

1 Peter 2 Introduction

In beginning [1 Peter 2](#) this morning, I want to purposely try and generate a kind of compelling encouragement for you, and it is all created by the word “**Therefore**” that begins v1. The word “**therefore**” always forces the reader to understand that what is about to be addressed is based on what has previously been stated, and in many cases it has an imperative sense, a spiritual compulsion that is innate to it. What [1 Peter 2:1-3](#) is going to do is to force the believer to examine their own life to see whether or not they really understand the practical aspects of what it means to “**be holy in all of your conduct**” and “**to love one another fervently with a pure heart**”, and Peter is going to do that by telling the believer that he has to “**lay aside**” certain things. He would not be doing that if he did not believe that it was actually necessary. Every believer has certain areas of our life that we know needs to be adjusted, but too often we just ignore and disregard them. Maybe we are just too spiritually lazy to deal with them or we have rationalized them away as not really being too much of a concern. Well, the “**therefore**” changes all of that!

Certainly we all realize that being a Christian is one thing, but living out the Christian life is something very different. Without overstating the issue, the Christian life can more than often be very demanding on the believer. Because of the person and work of Christ and because of the holiness of God, the Christian life has incredibly high standards. Those standards, morals, and ethics innately become an integral part of the believer’s life through the indwelling Spirit and are always making demands on the believer. There is no escaping this spiritual reality. However, the last thing that I want to personally do in teaching is to somehow make Christianity to be a kind of “moralistic theism” - which is just a fancy theological term for salvation by works – do good, be good, read your Bible, go to church, pray. All of those are great and they are certainly spiritually essential, but by themselves they completely miss the point. To me that would be a great spiritual tragedy to always be presenting the Christian life in that way. I remember when I was growing up as a young boy in a Baptist church that it seemed like every message was somehow focused on what I should not do – Christians do not dance, do not go to movies, do not smoke or chew, do not drink. We can beat people up everytime they come to church with strong, hard preaching aimed at being a better person, but when we finally get to the end of that scenario, it leaves Jesus sitting on the bench. He just happens to be the star player! The problem with that kind of moral perspective is that by maximizing the law, we minimize and neutralize the gospel. It is impossible to have Christianity without the gospel of grace. Paul said it quite well in [Philippians 1:21](#) when he said the following,

Php 1:21 (NKJV) For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The Christian life is a life transforming reality that radically changes a person, but its design is not just to try and manipulate someone to have high moral values. Its design is to bring the believer into a living, vital, and dynamic relationship with the living God and with Jesus Christ who is the most amazing being in all of eternity. I would never want a lost person to come to church and week after week just hear messages on personal morality, on high ethical values, but somehow miss how the person of Christ can actually save them and fill them with His life. Jesus Christ is the full and complete essence of the Christian life, and to somehow miss that reality would be the greatest of all tragedies. I clearly understand, appreciate, and accept that the Christian life has many moral and ethical constraints and

obligations. The problem, however, is that when those spiritual constraints become the focus, what happens is that the beauty and grace of God become lost. What we want to happen is for all of the good and moral things of God at work in us to become so visible that the beauty of Christ in us becomes the attraction, and not our morality.

Obviously, there are certain realities to the Christian life and to a believer's personal witness that provide a legitimate basis for our testimony to others to have substance and meaning. That should be obvious. As believers, our lives have to be a living testimony of the beauty and wonder of God's life transforming work in us simply because our actual life is what others will use as a spiritual scale to measure and evaluate what they think about God. If they do not see the dynamic and beauty of Christlikeness being developed in our life, then why would they ever think that becoming a Christian would be of any value to them? If they always see believers speaking down of other believers, or see moral impurity in their lives, or speech that is totally unbecoming, then why would they believe us when we declared that Jesus is "**the Way, the Truth, and the Life**"? There has to be something in the Christian life that makes it believable, and it is not just going to church on Sunday and getting together in our little "holy huddle" for coffee and donuts.

That is why when the New Testament authors teach doctrine, and they always supplement and continue that doctrine with obvious practical applications as to how that doctrine is to become visible in the believer's life – and they very often use the word "**therefore**" to introduce those practical exhortations. Just having a Christian routine and moral discipline is not going to be enough to convince lost people in today's culture to embrace Christ. In fact, it should be apparent to any discerning Christian that all of the values that believers deem important have become the target of social criticism and rejection. In a liberal, secular society, a God who restricts someone is seen as a grave liability. The Christian faith is actually viewed as counter-productive to a normal, happy life. If I can say it this way, Christianity has become the great arch-enemy and antagonist to people's personal fulfillment, pleasure, and happiness.

What so many lost people want is a kind of personal sovereignty and autonomy where they can do whatever they please. The last thing that they want is for someone to try and tell them how to live, or that they should not have sex before marriage, or what they need to be doing on Sunday. The lost man just dares the believer to interfere and impede their personal independence. We have become the great impediment to their personal gratifications. All of our moral and biblical propensities are seen as unnecessary, avoidable, and pointless obstacles that prevent someone from truly being happy and living life the way that they want to live it. We are now seen as the social nemesis invading someone's personal space with all of our outdated morality. Before we enter into [1 Peter 2](#), please take a look at [Matthew 5:11-12](#) which says the following,

Mt 5:11 (NKJV) "**Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.** ¹² **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

I do not know about you, but I am not just trying to be a good person. We know that if a believer truly lives for Christ that the unbeliever who wants to be their own little god and run their little universe that they have created, they will revile that believer. So, the words "**for My sake**" take on great significance

and create great perspective relative to all of the negative things that may happen to a committed believer. Jesus simply said to “**rejoice and be exceedingly glad**”!

If I can say this in a crude way, for us as believers witnessing to a lost person, just telling them to come to church is probably not going to “cut it”. There has to be some visible evidence to the lost man of genuine spiritual life! Just being a do-gooder and a Sunday Christian is pretty easy to see through for the unbeliever. For the life changing reality of Christ to have any impact whatsoever, He has to be both physically perceived and verbalized. If a genuine life transformation has taken place on the inside of the believer, then the reality of that transformation should be more than evident on the outside. What we are talking about here is not some kind of just “gut it out” type of Christianity. It is not just being so disciplined and well-organized and meticulous and self-controlled that nothing ever troubles us. What we are talking about is genuine spiritual life that is so focused on the person and beauty of Christ that it simply cannot be contained in a physical vessel. It just becomes so evident and so real that the lost man can actually see it!

In order for the living Christ that is in you to have any impact on someone who is lost, the life of Christ in you must be evident and that life must be verbalized. I have been working in my garden over the last several weeks – cleaning, planting, composting, fertilizing, weeding, and watering. However, when I first started, there were a lot of dead plants, herbs, and flowers in the garden left over from last year that had to be removed because they had no life – none, zero. The first thing that I had to do was to get rid of everything that was dead and had no value for the garden. The same is true of the Christian life. There are certain things in our life that are just an outrageous hindrance to our relationship to Christ, and so their removal becomes vitally critical to how effective we can actually be in our witness to non-believers. For instance, if the lost man sees Christians bickering and criticizing and acting no differently than they act, what would be magnetic about that reality? Nothing actually.

Well, that is exactly where [1 Peter 2:1](#) begins – “**laying aside**”. The first thing that Peter says is that believers are to “**lay aside**” certain things in their life. Peter clearly understood that if we as believers are ever going to be able to magnify the person of Christ to the lost, then there are certain areas of our lives that must be adjusted. He knows because of the end of [1 Peter 1](#) that there are certain qualities that can literally destroy our love for one another and our responsibility to love one another fervently with a pure heart. The Greek word for “**laying aside**” is “*apothemi*” and it simply means to put something away, to cast it off, to lay it aside, to put it down.¹ Peter gives us a very short list of things to lay aside, but obviously there are many others. For instance, [James 1:21](#) uses this verb,

Jas 1:21 (NKJV) Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

[Hebrews 12:1](#) says,

Heb 12:1 (NKJV) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

The verb to “**lay aside**” carries the idea of renouncing something.² I.e., we see something in our life that just does not “fit” what it means to be in love with Christ and fully committed to Him, so we just lay it

aside, put it down. These next three verses seem to capture this defining element of the word – [Ephesians 4:22](#), [Ephesians 4:25](#), [Colossians 3:8](#). They are all the same Greek word “*apotithemi*”.

Eph 4:22 (NKJV) **that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,**

Eph 4:25 (NKJV) **Therefore, putting away lying, “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*” for we are members of one another.**

Col 3:8 (NKJV) **But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.**

When a person renounces something, and especially a believer, it means that they reject, they abandon, and they forsake something in their life that they know and recognize does not glorify Christ. The deeper a believer’s commitment to deal with sin in their life, the greater will be their witness and their effectiveness. Without preaching on sin as such, I am personally convinced that no one ever realizes the incredible and residual impact of not dealing with sin in their personal life.

Let me approach this another way. Peter knows that if we are ever going to be able to love one another the way that he has described in [1 Peter 1:22-23](#) that we personally must allow God to work deeply in our life. We all have our personal propensities to sin – things that we just feel comfortable to overlook and ignore. I have heard them referred to as “white sins”, or sins that we believe are not that bad and can be overlooked. There may be gross sins that we overlook. The problem is that they literally rob us of spiritual vitality, and of spiritual substance and significance. We have become accustomed to ignoring those sins, and for some reason we never seem to think that they will have much of an impact on our personal lives. They are simply small, insignificant, little white sins. Here is what must happen, and it must happen in each and every one of us. We must bring our sinful tendencies, inclinations, and propensities to Christ, and then allow Him to break us of them and to humble us because of them. Do you really want to have a life transforming witness to some lost person that you know and are acquainted with, some person that God has brought across your path and into your life? Do you want the splendor and beauty of Christ to shine out of you to them? Then, you must “**lay aside**” all of those things that God speaks to you about – no matter how big or small, no matter how white or dark they may be.

Jesus made it very clear when He said that we are the “**salt of the earth**” and the “**light of the world**”. When I read those phrases in [Matthew 5](#), I immediately realize that I am very different from the world. I am salt, I am light by virtue of the dynamic of Christ Himself living in me. If we are different, then we must live differently, and by doing so, the world will find us to be peculiar. They may not like what they see or care to live how we live, but still they see something different in us from them. I simply define it as “**Christ in you**”, God in you, and Holy Spirit in you. It is God in you that makes you different. Notice how Peter will address this for us in [1 Peter 2:9-12](#),

1Pe 2:9 (NKJV) **But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among**

the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Do we recognize the problem that the church has, that believers have? We are constantly being influenced and manipulated by the world and by the culture in which we live. It is virtually unavoidable. We are surrounded by it at every turn, and without ever realizing it, the world that surrounds us is impacting us, influencing us, shaping us, molding us, and seducing us by all of its worldly and lustful things. The world is forever compelling us to be like it, to value what it values, and to yield ourselves to its influence and persuasion. No wonder Paul encouraged us in [Romans 12:2](#) to “**be not conformed to this world**”. The only way that we can do that is to literally inundate and saturate our life with Christ, with His words, with His truth. Nothing else will work. I have to make a choice. I have to choose Christ. I have to choose to saturate my heart and mind with His Word. I can choose to spend two hours in front of a compelling television program or three hours reading some worldly novel, and that is what will influence me. [Romans 13:14](#) says this,

Ro 13:14 (NKJV) **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

The less we make of Christ, the greater provision we will make for the flesh, and the more it will control our life. I wonder how many times that we have offended God by just living how we want to live, just doing it our way with no regard for Christ at all? In every believer’s life there is always a competition for what stirs our love for Christ and what robs us of our love for Christ – and they are not necessarily bad things. So, what do I as a believer have to do? I have to bring all of my sinful tendencies and inclinations, those sinful propensities to Christ, and then allow Him to break me of them and to humble me because of them. That is where the “**Therefore**” will ultimately lead us, and we thank God for it.

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, 982-98

² Zodhiates, 240.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Strong, James. *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.