseech. The implication is the instruction he gives them is for their consolation and comfort. Imagine someone saying, 'Listen up. I am going to say something important, take heed to my words'.

Think of this as trying to point someone in a direction that you know will benefit them. You do this because you care, out of love. The entire tone of Peter's Epistle is to encourage the saints. He is not demanding them to a certain behavior, rather he is impressing upon them to rely on the blessings they have in Christ.

In 1 Peter 2:11, Peter again acknowledges the unique role in which these Christian converts have been placed. He addresses them **as aliens and strangers** – this is their current status as seen in society. The differences they feel are real. They are resident foreigners – pilgrims because their true citizenship lies in heaven. They do not belong to their former way of life, yet they do not fully grasp their need to completely separate. The pull towards sin and their former way of thinking is strong and temptation surrounds them, however the Apostle pleads with them to live differently – **to abstain**, specifically **from fleshly lusts**. This is quite literally those things pertaining to the flesh and temporal satisfaction; the things of the world which are sin.

How can we know what thoughts and actions are worldly?

By asking ourselves some key questions.

What does God's word say?

What is my motivation?

Who benefits?

Are my words and actions pleasing to God?

Am I led to hide my actions?

Often regret is an indication that a wrong action or words have been shared. Our desire to please ourselves may become strong enough to ignore the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is imperative that we practice abstinence from sin and its appearance. We could also apply the importance of fellowship to helping one another keep on track.

Think of what it means to abstain from something. To hold oneself off or to refrain is the definition we read from the *Strong's Concordance*. We are to resist sin. Sin has no power over those who trust in Jesus. **Are you living free from sins hold?** When you are filled with Christ, there is no room for sin.

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to [its] lusts.

Galatians 5:16; 24 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

2 Timothy 2:22 Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

If we genuinely seek after Christ, we will not be seeking the things of this world, our focus will be towards heaven. If you have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, you will not consider the earth your home.

Are we so busy seeking things on earth that we forget our time here is temporary and we are only passing through? Consider what you might pack when you are travelling. Typically you bring only what you will need for your journey. Perhaps paying more attention to the investment in where we are going, rather than what we are accumulating here, is a good travel plan.

Have you become engulfed with your own goals or problems instead of giving attention to others? Are you serving sacrificially? There is a cost involved with truly serving others. Time for self may become sparse, energy may become depleted, and emotions may even become a bit frayed as you are challenged to be patient and encouraging. But we need to remember Who created us, Who gives time, Who gives energy, and Who guards our heart. We are only using what God has so graciously and generously given to us.

Have you allowed personal relationships and possessions to become your pursuit rather than heaven?

We all have responsibilities on earth. We need to work to earn a living, take care of daily chores, and be responsible to fulfill those things that affect our life on this planet. However, do these things occupy most of your thoughts, and affections? Or is God on the forefront of your mind?

What things are keeping you from making progress in your growth, knowledge, and understanding of Jesus?

We can choose to focus on ourselves, our problems, our difficult relationships, our health concerns, or any number of things that cause our current circumstance to be less than perfect. Sin, worldly pursuits, and worldly thinking will fight against us as we battle to keep our sights on our future in heaven. The things of earth will wage war against the soul. You are in a battle! This means real action is needed to stave off the enemy. Make certain you understand the battle and the enemy you are fighting. We can easily become sidetracked by concerns that belong to God. We are not here to 'fix' the world; God's got all things under His control. **We are here to speak truth in love, to share Jesus, and to make disciples.** Consider what might happen in a battle if you sit in a corner and cover your head. You will live in fear; you will miss out on being a part of advancing the Kingdom.

Our action point then, is to

- Encourage one another,
- Recognize where we belong and Who we belong to,
- Live according to God's commands, and
- Be prepared for the battle.

How are you doing?