

LIVING IN A FOREIGN LAND

1 Peter 2:11-12

Our life in Guatemala

God's people changed citizenship.

We are citizens of heaven! Eph. 2:11-13, 19 *"Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth . . . 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world, 13 but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ... 19 You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."*

Our new citizenship results in us becoming foreign residents in the world.

Phil. 3:18-20 *"Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven..."*

We're temporary residents of this world.

Our permanent home and citizenship is in heaven.

Therefore, we ought not to act like the citizens of this world act.

We're different from them (2:11).

Christians, traveling in Middle East, heard about a wise, godly, old believer, and decided to visit him. They found him living in a simple hut. All he had inside was a cot, a chair, a table, and a battered stove for heating and cooking. The visitors, shocked to see how few possessions the man had, asked, **"Where is your furniture?"** The aged saint replied by asking, "Where is yours?" The visitor, sputtering a little, responded, "Why, at home, of course. I don't carry it with me, I'm traveling." "So am I," the godly Christian replied. "So am I."

LIVING LIKE FOREIGNERS IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Foreigners display 2 main qualities:

- 1) Foreigners are watched by local people because they're different than local people.
- 2) Foreigners don't [shouldn't!] get involved in local matters because local matters aren't their affair.

Foreigners living temporarily in another country shouldn't get involved in the internal affairs of that country.

Even so, we're temporary residents of this world.

Our permanent home and citizenship is in heaven.

Some things that are appropriate for "locals" aren't appropriate for foreign residents:

God's people shouldn't act like the citizens of the world.

God's people are different than citizens of the world.

Godly people living in a godless society, should live an exemplary lifestyle, no matter how we're treated, so that unbelievers will be attracted to God (2:11-4:11).

2:11-12 – PROLOGUE – summarizes point Peter makes in rest of book: **Christians living in godless society ought to avoid fleshly desires and maintain an exemplary lifestyle, so unbelievers will be drawn to God.**

One way we manifest a godly lifestyle, in a pagan world, is by *voluntarily submitting to the authority God has established*.

This theme is repeated throughout the rest of 1 Peter.

We prove we love God and submit to His authority by submitting to authority He has established, whether or not they act as they should.

Toussaint: Being a holy and godly person is a prerequisite for submission.

Only godly people submit to authority God established;
all truly godly people submit to authority.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Importance of good deeds 2:11-12

NEGATIVE AND PRIVATE SIDE:

ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS

Avoid the natural desires that seek to destroy us.

2:11 *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."*

What are these "sinful desires" [= "fleshly desires"]?

Much broader than just sexual sins.

Flesh => human nature apart from God.

As "foreign residents" there are certain activities locals participate in that we ought to avoid: things humans without God normally desire.

Attitudes we learned from our old self-centered nature.

The old way of doing things.

Not especially pretty—**Gal. 5:19-21** *"The acts of the flesh [acts which our natural desires produce] are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."*

What we do *naturally*! => **"Doing what comes naturally."**

Many things are appropriate for citizens of this world,
but not for citizens of heaven.

Things that seem right, which appeal to our human nature,
apart from God, are to be avoided.

What do "fleshly desires" do to us?

Fleshly desires wage war against our soul

We have a tendency to think that such actions are relatively harmless; they may even appear attractive.

After all, it's merely "doing what comes naturally."

What harm can there be in that?

On the contrary, these desires are enemies—they want to destroy us!

They continually wage war against our souls.

Christopher Love: This conflict is as Caesar said in battle with people of Pompey; in other battles he fought for glory; in that battle he fought for his life.

What are we to do about "fleshly desires?"

"KEEP YOUR DISTANCE!!!"

We fail to put distance between ourselves and such activities because we don't know that we can.

We haven't learned how to **"Just say No!"** Tit. 2:11-13

"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

¹² *It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions [the desires which characterize the world] and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."*

We're told to continually keep away from such things; that indicates that such desires are controllable. They can be restrained.

Chauffeur applying for a job. "How close can you get to the cliff while keeping the chariot under control?" The person who received the job was the driver who responded that he preferred to see how far away from the cliff he could stay.

Peter says "Keep your distance!"

These desires aren't to be played with!

They'll destroy you!

Avoid the natural desires that seek to destroy us.

POSITIVE AND PUBLIC SIDE:

MAINTAIN A GODLY LIFESTYLE

Live a godly lifestyle

2:12 *“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”*

Besides negative aspect of separation from lifestyle of the world, there's also a positive motivation.

We ought to do what's right so that even those who oppose us will see our godly lifestyle and glorify Him.

We're to maintain an attractive lifestyle that will keep people from believing negative criticism against us and attract people to our Lord.

Godly people live an attractive lifestyle.

Doing what's right modifies the main exhortation: *“I exhort you to abstain ..., [by, while] maintaining your conduct excellent before the pagans.”*

We're to live a different kind of lifestyle.

Word means not only “good” but also “lovely” – fine attractive, winsome.

Godless people criticize godly people.

– they talk about us as evil doers. Accusation –

Briscoe – Christians were accused of “atheism.” “Can you imagine Christians being accused of atheism by pagans? Pagans worshiped a multiplicity of gods; Christians refused to join them. Anybody who refused to worship their gods, including the gods of national security and national prosperity, in pagan thinking, must be an atheist.”

Deanna's experience – “I won't share my pencil with a pagan!”

Barclay – When Plato was told that a certain man had been making slanderous charges against him, he responded,

“I'll live in such a way that no one will believe what he says.”

We can't worry about the accusations.

We have to let them take care of themselves,
we just have to be sure we don't give them an excuse.

We live godly lives and let the accusations take care of themselves.

Godless people observe our good works.

"In *the thing* in which they slander you" – seems to indicate that God ultimately uses the things they're criticizing us for to win them over.

"They give too much; they spend all their time sitting around praying"

"They surrender their rights for the good of others."

Cannibals – they eat flesh and drink blood, etc.

Rick Graham drove streets of San Francisco for over an hour to find a lady who left her purse with \$1792 in cash on back seat of his cab. He knew his action would spare the woman distress. Other drivers ridiculed him for not pocketing the money. "I'm a card-carrying member of the Christian faith!" he responded. "What good is it to go to church if you don't practice what you preach?"

Excellent behavior in front of pagans: not just limited to God's family.

The very things they are criticizing end up being the basis for their praise.

"As they watch attentively..."

[Common word for eyewitnesses 2 Pet. 1:16; Matt. 5:16]

What they see will motivate them to give God credit for what they see in us.

They're watching us!

Godless people glorify God

Car dealer went out of his way to give a foreign student an honest deal on a new car. Fifteen years later, young man became purchasing agent for a large contractors association. He showed his gratitude for kindness received by placing a multimillion-dollar order with that dealer for 750 dump trucks and 350 pickups. "It's unbelievable!" exclaimed the businessman.

The good he'd done was rewarded years later beyond his wildest imagination.

The reward isn't always immediate. Just as salesman's reward came later, so too God is often glorified years later by someone who remembers our distinctive lifestyle and comes back to find the God who caused that change.

When will God receive this glory?

In the day of visitation

When He visits the people on earth

O.T. view of visitation

Day God visits in judgment Job 7:18; Isa. 10:3; 29:6

Every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

They will then glorify God.

Day God visits in mercy Gen. 50:24-25; Exod. 13:19; Lk. 1:68, 78

Zechariah praises God for "visiting" and redeeming His people at the birth of his promised son.

N.T. view of visitation—

God visits lost sinners and saves them by His grace.

Lk. 19:44 Refers to day when God judges Israel, because they did not recognize the time when God came to them—in Christ

At that future time, when God again visits the earth, those who have been watching us will glorify God because of our faithful testimony, even when they were attempting to mistreat and discredit us.

Hodges—"The pure life of a believer, though scoffed at by an unbeliever, is used by the Lord in bringing conviction and salvation to the scoffing unbeliever."

HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE? Well, ...

***Avoid the natural desires that seek to destroy us!
Live a godly lifestyle!***

What difference should this exhortation make in our life this week?

Wiersbe: "Summer of 1805, a group Indian chiefs and warriors met to hear presentation of gospel by Mr. Cram from Boston Missionary Society. After the sermon, Red Jacket, a lead chief responded: "Brother, we're told you've been preaching to the White people here. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If it makes them good, makes them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will consider again what you have said."