

1 Peter 2:11-12, Part C

1Pe 2:11 (NKJV) 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.

Peter's encouragement in v11 is for believers to continually make the choice to refrain from engaging in those kinds of activities that are considered "**fleshly**", not God-honoring. If a believer does not have the self-control to develop that discipline in their life, then what happens is that they will yield to their "**fleshly lusts**" which will literally attack their "**soul**". The "**soul**", or "*psuche* (Gr.)" is that part of a person which wills, thinks, and feels. It involves a person's will power, reason, emotions, and can refer to their complete personality. It is a very small word with a very big meaning.

Then in v12, Peter addresses one of the primary reasons why it is important for a believer to maintain what he calls "**honorable**" conduct before those who are lost – Gentiles. It has eternal significance. The verb "**having**" means to keep maintaining something, to keep something in a certain state, position, or activity.¹ It is in the present tense which makes it something that the believer is to be doing continually – always maintaining the kind of conduct that is honorable to God. The NASB and ESV translations use the word "**keep**" – "**keep your behavior excellent** (NASB)". The word "**conduct**" is the Greek word "*anastrophe*" and in its simplest meaning, it refers to a person's way of life, their lifestyle, their manner of living. However, one nuance of its meaning refers to the believer determining a course of conduct and then carrying out their determined course of action.² It implies a very deliberate and purposeful decision on the individual's part to do something – what could be defined as "intentional". Godliness is not an accident. Becoming fully committed to Jesus Christ is not something that just happens. It is not something that is unintended or unplanned. To the very contrary, it is something that requires a high degree of planned, measured, and careful determinations and decisions on a person's part. The more that a believers give themselves to developing godliness in their life, the more godly they will become. There are obvious things to do. For instance, [Ephesians 4:22-24](#) gives the following insight,

Eph 4:22 (NKJV) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The verb for "**put on**" literally refers to "sinking into a garment", to be clothed with something. In this verse, it refers specifically to putting on the character of Christ in our life.³ We are to wear the character of the new man that has been created in what Paul calls here as "**true righteousness and holiness**". Whatever "**true righteousness and holiness**" actually is, we know that it is not how we used to live, or what Paul calls "**your former conduct**" (v22). Just listen to the other three times that Peter uses this word "*anastrophe*" in [1 Peter](#).

1Pe 1:15 (NKJV) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

He says here that “**all**” of the believer’s conduct is to be “**holy**” in its character. I.e., it is to reflect the very holiness of God. He says in [1 Peter 1:18](#) that believers have been “**redeemed...from your aimless conduct...**”

1Pe 1:18 (NKJV) knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

The word “**aimless**” is “*mataios*” and means empty, vain, of no profit. It is the person who builds their house on the sand, who chases the wind, or shoots at stars. It is all of no profit, vanity, and worthless. Notice what Jesus says about the man who builds his house on the sand in [Matthew 7:26-27](#),

Mt 7:26 (NKJV) But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

If someone understands anything about the Sermon on the Mount and all of the deeply spiritual truths that Jesus presented, these are the last two verses and they represent the ultimate message of His sermon. That message is that if a person hears the Word of God, but chooses not to be obedient to it, that the results of their life will be no different from the “**foolish man**” who built his house on sand and eternally suffered a great fall. In [1 Peter 3:1](#), Peter gives the following instruction to wives who have husbands that are not saved. He says that their behavior and their “**conduct**” is so powerful that it is able to win their lost husbands “**without a word**”.

1Pe 3:1 (NKJV) Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

These are very powerful verses related to a believer’s “conduct”. Please remember that godliness, righteousness, and holiness in a believer’s life is not accidental and inadvertent, not something that just evolves over time without effort or conscious decisions in that direction. For the most part, everyone is simply a by-product of their decisions, a result of the deliberate choices that they make in their life.

To place into perspective how critical this issue is of making good decisions, I want to identify the results of several surveys among young people in America. Unfortunately, many children receive no meaningful input about their spiritual life at home, so listen to the facts that deal with their lack of biblical “choices”. A Barna survey in 2009 of 18-23 year olds in America found that only 1 in 200 have a biblical worldview which was defined by Barna as:

1. A belief in absolute moral truth
2. The inerrancy of Scripture
3. The reality of Satan
4. Being good is not the way to heaven
5. Jesus was sinless, and
6. The Bible’s God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

Those are very basic and fundamental truths of the Christian life, but only 1 in 200 had a worldview that incorporated them into their life. In Jesus' terms, it building your life on the sand.

Another survey that Barna took in 2011 was called a Survey of Evangelical Young Adults (ages 18-29) and it found that 60% of those interviewed had disconnected from church life by age 15, drop out as soon as socially able, and do not view the church as any long-term part of their life. In simple terms that we can understand, America is now post-Christian and basically a pagan nation. 75% of the young people in Europe claim to be atheists. My personal opinion is that unless trends are reversed, the visible church in America is headed for extinction. We literally are only one generation away from that happening and probably do not even think that it could happen. Being able to think biblically is desperately needed. Why? It is because if our children grow up in homes and churches that do not think biblically, they are destined to making the wrong choices.

The following statistics were developed relative to children who have left home and are in college. If we are concerned at all, this kind of information should be somewhat alarming to anyone who is a parent of a young person. The facts of the survey about their generation were as follows:

1. 75% do not have their biological father in the home by their high school graduation
2. 50% have already had sexual intercourse
3. 70% do not believe in moral absolutes
4. 60% cheat in school
5. 40% have tried marijuana
6. 10% attend church
7. 1% will stay in church after high school.

If anyone is listening, what should be clearly evident is that committed Christians are definitely swimming upstream and against the current cultural value system. No wonder God said to live a holy life and to **“put off...your former conduct”**.

What Peter states is that believers who live this way will be spoken against as **“evildoers”**. The word for **“speak against”** is *“katalaleo”*. *“Kata”* means against and *“laleo”* means to speak – thus speak against.⁴ However, in the context, it means to slander someone and is translated that way in the NASB, AMP, and ISV. It means to say evil and malicious things in order to damage or destroy another person and their reputation. It includes things like gossip, backbiting, spreading rumors, passing along a bad report, taking cheap shots at someone, disparaging comments, or unkind words. It is anything said or done to make another person look bad and us look good.⁵ In today's political culture, the bashing of Christians has become the norm.

If believers do not honor the cultural, economic, and political gods of their day, they will naturally be viewed as both subversive and disgusting. What is extremely interesting to me is what Peter did not do. He did not summons Christians to make up Jesus tracts and pass them out to the world, or to somehow defend their views of morality. What He encouraged them to do was to always be living a life of virtue that would be clearly seen by the world.⁶ Certainly there is a need, a time, and a place to defend the

biblical values that comprise the Christian life – and we should do exactly that. In theological terms, it is called “Apologetics”, or defending the faith. [1 Peter 3:15](#) says the following in that regards,

1Pe 3:15 (NKJV) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

[Matthew 24:24](#) gives another reason to “be ready”.

Mt 24:44 (NKJV) Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Like it or not, Jesus will return and when He does, for the most part it will be the end of the line for many. Listen to these verses on those who are lost at the time of the Great Tribulation in [2 Thessalonians 2:9-12](#) because they were not ready. These may be some of the most frightening verses in the Bible.

2Th 2:9 (NKJV) The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Talking about a generation that is just a breath away from an eternity without Christ, well we may very well be living in it! Notice all that is against them. There is “**Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception**”. There is the “**strong delusion**” that God sends so that those who are lost will believe “**the lie**”. Based on the context of this chapter, it appears that the lie they believe is that Satan is God as he reveals himself at the “**abomination of desolation**” at the mid-point of the Tribulation. The result - “**that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness**”.

The phrase, however, that seems to divide scholars relative to [1 Peter 2:12](#) is the term “**the day of visitation**” and whether or not it refers to a time of God’s judgment or to His salvation. In the Old Testament, “**the day of visitation**” could be for either – judgment or blessing. There are good reasons postulated on both sides of the argument – for judgment or for salvation. It is clearly understood that unbelievers will give glory to God in the day that they are visited with His judgment. For instance, [Philippians 2:9-11](#) says,

Php 2:9 (NKJV) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

However, I am inclined to believe in [1 Peter 2:12](#) that it is referring to the salvation of those Gentiles towards whom believers had lived with a righteous and God-honoring life. It is referring to that amazing moment in a person’s life when God visits them in their lostness and saves them by His irresistible grace. At that moment they will glorify God for their salvation. It has to be appreciated that a godly life is very impactful. It always makes a difference somewhere. I love being around godly men and women simply because they make a great difference in my life. There is absolutely no substitute for a godly parent in the life of their family. Being a godly parent is not guarantee that your children will be saved, but it

certainly is better than the option of not being a godly parent. I could not imagine standing before God and knowing that one of my children did not make it into His kingdom because I had been ungodly in my life.

In the New Testament, the term “**visitation**” is generally applied to blessing. So, one of the greatest ways to give glory to God is to actually believe in Him, and Peter is clearly stating that a godly life is a great testimony to those who are lost. Obviously, saying the right things, but living an ungodly life has no spiritual or evangelistic merit whatsoever. No one listens to a hypocrite. Listen very carefully. You never know who is watching your life, but please appreciate that someone is watching you and how you live – and your life and your testimony can be the difference in their life, one way or the other. Guard your life carefully.

ENDNOTES

¹ Logos, *1 Peter 2:12*, ep.

² Logos, *1 Peter 2:12*, Thayer, ep.

³ Zodhiates, 587.

⁴ Zodhiates, 834.

⁵ Logos, *1 Peter 2:12*, katalaleo, ep

⁶ Schreiner, 122.

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