

For His Glory – 1 Peter 2:11-12
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis
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INTRODUCTION

Who would you say is on top in your life today? Who's priorities and convictions run the show? Who's desires and needs are most important?

Well, my default setting when I arrived on earth was myself. And that was yours as well. What did this look like? *I'm on top. The world revolves around me. My needs, desires and wants are most important. I expect people to like me, love me, think I'm wonderful, and bend over backwards to make me feel special. And I'm hurt and injured when they don't. I think of this as my birthright. It's my right and just deserve to be appreciated, loved, treated well, and given respect at all times. And when it doesn't happen, I feel I'm justified in just about any course of action to make it right and punish those who've mistreated me.*

This is how life begins and continues unabated for most people in the world. Of course, as we get older it's usually covered up and made more socially acceptable, and we learn to be more creative and subtle in pursuing our wants and desires so that it's not quite so obvious to everyone around us that it's all about us. And of course, our God-given conscience and the Holy Spirit's work in the world, do usually keep most people from going to the full extent of self-centeredness. Yet still the reality remains that we are at the top of our own lives and are pursuing what we think we want and need and deserve above all else.

But enter Jesus Christ and the knowledge of God and his world, and things turn upside down. We find out that the source of most of our problems in life is this default setting where we're trying to be at the top, at the center, at the place of worship, where only God is supposed to be. We've gotten a taste for worship and we like it and want more and more of it. But Jesus teaches us the truth: *we're not worthy of worship.* We're not meant to be worshiped. Only God is. We're not designed to be self-sufficiently in charge and having others bow down to our every whim. And the way of *life* and *purpose* and *joy* is actually to get down from

the top and let our good God take his place...take charge...and guide us and empower us to love him and others above ourselves. Human beings are designed by God to live in dependence on him and find in him their value and purpose and strength and perfect wisdom. And as long as we resist this and keep ourselves and our wants and desires above his, we will be on the path to death and disharmony and destructive living.

And sadly, even those who have come to new life in Christ can easily remain stuck in the same way of living we had before Christ. This putting of our wants and desires above God's and other people's is so ingrained in us, that without deliberate and conscious choices to reject it over and over again, we will continue to put what we want and think we need, above God and what he teaches us. We're so good at justifying this continued pattern of living. *We've been hurt. We've been injured. We've been disrespected. Our expectations have not been met. So now we have the right to set aside God's ways to put things right and punish others, instead of choosing love at all times.* Would you say we can easily do that still, even if we're followers of Christ?

Well, today, in 1 Peter 2:11-12, Peter's going to urge us – to implore us – to actively and deliberately and continually reject these ingrained tendencies to put ourselves back on top and set aside God's ways whenever things get hard. Let's begin by reading the passage:

11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

May the Lord bless the reading of his word and enable us to understand it and apply it by his Spirit this morning.

Before we study this passage, let's briefly step back and remind ourselves again where we are in the book of 1 Peter. We've just finished the *Big Picture View of the Saved Life*. In that view, Peter shared with us *3 guiding principles* that should permeate our new lives in Christ: *1) Setting our faith and hope fully in God and the inheritance he has for us, and leaving it there; 2) Learning to love God and*

each other deeply as we know and obey God's word; and 3) Living together with the body of Christ to proclaim God's excellencies everywhere we go. Now, in chapter 2, verse 11, through chapter 4, verse 19, Peter is going to move into very practical guidance for real-life situations we will face; teaching us how to live this out and glorify God no matter the circumstance. And the foundation for being able to do this consistently is found in the 2 verses we'll look at today: verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2. So let's see what Peter has to share with us in these 2 verses.

AS DEARLY LOVED SOJOURNERS

The first heading in your sermon notes is this: *As Dearly Loved Sojourners.* We'll begin with the first phrase of verse 11: ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles... Beloved.*** That's a powerful word, and it shouldn't be missed. It's key to being able to do what Peter urges us to do in these verses. The word in Greek comes from *agape* love; God's kind of love: *Steadfast, faithful, unchanging, not dependent on human actions or failures; strong and always working for our good even when we're rebelling against him.* This is the way you and I are loved right now by God. It's the love we've been longing for and looking for all our lives. And it's fully ours in Christ. Nothing is held back. If you've come to Christ in repentance and faith, you are now, forever and always, the recipient of God's perfect, unchanging, life-giving, *agape* love. You don't have to look for it anywhere else or expect any person to give it to you anymore. You have it in Christ. And nothing can now separate you and I from that love. Let that soak in for a moment.

Beloved. You are God's beloved, his dearly loved one, and you can stop looking for it in all the wrong places and expecting sinful human beings to give it to you, or else. This understanding and acceptance and experience of God's perfect love, is what frees us to free others from the impossible expectation that they give us that kind of love. It's what frees us to give them grace and continue loving them and doing good to them even when they fail us or hurt us deeply. Only God is able to give us the love we long for, and as he does he begins changing us and empowering us to give his kind of love to other people...the same love we've received from him. Being God's beloved, living in the fulness of the undeserved love of Christ, is foundational to the kind of life Peter urges us to live in this next

section of 1 Peter. Without it, we'll be endlessly frustrated in our efforts to live as God calls us to live.

But the second element of the foundation we need is found in a theme we've already seen in our study of 1 Peter: the embracing of our identity as *sojourners*, foreigners just passing through a country that's not our true home. ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles...*** You see, we'll only be able to do what Peter urges us to do as we truly accept and begin living as sojourners. If we're still loving the world and what it has to offer and trying to finally "arrive" and settle in here on earth, we'll never be able to release our wants and desires to choose God's ways instead...to put him at the top instead of ourselves. Our desire to be loved by people and our hunger for material things and earthly glory will continue to be more important than walking in God's ways...than setting ourselves aside to glorify God and prepare ourselves for our true home in heaven.

My friends, if today and everyday each of us could just settle in to the fact that we're not home and that we're not going to get everything we think we want in this world; we would be ready to break free from the destructive and self-centered ways that so often paralyze us and keep us trapped and resistant to doing what God asks us to do. *As dearly loved sojourners*. Have you accepted this identity in your life today? Or are you still living as an unloved person who's hope is still mostly wrapped up in this world and what you can get and achieve and experience here?

Interestingly, on earth, in the *physical* realm, we are sojourners. We're strangers, foreigners, aliens to the people in the world who don't know Christ. And we know that what we long for is not to be found in this present, physical world. But the *spiritual* reality, even now, is a whole different story. With respect to God and his household and his people and his spiritual kingdom, we are no longer strangers and aliens. We've been invited into God's spiritual house to make ourselves at home with him and with other followers of Christ from every tribe, tongue and people group. And this spiritual reality is what enables us to release our hold on the physical realm of this present world...the things and priorities and passions of the world around us.

Paul lays out this spiritual reality beautifully for us in Ephesians 2:17-22. He says:

17 And [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

We are sojourners, strangers, aliens on earth, but in God's spiritual kingdom right now, we have found our true home with him. We're not strangers and aliens to God and his people. We've been invited into his house to live at home in his presence, take up his good purposes, and receive from him everything we need to choose his ways and learn to love other people with the same kind of love we've received from him. Are you ready for him to lead you there?

REJECT DESTRUCTIVE DESIRES

When you are ready to embrace this new identity, you'll have the foundation you need to start making the difficult choices Peter calls us to make daily as followers of Christ. Looking again at verse 11, Peter says: ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*** This section of your sermon notes is labeled: *Reject Destructive Desires.*

The passions of the flesh. What are they? Simply put, they are the desires that run our lives when we're placing ourselves above God and others and setting our hearts on things of this earth. *Sinful desires. Fleshly lusts.* Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 gives us a list of some of the actions that result when we let these sinful desires and lusts rule our lives. He says:

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

These are the kinds of things we get involved in when we allow the passions of our flesh to guide us. We typically think of things like sex outside of marriage, getting drunk, or using drugs, when we think of sinful desires and passions. But did you notice that there are some pretty ordinary and widespread things on the list? Jealousy, arguing, fits of anger, rivalries between people, envy, broken relationships, bickering, and the all-encompassing, *idolatry*...putting other things, including ourselves, above God.

And don't we so often justify these things in our lives and think we have legitimate reasons for acting in these ways when people have hurt us or treated us badly? Well, Paul, in this Galatians passage, does NOT share our tendency to minimize and justify these type of actions. He says instead: ***I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*** That's a pretty serious warning that he's evidently given more than once. He would agree wholeheartedly with Peter in urging us, beseeching us, exhorting us, to have absolutely nothing to do with these things...to actively resist giving in to the sinful desires that lead us into these types of behaviors. We were enslaved to these ways of living before Christ, and now God is calling us to actively reject them and go in the opposite direction, however strange it may feel.

And what reason does Peter give us in our passage today for abstaining from the passions of the flesh? The reason he gives us is this: *these passions are waging war against our souls.* Peter gives a battle picture here. And not just a battle, but an all-out war! The picture he gives us is this: Our fleshly passions, desires, and lusts are not just harmless, natural, normal parts of human existence. Instead, they are like a mighty army coming against us to destroy our souls and wipe us off the face of the earth. When we give in to them, we allow them to gain ground in the war and we subject ourselves to harm and injury and even death.

But when we actively reject these destructive desires and go in the opposite direction, we grow stronger and gain ground in the war. We start taking out the enemy and weakening his forces. *Abstain. Keep away from. Reject. Have nothing to do with the sinful desires that used to run your life before Christ.* That's how we win the war. And God has given us everything we need to do this: his love, his truth, and the awesome power of his Holy Spirit dwelling inside us. We walk into his new life as by the Spirit we daily, over and over again, put to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13).

As dearly loved sojourners, reject destructive desires by the power of the Spirit and trust that God knows what he's doing! For us who have come into the light of Christ:

12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
(Romans 13:12–14)

Make no provision for sinful desires. Don't gratify them. Put them to death as you put on Christ Jesus and walk in the power of his Spirit and the truth of his word.

TO GLORIFY GOD IN ALL SITUATIONS

And this brings us to the final section of our sermon notes: *To Glorify God in All Situations*. As we reject our sinful desires by the power of the Spirit, we fill the void by actively doing good instead for the glory of God. Peter continues in verse 11: ***Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*** Keep your conduct, your behavior, your conversation, your actions, honorable at all times. The Greek word here for honorable actually means: *good, fair*. It's the same word used in the phrase "good deeds" in verse 11. Keep your conduct always good, fair and honorable, no matter what. Instead of responding with fits of anger and harsh words and seeking retribution, actively do good to all, no matter what they do to you or say about you. What a foreign concept to us? Reject that natural human tendency to lash out and punish and take revenge, and instead treat others as God treats you...working for their good and their freedom, knowing that they're trapped, ensnared, stuck, in those old and destructive ways that used to run your life.

Choose to see the big picture. Those trapped and stuck by the passions of the flesh and the works of the flesh are of all people most miserable; no matter how happy and successful they may seem on the outside. They have no peace and fulfillment inside and they have an awful future awaiting them if they continue

down that path and reject the salvation and freedom offered through Christ. Ask the Spirit to give you the big picture perspective and raise up within you an authentic love for even your enemies as you see the trap they're caught in...and as you remember that you also have often been stuck in the same traps. Then by the Spirit choose God's ways instead of your own. As you abstain from fits of anger, harsh words, vindictive punishment, breaking off relationship, and other techniques for fulfilling our earthly desires, let the Spirit lead you to **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...**

"But how could you expect me to respond these ways when I've been hurt, slandered or mistreated," you might be saying in your head right now? "That's just unrealistic! Illogical! Naïve!" How often do we tell ourselves these things and believe we're fully justified? But my friends, Peter doesn't agree. Neither does Paul. Neither does John. Neither does Jesus. They all say that even when people slander us...speaking evil of us and telling others lies about us...even when they persecute us and pour out injustice on us...these are reasons enough for us to rise up and let 'em have it, right? Wrong. They all tells us instead: *always keep your conduct honorable, no matter what.* Let all people see your good deeds that continue even in the face of injustice and hurt and wrong that you suffer, and it will bring great glory to God and reveal him to those who so desperately need him. You will shine as lights in an incredibly dark world. Listen to the familiar words of Paul in Romans 12:17-21:

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Overcome evil with constant, persistent, enduring good done to even your enemies.

CONCLUSION

As dearly loved sojourners, reject destructive desires to glorify God in all situations. That's what it looks like to live for God's purposes in a world that's not

our home...a world whose glory is passing away quickly and will not last...A world where Jesus leads us to get off the throne and put God back where he belongs for good...a world where we exist for him and for his glory. When we do what Peter urges us to do in this passage, people will see God at work in us and glorify him greatly. They may not glorify him now, but there will be a day...that day when you arrive at your true home and receive your imperishable, undefiled and unfading inheritance...when the truth will be revealed to all and God will be glorified for his powerful work in your life...His work that allowed you to keep him and his ways at the top and to love others relentlessly as he loves you!

Glorifying God in all situations is to be the ultimate priority in all we do. And when it is, we will find freedom and joy and relational health that will reveal God powerfully to others. We'll also be cooperating with God's training plan designed to prepare us to reign with him one day in the new heavens and the new earth.

Who's at the top in your life? Are your rights, your feelings, your wants and desires, running your life? Or is God? Do you justify fits of anger, harsh words, unkindness, jealousy, and other works of the flesh? Or do you recognize them for what they are: hostile enemies seeking to take you out in the war being waged for your soul? Learning to abstain from and reject our comfortable, ingrained, sinful human reactions to life and its challenges, takes deliberate and intentional thought and effort and self-denial and Holy Spirit power. But by the Spirit, we can do it. And it's the only way we'll fully walk into new life and freedom God has called us to in his kingdom. Are you ready to live *for his glory*?