

Living As Strangers
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1 Peter 2:9-20

Opening: When you travel to a foreign country, **why do the natives tend to observe you closely?** Let's think about the reverse. A family from another country and culture moves into your neighborhood. **Is the natural reaction of the neighborhood acceptance or suspicion?** Have you ever gotten to know someone from another country and though they were different culturally they turned out to be terrific and you really liked them?

In today's text Peter told these early followers of Christ they were foreigners or exiles. **In our society today, are followers of Christ the "natives" or the "foreigners?"** Using our earlier examples that means unsaved people are watching followers of Christ in the same way "natives" watch "foreigners" in their country. **Are they expecting good conduct or bad conduct?**

- A follower of Christ should live a certain way because we're loved by Him.

In John 14:15 (ESV) Jesus said,
¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

- A true follower of Christ will want to help others find what we've found.
- We should be passionate about helping people around us change their eternal destination from hell to Heaven.
- Jesus commanded us to TELL people about what he's done in our lives. How we LIVE among people sets the stage for that conversation.
- The BIG IDEA of this lesson is this: How you live tells those around you a lot about whom you serve, and opens the door to share the good news about the love of Christ and the hope of Heaven.

- We should remind ourselves daily that people are watching how we live (good or bad) and saying, “So, *that’s what a Christian looks like!*”
- Let’s start in this text at verses nine and ten. Peter reminds these early followers of Christ about their special status.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- Peter is saying, “*You are special! God chose you to be His people!*”
- Then Peter underlines the point with his very next word: “Beloved.”

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.

- Let’s go back to that word, “Beloved.” In the Greek that word means **only dear**...one of a class, esp. loved. The same word is used in Mt 3:17.¹ *...and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*²
- Peter reminds us that followers of Christ are God’s beloved; dear to Him!
- Because we are so loved by God Peter says, “abstain” from the passions of the flesh. **What does that mean? How hard does Peter say that is?**
- We are saved, we are loved, but our sinful nature attacks us just as fiercely as an army. Every day we have to do battle against our old nature!
- Then Peter tells us how we ARE to live in front of unbelievers. **How would you describe someone with “honorable” conduct?**
- kalos; a prim. word; *beautiful, good*:—beautiful(1), commendable manner(1), excellent(1), fair(1), fine(2),

- good(79), high(1), honest(1), honorable(1), right thing(1), sound(1), treasure*(1), what is right(2).³
- Imagine unsaved people being able to say, *“Those Christians are a little different but they sure live honest, commendable, beautiful lives!”*
 - End of verse twelve: **What is the outcome of that kind of life?**
 - The best response to critics is to have other people say, “There’s no way that could be true!” We shut up the critics when we live our lives in a way that takes away anything they can criticize. The goal is not just to shut up the criticism of unbelievers. **In last line of verse 12, what do we really want unbelievers to do?** Peter is just repeating what Jesus said:

Matthew 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

- Unbelievers in Peter’s day said terrible things about followers of Christ. They accused them of incest (because they called spouses brother/sister) and cannibalism (because of the Lord’s supper.) Unbelievers still say terrible things about followers of Christ today.
- That doesn’t take away our responsibility to try to live in such a way that we might win them to Christ.

The Life Application Study Bible says,

“Don’t write off people because they misunderstand Christianity; instead, show them Christ by your life. The day ay come when those who criticize you will praise God with you.”⁴

- Next, Peter moves to the subject of submission to authority.

¹³ Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

- Verse 13: "Be subject (or submit) for the Lord's sake to every human institution..." **Why did God give us institutions of government?**
- Verse 14: **What does Peter say the government is supposed to do?**
- God put the institutions of government in place to give civilization order and not chaos. [For more read Romans 13 (longest chapter in the NT.)]
- Verse 15 is another good summary. Living right shuts up the critics.
- Verse 16: God gives us freedom as followers of Christ. But we're not to abuse that freedom by claiming our religious beliefs give us a pass on obeying the laws of the land. **Where do we draw the line with that? When do we engage in "civil disobedience?"**

Acts 5:29 (NLT)

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. (You can also read Daniel chapter six for more on this.)

- Verse 17 is another great summary: Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king. (NLT)
- What about times when those in authority over you are unfair?

¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

- **Let's apply this to our lives in the workplace. If we wind up working for a "jerk" is it always God's will for us to run away? If not, why not?**
- Let's tie all this together. Peter told us that followers of Christ are like exiles in a foreign land. There's an old saying, "When in Rome, live like the Romans." **How do most people use that**

old saying? How does Peter's teaching in this text compare to that theory? Many Christians look for ways to "blend in" with the world. What does Peter teach?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- How you live tells those around you a lot about whom you serve, and opens the door to share the good news about the love of Christ and the hope of Heaven.
- Use your imagination for a minute. As you interact with those around you who don't profess to be followers of Christ, imagine a sign hanging around their neck that reads: "*Heaven or hell --???*"
- That sign would remind us that how we conduct our lives could push them in one direction or the other.
- Now imagine something else. Imagine those unsaved people around you watching how you and I live our lives as followers of Christ.
- Imagine that every time they see how we act or react in situations, a "thought bubble" shows up over their heads that reads: "So, THAT'S what a follower of Christ looks like!"
- Based on how I strive to live my life, would that thought be embarrassing to God or pleasing to God? In fairness, sometimes it might be either one because though we're saved, we're still human.
- Peter acknowledged that our old human nature is at WAR with our souls.
- Peter isn't demanding perfection because that would be impossible.
- Peter is urging us to do our best to live in a way that draws people to Christ instead of pushing them away from Him.
- We won't get it right 100% of the time, but we need to be sensitive to the fact that we're being watched and how we live is a reflection on Christ.
- This week, will you remember that sign around their necks and that "thought bubble" above their heads?
- God help us to live in a way that won't embarrass Him when they think: "So, THAT'S what a follower of Christ looks like!"
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¹ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Mt 3:17). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

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