

Woman's Bible Study
 Wednesday, December 8, 2021
 1 Peter 2:12

We continue Peter's address to the dispersed Christians – You have been born again, therefore refrain from sin and seek to grow in your salvation. Even though men may reject you, in God's sight you are precious. Your purpose is to live according to God's word and to proclaim His excellencies because of His mercy on your soul. In verse 11, the Apostle urged the saints to refrain from the enticement of worldly cravings which leads to sin. He continues this thought in verse 12 with an order for excellent behavior, so that even when they are slandered, their actions speak otherwise.

1 Peter 2:12 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.

To **keep** is a continuous action, think 'keep on keeping on'. Coming from the Greek word *echo*, it means to hold or to use. Consider what happens to your behavior once you are truly saved. You change! Those things you once thought were okay suddenly become questionable; your actions turn from being self-absorbed to becoming mindful of helping others. Your thoughts and words begin to reflect the Truth you believe. Your focus is changed as you seek to become more Christ-like in all your ways. And ... others cannot help but notice.

'Having your conversation' *KJV*

'Having your behavior' *ASV*

'Maintain good conduct' *RSV*

'Keep your conduct' *ESV*

There is a need for awareness of our **behavior** and conversation as a believer. No longer do we say what might first come to mind, or act on impulse – instead, we consider Truth and what will encourage another. Our actions and words need to be filtered through Truth. We seek to refrain from acting according to our feelings as in 1 Peter 2:11 rather, our lives should depict our relationship in Christ.

Do you feel you just have to share something negative because it will make you feel better?

Is your conversation and behavior honest? Or are you a fraud?

Are you maintaining a witness consistent with your salvation?

Are you excusing improper conduct towards others because you are 'weak', or cannot help it, or you feel someone deserves you to be upset with them?

Do you put limits on patience and love and serving, checking out when you have had enough or are tired of always being the 'nice guy', or simply do not feel like helping any longer?

Do you only respond in love if others act accordingly?

We could ask ourselves all sorts of questions that are convicting regarding our behavior. It is no surprise that we all struggle with sin; but are we willing to change? 1 Peter 1:12 does not give a choice, it gives a command. Keep your behavior excellent so that Christ may be seen in you.

Read this quote from the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*, “Our conversation should correspond to our Saviour’s condition; this is in heaven, so ought that to be”.

Romans 12:17-18 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

2 Corinthians 8:21 for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Philippians 2:15 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

1 Peter 1:15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all [your] behavior;

“A good walk does not make us pious, but we must first be pious and believe before we attempt to lead a good course”, *Luther*.

Peter’s words are to Christians who are being ridiculed and persecuted because of their faith. However, he does not make amends for them to take into account their hurt, or difficult circumstances. Rather, the admonition is to keep going regardless!

Concerning ourselves we are to maintain a character that represents our life in Christ. Notice there is a personal responsibility to one’s own behavior. We are to be mindful and sensitive to our actions and words, not quickly pointing out another’s mistakes but having our own witness point towards God.

Our behavior is the manner in which we act or control ourselves. There is no truth for the thought, “I can’t help it, it is just the way I am”. Our conduct in all circumstances should emulate our change as a new creature in Christ. God wants us to be holy, therefore, He will provide the means to grow us toward His holiness. Our conversation in all circumstances should reflect our position as His child.

There is a familiar cliché which says, “do as I say, not as I do”. This is an unfortunate example of excusing one’s own mistakes and making exception for unfit behavior while ordering others to have a higher standard. This is hypocrisy! We are to be an example – not perfect by any means – but striving for holiness, confessing and turning from sin rather than making excuses.

1 Peter 2:12 says our behavior is to be **excellent!** Excellent is translated from *kalos*, meaning beautiful, good, valuable, or virtuous. This is more than just being better than another, like grading on a curve in school. It is a standard of moral excellence; doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. It is not “barely unblamable, but virtuous in every respect”, *John Wesley’s Notes on the Old and New Testaments*. *Matthew Poole’s Commentary* explains having your conversation honest as “irreprehensible, fruitful, such as may gain men’s love, and commend the religion you profess”.

Are you seeking to live an upright and consistent life?

Notice the word consistent in the previous question. This is our daily life, no matter where we are or who we are dealing with. In other words, it is not acting a certain way only when others are watching or when we are at a ‘church’ function, or particularly mindful of our surroundings. The goal is a 24/7 witness of God’s grace and mercy which has been extended towards us because of His great love. *William Burkitt New Testament*, notes this “is not a single action, but our general course and conversation, that denotes us either good or bad; and the word translated honest, signifies fair and amiable, beautiful and adorning, the doing nothing that is unseemly or a blemish either to our person or profession”.

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

Philippians 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but [rather] in speech, conduct, love, faith [and] purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

Peter specifically mentions excellent behavior [among the Gentiles](#) – meaning those who are not saved. The recipients of Peter’s letter were surrounded by heathens who observed their conduct. These atheists were prone to look for reasons to attack those who did not worship their false gods. *Robertson’s NT Word Pictures* says, “The Gentiles were on the watch for slips in moral conduct by the Christians”. **Think!** This is the same for us today; we are surrounded by those who have not trusted Jesus alone. Have you ever noticed that those who have opposite loyalties or convictions sometimes wait for others to fail? This is the ‘I told you so’ mentality. We want our witness to shine God’s glory rather than turn people away. When others look for something negative, we want them to see only that which brings honor to God. We may be reproached for our faith but let us not give grounds for reproach.

[‘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’.](#)

Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary reads, “at the very time when they speak against you in this manner they may be silenced by seeing your upright lives ... that they may see by your meek and upright conduct that there is really no ground for reproach ... that in the very matter for which we are reproached we are conscientious and honest”.

2 Corinthians 13:7 Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we should appear unapproved.

The goal then is to persuade them by means of honest behavior to think differently upon the very things they revile. Sometimes the best way to answer a false charge is to give no evidence for it in your actions. Perhaps your honest conduct will be a tool used as those around you acknowledge your sincere behavior and see God’s work in your life. The prayer is that God will have mercy upon them which brings them to an understanding of His love by our example.

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

John 15:8 "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and [so] prove to be My disciples.

Romans 13:13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

Titus 2:7-8 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, [with] purity in doctrine, dignified, sound [in] speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

1 Peter 3:16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

“It was incumbent on Christians to maintain an honorable and becoming conversation, in all respects, among their Gentile neighbors: that whereas these, through their enmity against God and true religion, and their ignorant prejudices were led to invent and propagate slanders concerning them as evil-doers, or malefactors guilty of crimes injurious to society (verse 14), because they would not join with them in the established idolatry; Christians might silence their calumnies, and soften their prejudices, by their evident and abundant good works. Thus their example in the presence of their enemies, would concur with the preaching of the gospel in promoting the conversion of the Gentiles; and “in the day of their visitation,” when the Lord should please to call them also by his grace to glorify his name, the holy lives of his people would be owned as the means of that happy change”, *Thomas Scott*.

Is your conversation honest?

Do your works glorify God?

Does your conduct align with the world or according to the Gospel you profess?

Consider again the group of Christians Peter is exhorting. They were surrounded by those of the same governing authorities, yet they had professed faith in Jesus Christ. It was important for them to behave different than those who were not Christians.

1 Peter 4:14-16 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

“Our conduct as Christians should be such as to bear the strictest scrutiny; such that the closest examination will lead our enemies to the conviction; that we are upright and honest”, *Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary*.

“Having your *conversation honest*, fair and honourable *among the Gentiles*, particularly in an exemplary discharge of all social and relative duties; *that whereas they speak against you, as evil-doers*, in separating from the worship of their gods, and joining yourselves with what they presumptuously call the impious sect of Christians, *they being eye-witnesses continually of your good works*, may not only lay aside these blasphemous reproaches, but exchange them for commendations and praises; and so *may glorify God in the day of their visitation*, during the season in which the gospel is preached among them, whereby they are visited with the offers of pardon and salvation”, *Philip Doddridge N.T.*

The **day of visitation** means generally a time period of inspection “designed to confer favours rather than to inflict punishment ... to denote God’s coming to men to bless them; to pour out His Spirit upon them; to revive religion”, *Albert Barnes NT Commentary*.

The whole focus of keeping excellent behavior among those who do not know Jesus is the hope that God will call them to a saving knowledge of Christ. We are here to make disciples, to share the Truth of the gospel. Our lives should glorify God in the hopes that those who surround us will think more favorably of the One we follow and be drawn towards Him.