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The basis of our thoughts will be 1 Peter 2:11-17. It seems the apostle Peter was fond of using metaphors in describing the Christian life. In v11 he uses “*strangers and pilgrims.*” (slide) (1 Pet 2:11-17) *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;* A pilgrim is indeed a stranger. He is a person who doesn’t belong in a certain place but rather he is a person just passing through while going somewhere else. So this is a fitting description of a Christian. This world is not our permanent home.

(slide) **We are strangers in a world of both moral and spiritual darkness.** That’s why verse 9 speaks of God who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. (slide) (1 Thessalonians 5:5-6) *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. {6} Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.* As children of light, we are not to be caught sleeping as the rest of mankind.

Since we are strangers in a foreign land and because we are lights walking in the midst of darkness, we can expect some criticism and opposition from this ole world. (slide) So Peter tells us in verses 11 & 12 that as sojourners and pilgrims we abstain from fleshly lust and behave honestly among the Gentiles because they speak evil of us. Non-Christians are looking for the opportunity to slander us, so **in order to avoid that criticism, we ought to live a life that’s honest and pure.**

This is not something new; in fact, it’s been true with the church from the very beginning. Church historians tell us that those early Christians were severely criticized by those who live around them.

1. They heard early Christians talking about partaking of the Lord’s Supper, which represents the Lord’s body and shed blood and they accused them of cannibalism.
2. They overheard Christian husbands referring to their wives as “sisters in the Lord”, so the accused them of incest.
3. Then when those faithful disciples refused to bow down to the pagan gods in worship and address Caesar as lord, they accused them of insurrection and rebellion against the government.

There has always been criticism because we are strangers, we will be considered odd and as long as we are soldiers we will be considered the enemy. As long as we are servants of God, we will be considered as a threat to some. So don’t be surprised when the world opposes us.

Now if you live like the world lives, then you will escape that kind of criticism. But as strangers, there is to be something different and distinctive about our lives. Peter here is talking about the difference that our faith makes. As we relate to those around us, there are several responsibilities that we have as strangers in a foreign land and as lights in a dark world. I want us to notice three of those responsibilities.

(slide) **FIRST, as strangers in this world, we have a responsibility to the godless of this world.** (slide) {12} ***Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation***  
Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles. That means we are to conduct our behavior in an honorable way among the unbelievers. Here the word Gentiles has reference to unbelievers. Often the term Gentile refers to non-Jews; but here it refers to unbelievers. So Peter is instructing Christians to conduct themselves among the unbelievers in an honorable way.

That's our responsibility, but how do we do that? (slide) Let me suggest that to do that we first must win the war over sin. Again (11) ***I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Did you know there is a war being fought over your soul?*** Now it's not the war we see on CNN or FOX news. It's not a war being fought in the trenches or on the beaches of the world or any other identifiable battlefield. Rather it is a war that no one is able to see; yet it is just as real and just as deadly as any war that's ever been fought. It's a war that's going on for the souls of men and women. It is a spiritual war. We are not talking about the problem "between" men but rather the problem "within" man and his passions. We are as the comic script Pogo once said, "*I have met the enemy and he is me.*"

So we are warned that fleshly lust wars against our souls. These evil desires; these fleshly lust are doing everything they can do to attack you and destroy you. So we are to abstain from such things and that word "abstain" is a strong word. **Abstain means you stay as far away as you can.** You know as Christians, there are some places that we ought not to go and there are some types of people we ought not to associate with and there are some things we ought not to get involved in because they are not healthy and threaten our spirituality. So to influence the ungodly, we are to win the war over sin.

(slide) **A second way** to influence this ole world that surrounds us is to **work for the Savior**. Notice {12} ***Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*** You let them see your "good works." **You live a consistent Christian life and others will notice.** You know the people of this world are not always friendly and sympathetic to God's people and oppose all for which we stand, the values that we hold and the message that we teach. So there are people watching you with a critical eye and are trying to determine if you are really living to the standard that you preach. If you are inconsistent in your life, they may reason that "*their sinful life is just as good as yours.*"

This is why Peter is putting such emphasis on the fact that we as God's people are to live a life that is holy and pure. As someone has well said "*the best argument and the worst argument for Christianity is the life of the Christian.*" **It is indeed true as often said, "Your life is the only Bible**

**that some people read.”** *Story is told of a lady that responded to the invitation one Sunday morning. She walked down the isle and took the preacher’s hand. Then preacher then said, “I’m so delighted that you have responded this morning but I was curious, was there anything in the sermon that made an impression on you?” She replied, “No, not at all.” He then asked what it was that convinced her to become a Christian. She said, “Well, the other day I saw a lady come up and talk to you and she was so harsh and unkind and rude. Yet, you responded in such a sweet and patient and forgiving way that it occurred to me that Christianity is real and I wanted to be a part of it.”* Never underestimate the impact of a Godly life. So Peter instructs us to do good works in order to silence the critics. (slide) That’s why he says in {15} ***For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*** That worked in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and it will work today.

Not only will honest behavior silence the critics, it will sometimes save the critical. (slide) {12} ***Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that...they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*** The day of visitation probably refers to the day when their eyes were opened to the gospel and they learned the truth. **The heart can either be opened or closed, much like a door** and so often the thing that opens or closed that heart is you example. So live a life that will be a credit to the gospel.

(slide) So we have a responsibility to the godless, we also have a (2) **responsibility to the government.** (slide) {13} ***Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;*** The word “submit” or “be subject,” in verse 13 shows responsibility. “*To every ordinance of man,*” means every position or office creation of man. Every created institution, whether it is the office of the president or the office of the mayor, or governor, or police chief, is to receive your submission. You be the model, law-abiding citizen. That’s a responsibility we have.

Notice now the reason for that responsibility; it’s for the Lord’s sake. (slide) Really, that ought to be the motive behind everything that we do and say. Story has been told about Bobby Dodds, coach of the Georgia Tech football team and /or coach Bear Bryant of the Alabama football team. I’ve heard this story regarding both coaches. But the story goes, *there was less than a minute to go in the game and his team was ahead 7-6. They had the ball inside their ten-yard line and victory seemed to be theirs. The coach called timeout and told his QB to take the snap and just fall on the ball. Under no circumstance do you throw the ball. Play resumed and the center snapped the ball and low in behold there was a receiver in the end zone wide open and the QB just couldn’t resist, so he threw the pass. From out of nowhere, the fastest player on the other team came and intercepted the ball and was headed down the sideline for what seemed to be the winning touchdown. But to all surprise, the QB caught their fastest player from behind and tackled him and saved the game. After the game, someone asked the coach how his QB could catch their fastest player from behind and he replied, “It was motivation. Their player was running for a touchdown. My player was running for his life.”* You see, your motivation determines outcome. Why

are you a good citizen? Why do you endeavor to keep the law? I'll tell you why, it's for the Lord's sake. It's the right thing to do. That should be the Christians greatest motivation in life.

(slide) As part of this responsibility to the government, Peter talks also to the respect that is due. **{13} Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.** The principle is this; we respect the office whether or not we respect the person holding that office. While you may not agree with decisions made or policy implemented, and you may not approve of the person in office but it's wrong to ignore the position being held because God approves of that office. (slide) This is what the apostle Paul taught us in **(Romans 13:1) Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.** Now I'm not saying not to voice your disapproval. There are proper ways to express your disapproval to certain polices. You do so respectfully and with dignity because of who you are. We have a responsibility to the government.

(slide) Finally, Peter tells us that we have a **(3) responsibility to God** himself. (slide) Look at **{16} As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. {17} Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.** He says you be servants to God. Now that word for servant literally means "household slave." **Being a slave or servant to God is really our purpose in life.** How do we do that? Well, one way is through our "freedom." One of the great truths of a Christian life is that we are "free." Now that doesn't mean that you are free to live any way that you want to live. It means you are free from the bondage of sin.

Back in chapter 1 Peter said, "**Be ye holy**" and that means you live right, as you know you ought to live. (slide) Listen to **(Romans 6:17-18) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. {18} Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.** When you become a Christian, you exchange one master for another. You leave the service of Satan and you begin the service of God. Instead of serving sin, you are now serving righteousness, which imposed righteous restrictions. Now to some, their idea of freedom is no restrictions or limitations at all. They want absolute freedom to do what they want to do when they want to do it. **There is no such thing as absolute freedom.** All freedom has its limitations. While as a citizen of this country, I am free to carry a gun, I am not free to take someone else's life with that gun. There are limitations. Now, the greatest freedom of all is the freedom that submits to the authority of God. Remember what Jesus said over there in **(John 8:32) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.** And if Jesus makes you free, you will be free indeed but understand that real freedom comes with restrictions.

(slide) So Peter says in verse 16 that you are free, but don't use your freedom as a cloak to sin; as a cover-up for disobedience. You serve God and in the service to God you will find true freedom. Sin

gives people an illusion of freedom while all the while, they are in chains of bondage to Satan. It's kinda like a man in a hospital and he is delirious, so the hospital staff chains him to his bed. Since he is delirious, he thinks he is out in the open spaces and free to roam while the reality is that he is still chained to his bed. That's the way sin is. So we serve God by our freedom.

We also serve him by our faithfulness. *{17} Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Peter is telling us that we serve God by serving others.* You can't be rightly related to your Heavenly father and not be rightly related to those around you. So he says you honor all men. Now that must have had special meaning to those in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. You see, the Roman Empire was filled with slaves. I've been told that they had as many as 60M slaves. Probably there were some places where there were actually more slaves than were free men. A slave was considered as nothing more than a piece of property. *Aristotle said on one occasion that the only difference between a slave and an animal was that a slave could talk.* They had no rights yet Peter says you honor all men. This is a reminder that every person is important to God.

You love the brotherhood. **Brotherhood was Peter's term to reference Christians and the church.** We are all part of a great spiritual family and we are to treat one another with kindness and respect and as we do we faithfully serve God.

So as Christians, we have some responsibilities. We have responsibilities toward the godless that are around us and the governments that over us, and the God that is above us. (slide) Now you are either a stranger in the night or you are a stranger to the light – you choose. You are either a friend of the world or you are a friend of God. If you are not a Christian, let me encourage you to become one.

Invitation.