

## 1 Peter 2:11-12, Part A

1Pe 2:11 (NKJV) **Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,<sup>12</sup> 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.**

After reminding his readers of how God sees them in v9-10, Peter immediately begins some very strong exhortations to them. For the believers in Peter's day, there was a very real need to persevere and endure in the midst of very trying and stressful trials and persecutions. So, what Peter does is twofold. First, he calls on the believers to develop an important godly discipline in their inner life (v11 - "**abstain from fleshly lusts...**"). This was something that would take a high level of personal discipline to accomplish. Being a godly man or woman is never something that is cheap. Secondly, he calls on them to maintain a personal and public kind of conduct that would be very visible to those who were not Christians (v12 - "**having your conduct honorable**" and "**good works which they observe**").<sup>1</sup> Then to emphasize all of this even more, he actually says in v11 - "**I beg you**". Obviously, from that very simple phrase, it should be evident that Peter feels very passionate about what he is saying to his readers. The NASB, ESV, and NIV all use the word "**urge**". The AMP uses the word "**implore**". If I came to you with some serious concerns that I had for you as your pastor and I began my exhortation to you with the words "*I beg you*" or "*I urge you*" or "*I implore you*", I would hope that you would take me seriously. The Greek word is "*parakaleo*", and in this context it means to call on someone to do something, to exhort them, to admonish them.<sup>2</sup> There were these two women in [Philippians 4](#) that apparently were struggling to get along with each other, so Paul wrote the following to them in [Philippians 4:2](#),

Php 4:2 (NKJV) **I implore (*parakaleo*) Euodia and I implore Syntyche (*parakaleo*) to be of the same mind in the Lord.**

[Romans 12:1](#) uses the word this way when it says,

Ro 12:1 (NKJV) **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.***

[1 Corinthians 1:10](#) says,

1Co 1:10 (NKJV) **Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.***

The point here is very simple. Peter feels very strongly about what he is about to embark on, and so his impassioned plea sort of sets the tone for the remainder of this chapter as well as 1 Peter 3. There will be many, many exhortations in these two chapters, and so Peter is simply trying to get the attention of his readers. Everything that Peter will address will simply be about how Christians are to live, how they are to conduct themselves in a world that is very opposed to Christ. It is obvious that Peter is not addressing lost people here, but it seems that at times this kind of approach with people may not be a bad idea – this idea of pleading with them, begging them, urging them to hear what we have to say to them about Christ. Just always being kind of matter of fact with someone may not be that effective, and there may be times when we simply have to let our heart become somewhat exposed with people.

It is very interesting as Peter continues that he uses two words to describe how he sees Christians. He calls them “**sojourners and pilgrims**” – two very interesting words that give some insight into why Peter is going to challenge his readers so very strongly in the letter. The word “**sojourner**” is actually translated as “**aliens**” in the Greek Interlinear, NASB, AMP, NIV, ISV, and RSV. It is the Greek word “*paroikos*” and literally means to have a home near or alongside.<sup>3</sup> It refers to someone who temporarily lives in a foreign country.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the word carries the specific nuance for the Christian as someone who is living alongside of those who are being controlled and dominated by a world system that is not of God. So, the believer is living alongside those in that worldly and Satan manipulated system, but they simply are not a part of that system. They are “**aliens**” in the world. They are in the world, but not of the world.

The word “**pilgrims**” or “**strangers**” is the Greek word “*parapidemos*” and it literally means to settle down alongside of pagans. So, when you take the two words together, it describes the Christian position in the world. The believer literally has made his home right beside, right alongside people who are not saved and who really are very different than the Christian is. In reality, the true believer’s Christianity makes him a kind of stranger to those who are lost. He is different than they are.<sup>5</sup> His neighbors become his mission field. I imagine that to many of you that if you could compile a demographic survey of your neighborhood, in many cases there would be a lot of people who live very near you who are not saved, yet you live right alongside of them, but you are not actually like them.

So, I really like what Peter is doing here. He is simply reminding his readers that they are not like the people that surround them – and he sees that as a very good thing. I love being with believers, being at church, eating together and having fellowship with one another. However, I just as much enjoy the opportunity to be around lost people who are very different than I am. They become my opportunity to test the reality of my faith, to test the reality of my willingness, inclination, and readiness to speak to them about Christ. I was talking recently with Tami Shaffer who is the Assistant Principal at South Aiken High School about the difficulty of her position, and she made a remarkable statement to me that immediately showed me how much she understood a verse like this. She simply said “It’s a wonderful mission field”. She gets it.

Now, in v11, notice what it is that Peter wants his readers to do. He wants them to “**abstain from fleshly lusts**”, and then he makes this remarkable statement that follows it up and says that those lusts, if allowed to continue in their life, will “**war against the soul**”. Peter fully understood that even though all believers have been given a new nature at the new birth, that that new divine life is still confined within a fleshly body that is not yet redeemed. What that reality does is to create an ongoing battle between the indwelling Spirit in the believer and the believer’s flesh that houses that Spirit. That is exactly why every believer finds himself or herself continually struggling with various sins in their life. They can readily identify with Paul in [Romans 7:19](#) when he said,

**Ro 7:19 (NKJV) For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.**

The word “**abstain**” is the Greek word “*apecho*” and it means to keep oneself away from, to make yourself distant from something.<sup>6</sup> It means to hold oneself back from something.<sup>7</sup> It is in the present tense and the middle voice. Because it is in the present tense, it means that the believer is to continually be choosing to abstain, to continually be choosing to refrain from those things that are not honoring to

Christ. It is the idea that the believer is more than willing to put considerable distance between themselves and these fleshly lusts that are so characteristic of the world system in which we live side by side. The middle voice means that the subject of the verb is being impacted by its own action. So it could be read “**you yourself abstain from...**” I.e., if the individual abstains from certain things, their life will be greatly impacted by their self-control. For instance, [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#) says,

1Th 4:3 (NKJV) **For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;**

[1 Thessalonians 5:22](#) says,

1Th 5:22 (NKJV) **Abstain from every form of evil.**

If I can say it this way again, this is one of those verbal infinitives that reveal to us that God is not going to live the Christian life for us. We have to live the Christian life. Obviously, God will help us, but we still have to do the work. Larry Kuhn uses a great example of how God provided the manna and quail each day to the people wandering in the desert, but the people still had to go and gather it up. God gave them what they needed, but He did not eat it for them. I love my garden and God provides the seeds, and the sun, and the water, but I still have to work the garden if I ever expect to eat anything from it. If I do not go out and pick the beans or the tomatoes, they will simply fall to the ground and rot.

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, 137.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 1105.

<sup>3</sup> Strong, 1298.

<sup>4</sup> Zodhiates, 1121.

<sup>5</sup> Wuest, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Strong, 972.

<sup>7</sup> Zodhiates, 213.

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