

• *Reasons to glorify God*

• *Bridge section*

• *An appeal – inward – then outward*

1. He reminds them of their identity

2. He reminds them of the battle that will not cease while we are in this world

• *An A-to-Z of sinful attitudes, actions and speech*

• *Our 'flesh' – the tendency to sin*

• *Temptation is not sin*

• *We are covered with the righteousness of Christ*

Peter has been giving many reasons why the Christian should live in such a way that he or she glorifies God. 1 Peter 2:11–12 comes as a kind of 'bridge' section. It concludes the many reasons for godly living which Peter has put before his friends¹. It also prepares the way for the detailed commands of 2:13–4:11.

He has an appeal which looks **inward**: '*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and temporary residents, to abstain from fleshy lusts, which war against the soul*'¹. Then he has a command that looks **outward** to the pagans round about: '*Maintain good behaviour among the Gentiles...*'². The first command is negative: abstain. The second command is positive: maintain.

1. **He reminds them of their identity.** We are 'aliens' (foreigners, people who do not completely belong in this world); and we are 'temporary residents' (people who stay here for a short time and then move on). In practice this means that we do not settle down too much. We do not make our entire life revolve around the pleasures and pursuits that belong to this world. We are not to be excessively bothered by money-making, house-buying, luxurious holidays, time-consuming hobbies. Soon we shall be in a heavenly homeland!

2. **He reminds them of the battle that will not cease while we are in this world.** There are 'fleshy lusts, which war against the soul'. There will always be a 'fight of faith' in the Christian life until we are taken out of this world altogether. Christians that try to find a way of getting rid of the flesh altogether generally end up teaching some heresy which pretends that they now do not sin or have abolished the flesh altogether. Any teaching which says that 'the flesh' can be abolished altogether in this life ends up in hypocrisy or depression. Peter asks us to abstain from fleshy lusts. Perhaps he has in mind sexual sins, laziness, love of ease, love of luxury, gluttony, over-indulgence in alcohol. But there are many other less 'physical' sins which arise from the fact that we still have sin in the body. One could give a whole A-to-Z of them: arrogance, boastfulness, complaining, deceit, envy, fraud, gossip, hate, impatience, jealousy, kiburi (Swahili: pride), laziness, moaning, negativism, obstinacy, prayerlessness, quarrelsomeness, resentment, spite, tale-bearing, unbelief, vindictiveness, witchcraft, eXcuses, yielding to temptation, zinaa (Swahili: sexual impurity).

These are largely sins of attitude and of our talk, but they arise out of 'the flesh', the tendency to sin that resides in our fallen bodies.

We should remember that temptation is not sin! The fact that temptations to these sins arise in us daily does not mean we are living defeated lives. We are only defeated if we give in to these sins.

We need to know that we are covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If we are not aware of this 'covering righteousness', Jesus' righteousness given to us, we shall feel unclean and unable to relate to God as our Father. When we stand before God we always need the righteousness which is not our own, the righteousness of God by the faithfulness of Jesus¹. We always need the blood of Jesus Christ. 'They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony'.

¹ 1:12-2:10

¹ 2:11

² 2:12

¹ see
Philippians 3:9

• *The battle will never be over, although the front line will move forward*

When we are trusting in the covering righteousness of Jesus, we ‘abstain from fleshly lusts’. We identify special problems. We do not allow ourselves to feel rejected by God. We know that Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses. We get up speedily when we fall. We go on believing no matter how bad we feel about ourselves. We remember that our security is in the blood and righteousness of Jesus. The battle will never be over, although the front line will move forward.

3. Peter invites them to view their lives positively not negatively

3. Peter invites them to view their lives positively rather than negatively. He says ‘*Maintain good behaviour among the Gentiles, in order that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may glorify God in a day of visitation, because of your good works which they see*’^{□1}.

□1 2:12

• *Not only ‘abstaining’ but ‘maintaining’*

It is not only fighting and abstaining. The negative is important but the positive is important as well. Not only ‘abstaining’ but also ‘maintaining’!

• *Approval of others*

We are to live a life that others can approve of. Of course they will not approve of everything! They sometimes will think we are too narrow, too rigid. They will complain about our living for God – but secretly they know that we are right to live as we do.

• *Special difficulties when pagans speak against us*

There are special difficulties when pagans are themselves perverse and speak against us as evil-doers. In ancient Rome, Christians were sometimes accused of being cannibals because they would talk about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus! Or they would be accused of incest because they insisted they loved their brothers and sisters! When the city of Rome caught fire in July AD 64, Nero blamed the Christians. The Christians taught that the world would end in fire^{□1}! In a sense we do not worry too much about what others think of us – yet we have to be sensible. The important thing is that there are ‘good works which they see’. Then on a day when God is working in great blessing, the Christians’ way of living will lead many to put their faith in Jesus. Some think ‘a day of visitation’ means the day of judgement. More likely it means a day when God is moving in special blessing, a day when it is easy to get saved, a day when God seems near^{□2}.



□1 2 Peter 3:10

□2 see Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:14; Acts 15:14; Hebrews 2:6

• *A ‘day of visitation’*

It is these things that must be uppermost in our minds, in living the godly life. It is not just a matter of ‘abstaining’; it is positively getting on with living a full life for God.

• *Living a full life for God*

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