**1 Peter: Excellent Conduct**

1 Peter 2:11-12

**Context**

**1 Peter 2:11-12**—Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. **12**Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

In our endeavor to rightly represent the God who saves us, we must live our lives consistent with what His word tells us. We cannot expect that our lives would be incongruent to the teachings of scripture.

**Luke 6:46**—“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

The sad reality is that the misrepresentation of those who would identify as “Christians”, but inwardly their hearts are far from God, do a disservice to the God who calls those who are truly His own to true holiness.

“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. They see us; they only hear about Jesus Christ”[[1]](#footnote-1)

When we genuinely live out our faith, we do much to silence the opposition of our critics.

**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.

This is the essence of what Peter in this passage exhorted his readers to do: live godly lives, which is the single most effective foundation for making the gospel attractive and believable.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Peter begins with a brief summary admonition, a preamble to the specific relations that follow.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Keeping our conduct pure**

1. **Inner purity**

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

1. Beloved—beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite, worthy of love[[4]](#footnote-4)
	1. They were the recipients of God’s immeasurable love
	2. As such, they had an obligation to obey Him in response

Peter draws his readers closely to his heart with intelligent, purposeful love, a love that will call forth a corresponding love and a readiness to obey.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. They were urged to do so
	1. Urge (parakaleō)—to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation (the act of giving advice or encouragement) or consolation)

**Romans 12:1**—Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

* 1. It is an urging that is reciprocated
1. These beloved people were aliens and strangers
	1. They did not belong
	2. Their home was elsewhere

**Philippians 3:20**—For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ

* 1. Aliens—[stranger](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?t=KJV&Criteria=stranger*+G3941) (2x), [sojourn](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?t=KJV&Criteria=sojourn*+G3941) (1x), [foreigner](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?t=KJV&Criteria=foreigner*+G3941) (1x); a person who lives in a country not his own
		1. That applies to our physical residence on this earth
		2. It applies to our spiritual alienation

**1 John 2:15-17**—Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17**The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

**Romans 12:2**—And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

* + 1. Although we do not conform to the world system, we nevertheless live in it

**John 17:14-16**—I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. **15**I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. **16**They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

* + 1. It is not a lasting city

**Hebrews 13:14**—For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

1. The command: abstain from fleshly lusts

**Romans 8:5-9, 12-13**—For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6**For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, **7**because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, **8**and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **9**However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you….**12**So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— **13**for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

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

**Galatians 5:13,16-17**—For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another…**16**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. **17**For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

* 1. Although Christians are redeemed and now have a new nature, that new nature is incarcerated within the unredeemed flesh
	2. A battle exists between the spirit and the flesh
	3. Believers are set free from the dominant and exclusive power of sin
		1. We are not slaves to unrighteousness
		2. But to righteousness

**Romans 6:18**—…and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

* 1. Here we are directed to abstain
		1. Which means we have a choice
		2. Prior to regeneration, we had no choice
	2. To abstain from what? Fleshly lusts
		1. Fleshly lusts (epithymia)—a longing (especially for what is forbidden):—concupiscence (strong sexual desire), desire, lust (after).[[6]](#footnote-6)
		2. Including but not limited to sexual immorality
		3. It does refer to the evils of the sinful nature

**Galatians 5:19-21**—Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20**idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissentions, factions, **21**envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God

**1 John 2:15-17**—Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17**The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

**Romans 7:14-23**—For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. **15**For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. **16**But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. **17**So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. **18**For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. **19**For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. **20**But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. **21**I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. **22**For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, **23**but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. **24**Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? **25**Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

* + 1. There will come a day when our bodies will be redeemed

**Romans 8:23**—And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

1. These lusts wage war against the soul
	1. Wage war—to make a military expedition, to lead soldiers to war or to battle, (spoken of a commander); to do military duty, be on active service, be a soldier; to fight[[7]](#footnote-7)
	2. It is a long-term assault or military campaign
	3. The aggression and attack is intense
	4. As it is in the soul, it’s a kind of civil war
	5. The lusts are on a seek and destroy mission

**Ephesians 2:1-3**—And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2**in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3**Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

* 1. The believer’s ability to abstain from these desires is to:
		1. Walk in step with the Spirit’s power that now resides within us

**Galatians 5:16**—But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

* + 1. Discipline yourself for godliness

**1 Corinthians 9:27**—but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

**2 Corinthians 7:1**—Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

* + 1. It must be won on the inside; if not, it will destroy and become evident on the outside

**James 1:12-15**—Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. **13**Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. **14**But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15**Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

1. **Outer purity**

**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 because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1. Keep your behavior excellent
	1. Behavior (anastrophe)—daily conduct; manner of life, conduct, behavior, deportment[[8]](#footnote-8)
	2. Excellent (Kalos)—beautiful, handsome, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable, beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent[[9]](#footnote-9)
2. They are to act excellently among the Gentiles
	1. Gentiles (ethnos)—a race (as of the same habit), i.e. a tribe; specially, a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually, by implication, pagan): Gentile, heathen, nation, people.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Luke 2:32**—A Light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.”

**Romans 2:14**—For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves

**1 Corinthians 5:1**—It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife.

**Galatians 3:8**—The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.”

* 1. If our witness for Christ is to be meaningful, our conduct must match our words—beyond reproach
1. The early church was slandered as evildoers
	1. The accusations of the Gentiles against Christians was significant and widespread
	2. They were thought to be rebels against Rome; cannibalists, incestuous; further, they were against slavery, and refused to worship Caesar

**Acts 16:18-21**—She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment. **19**But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, **20**and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, **21**and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”

**Acts 19:19**—And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

1. In the very things in which they are slandered

On the platform of such credibility, personal witness has an impact. Observing the exceptional life of such believers, some will believe, be saved, and glorify God in the day of visitation.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**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.

**Titus 3:8**—This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

1. Day of visitation (hēmera episkopē)—inspection (for relief); by implication, superintendence[[12]](#footnote-12)
	1. An OT phrase where God visits His people for blessing or judgment

**Exodus 3:2-10**—The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. **3**So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” **4**When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5**Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6**He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.**7**The Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. **8**So I have come down to deliver them from power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. **9**Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.**10**Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”

**Judges 13:23-23**

**Ruth 1:6**—Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.

**1 Samuel 3:2-21**

**Psalm 65:9**—You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; The stream of God is full of water;
You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.

**Psalm 106:4**—Remember me, O Lord, In Your favor toward Your people; Visit me with Your salvation

**Zechariah 10:3**—“My anger is kindled against the shepherds, And I will punish the male goats; For the Lord of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah, And will make them like His majestic horse in battle.”

**Isaiah 10:3**—Now what will you do in the day of punishment, And in the devastation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth?

* 1. In the NT, visitation generally came with blessing

**Luke 1:68**—“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

* 1. …but it also had judgment as well

**Luke 19:44**—and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

* 1. There will be severe judgment for the Jewish people because of the rejection of the Messiah—visitation of judgment

**Matthew 11:20-24**—Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. **21**“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **22**Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. **23**And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. **24**Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

**Romans 11:17**—But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree

**I Thessalonians 2:14-16**—For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, **15**who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, **16**hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

* 1. Peter’s use here is re: God’s redemption
		1. As unbelievers observe the respectful behavior of believers, they will glorify God when He visits them for salvation

**1 Peter 3:1-2**—In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, **2**as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

* + 1. The most effective means of evangelism is an irrefutable life

**Conclusion**

The Apostle Peter, who had learned many lessons along the way in his own Christian experience, was writing to believers living under difficult condition.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The life of Christ, as well as writers of the epistles, repeatedly tell us that a redeemed life will result in a change in how we live. That change of life coupled with a heart’s desire to please Him will result in a testimony that draws the unbeliever to glorify God in the day of visitation.

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

Richard W. DeHaan, Good News for Bad Times: 1 Peter

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude

John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter

John MacArthur, The Believer’s Privileges, Part 5: Election and Dominion, Feb 12, 1989, [www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org)

Alexander MacLaren, First and Second Peter and First John

Jerome H Smith, The New Treasure of Scripture Knowledge

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

1. Alexander MacLaren, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. MacArthur, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lenski, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Strong’s G27 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lenski 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Strong’s G1937 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Strong’s G4754 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Strong’s G391 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Strong’s G2570 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Strong’s G1484 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. MacArthur, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Strong’s G1984 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. DeHaan, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)