

“REASONS FOR RIGHTEOUS LIVING”

HOLINESS

1 Peter 2:11-12

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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: You know, I want to thank all of you for your many kindnesses to me in that wonderful book. I expressed my gratitude last week. Some of you may not have been here, but I was deeply touched by that. That’s a life changing thing for me, and I’ll always be grateful. Thank you for your creativity and your ministry to me. It’s a wonderful gift, and I’ll treasure that as much as anything I’ve ever been given. So I thank you very much. Thank you. Don, do you want to take us into the presence of the Lord, with gratitude and thanksgiving? (*Music.*)

Indeed, heavenly Father, You have done great things. You are the Author, the Sustainer, the Giver of life. We thank You for life itself. We thank you for the year 2014, that You were pleased in Your providence to permit us to live another year for Your glory. We just dedicate these days ahead, the year 2015, with the same motivation, that You would be pleased with our attitude of gratitude, to say “Thank you,” in Jesus’ name. Open our eyes today, Lord, that we might behold You more clearly, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: We want to continue back into our study in the book of 1 Peter. We took a little hiatus during the Christmas season, to understand the real significance of Christmas, which I described for you and is found in Isaiah chapter 40: “And the glory of the LORD will be revealed.”

Yesterday, in our Thursday study downtown, we talked about Isaiah chapter 40. “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed.” Christmas is not a calendar event for the believer. Christmas is an every day event, because you and I have the opportunity to see the glory of the Lord revealed. The whole Christmas story, as recorded in the Gospels, is really a synthesis of God being the sovereign Ruler of history, by His glory being put on display. So let’s celebrate Christmas every day, and just realize that we have the opportunity to witness the glory of the Lord revealed. May He be pleased to do that today.

Let’s go to 1 Peter chapter 2. The verses I want to look at today will be 11 and 12, but I want to back up and keep it in the right context. We’ll begin in 1 Peter chapter 2, beginning at verse 9, and we will go down to verse 12. Let’s listen to the word of the Lord.

“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. 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. Beloved, I urge you, as sojourners and exiles, to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage

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war against your soul. 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.”

Once again, Lord, will you be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: We’ve been studying the book of 1 Peter because it has to do with the theme of holiness. And holiness is the study of the practical implications of what it means to live the life as God’s people. We’ve been studying the last couple of weeks about what it means to be the priesthood of believers, how God chose us from eternity past to create a body for Himself, and He refers to us as the priesthood of believers.

Now, as a result of that, holiness is really the study of the practical implications of what it means to live as one of God’s chosen people, as His holy priesthood.

There is a major shift in our theme now, in our study, as we look at 1 Peter, because he begins to emphasize our relationship with people in the world.

Now one of the great things about Scripture is that He gives you some instructions, but He also gives you a reason for why our conduct is such. Now you look at verses 9-10, and you’ll see that he is making a declarative statement, saying that you are “a royal priesthood.” Now there is your reason for the conduct that you’re now going to discover, as you look at verses 11 and 12.

So there are a couple ways we can look at this. Let me do some review of the book of 1 Peter for us, just to keep this in the right context.

The major theme from chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 11, where we’re picking it up, really is salvation and man’s responsibilities. Then there is a major theme from chapter 2, verse 11, to chapter 3, verse 12, and that is submission and God’s honor. Salvation produces submission, and submission can only be understood in terms of your and my salvation. That’s why this is such a good outline of the book of 1 Peter.

Another way of looking at the flow of this text would be this. In chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 10, you have salvation, the living hope. So what goes with our salvation is a living hope. And then, in chapter 2, verse 11, to chapter 3, verse 12, it would be submission, the pilgrim’s life.

There are several ways of looking at this salvation. What goes with it? We’ve seen this in chapter 1, verses 1-12. It’s a life of hope. In chapter 1, verses 15-16, it’s a life of holiness. In chapter 1, verse 17 to verse 21, it’s a life of hallowedness, or reverence for God. In chapter 1, verses 22-25, it’s a life of harmony in our relationships in the body of Christ.

In chapter 2, verses 1-3, it’s the life of harvest, where we produce glory for God in our witness and in our testimony. And then, lastly, it’s a life of housing the priesthood in chapter 2, verses 4-10.

So when you take a look at the summary of what we’ve learned so far, in our previous study of the book of 1 Peter, we have seen that our salvation produces a life of hope, a life of holiness, a life of hallowedness, a life of harmony, a life of harvest, and a life of our housing the priesthood.

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Now Peter begins to instruct us on how it is that those things that we have just learned—salvation and the hope that goes with it—how is it that we are to relate to the outside world? Now notice that Peter has described what holiness is before we get into the discussion of how we relate to the outside world.

We need to have doctrine that precedes practice. Doctrine precedes practice. The truth of the Scripture always comes before the application of the Scripture. Now we get into some application of the understanding of what it means to live a holy life. And so Peter is going to teach us some specific instructions concerning submission and God’s honor.

And he gives us a preamble of this, two significant reasons why we should live righteous relationships among the system of this world. In other words, the title of this particular passage, as I gave it in our outline, is “Reasons For Righteous Living.” And Peter gives us two reasons in the verses I just read, in verses 11 and 12.

Let me read them again. “Beloved, I urge you, as sojourners and exiles.” There is your first reason, that is, because of our heavenly citizenship. The reason that you and I act differently with the outsiders in the kingdom of God is because of our heavenly citizenship. If we don’t understand where our citizenship is, and what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom, we’re never going to have a conduct that is going to be reflected of a kingdom citizen.

So the very first reason Peter gives us is “I urge you, as sojourners and exiles, to abstain from the passions of the flesh which rage against your soul.” The next reason is our heavenly conduct. Our heavenly citizenship, and then our heavenly conduct. Notice verse 12. “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.”

Now there he gives us two reasons, men, for us to have conduct, and reasons for righteous living. Righteousness, if you recall, Biblically, is right wiseness. It means making the right decisions.

Peter has given us every reason for us to understand two things. When you understand the degree of your citizenship in heaven, and understand your heavenly conduct, that is going to give you reasons for your righteous living with the people of this world.

When people ask me about discipleship, Jesus gives the definition of discipleship when He says that, if you want to come after me, you must “deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.” He’s describing three personal character qualities—self denial, self sacrifice, and self submission. Self denial (deny yourself; take up your cross), self sacrifice, and follow Me, self submission.

Peter now goes into this whole wonderful, glorious theme of submission, as it relates to our submitting to our understanding of what it means to live a holy life. And he gives us two reasons to shape the conduct that we have with the outsiders of this world, in the world system, and those are found in verses 11 and 12—our citizenship, and our conduct, our heavenly citizenship, and our heavenly conduct.

Let’s take a look ,first of all, at our heavenly citizenship. Now it may take us a couple of weeks to go through this, because this is such critical information for us, because it

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determines the reason for our righteous living. How is it that you and I make wise, right decisions in the system of this world?

First of all, you have to understand what it means to have your citizenship in heaven. The first reason for righteous living, for those of us who are really in Christ, is because we are aliens and strangers in this world. Notice verse 11. “I urge you, as sojourners and exiles.” Other translations would be “aliens and strangers.” The word literally means “outsiders.” An outsider is someone who is a resident in a country which is not his own. His citizenship is elsewhere.

Now that’s how he is describing us. He is saying that, because you are members of the priesthood, you are someone who is a resident in a country which is not your citizenship, because your citizenship is elsewhere. It also means “one who dwells beside the native citizens, but who does so under restricted rights, which are less than those granted to the citizens of the country which you are in.” In other words, you and I have a whole different standard of citizenship, and the rights that we have are different from the rights of the people with whom we associate, the system of this world. That’s what he means when he says that you’re an alien or a stranger, a sojourner or an exile. You and I have a citizenship that is not of the system of this world. And we have to understand what that means to us very practically.

Peter tells us that we live with them, but that our rights are different from the citizens of this world. You and I have different rights. Remember, we don’t have the rights of the citizens of this world. We have responsibilities as heavenly citizens of the Kingdom. We gave up our rights when we trusted Christ, and now we have responsibilities to live as heavenly citizens in a foreign world. We are sojourners, exiles and strangers.

Take a look at Hebrews chapter 11, verse 9. If you take a look at that, the verb form of that passage says that you need to live as an outsider. Abraham lived as an outsider. You and I live s outsiders. It is used to describe the children of Israel, as they were slaves and strangers in Egypt, before they entered the Promised Land.

Now notice what he says, as he instructs us because we are outsiders. He basically says, “Don’t live like an insider.” You’ve got to realize, men, that you and I are outsiders, and we are called not to live as insiders. Our true destiny is not linked to this world, but to the redeemed earth in which the righteous will dwell when God returns in all of His glory.

He is basically saying this. Because of your holy citizenship in heaven, you live as an outsider. Don’t live as an insider. And so we need to understand the contrast between what it means to be an outsider and what it means to be an insider.

We are not to derive our values from the system of this world, but rather from what is in the eternal Kingdom. So Peter warns us not to play around with the values of this world system, and notice what he says. “I urge you, as sojourners and exiles, to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which war against your soul.”

Abstain from sinful desires. What does he mean by that? Well, that’s more than just sexual sins. Go to Galatians chapter five. Let’s take a look at what he means. Abstain from sinful desires. In the fifth chapter of Galatians, Paul writes this. I’m speaking specifically of verses 19-21 of chapter 5 of Galatians.

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“Now the works of the flesh are evident.” Now here is how the insiders live. “Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealous fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warned you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now he is basically describing for us that this is how the insiders live. Take this list, this litany of activities, and you’re going to see a description of the world system. He says that, as a person who has his citizenship in heaven, don’t live like that, because those are the things that war against our souls. You and I have different responsibilities from the rights of the citizenship of this kingdom.

Now the contrast would be that this is how an outsider lives. We just saw the insiders. Now read the next couple of verses.

Notice verse 22. “But.” The word *but* means that there is a contrast, the contrast between the verses right before and what he is now going to write. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Now take a look at the contrast. In verses 19-21, you see the insiders and how they live. In verses 22 and 23, you begin to see how the outsiders live in the insider world. Verses 19-21, the first list, is a list of how the insiders live. We are outsiders because we’re aliens. There is a wonderful contrast, and the little word *but* shows you the contrast between the insider system of the world and the outsiders. You and I are outsiders. We are to live according to this: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh, with its passions and with its desires.”

The reason you choose to do that, men, is because you understand your heavenly citizenship. Your citizenship is in heaven.

In what respect are we outsiders? Well, let me just give you a couple of classic examples.

The language of the believer is strange to the world. The way that you and I talk is very strange to the world. The heart cannot be pure when the tongue is not clean. “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” Do you know that one of the greatest indications of whether somebody would determine if you’re an insider or an outsider is what comes out of your mouth, as they listen to how you talk? You see, you and I ought to, because we’re outsiders in an inside world, our language ought to be radically different. That means we don’t talk like the system of the world. We don’t use their vocabulary. We don’t use the expressions that they do, because we are outsiders in an insider world, and one of the quickest ways in which an insider is going to discern that you’re an outsider is by what they hear coming out of your tongue. Your heart cannot be pure if your tongue is not clean, because “out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” That is probably one of the greatest barometers of your spiritual maturity. What do you say? Listen to yourself talk. Do you join in with the crowd, and say the things they say?

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Several years ago, I was with a very close pastor friend of mine, and we were coming back from a pastoral conference with John MacArthur at the Shepherds Conference in Los Angeles. We both happened to have our name tags on. We just forgot to take them off.

So we're at O'Hare Airport, and there's this massive hassle, because the plains were late because of bad weather—storms and lightning and rain, and so forth, and all the plains were late. People were just having fits. They were going crazy.

My pastor friend and I, my brother who I was traveling with, we got in line, and we just decided that we were going to have a different conversation with the ticket agent, because we did not want to reflect the insider conversational style. So we were loving, kind, generous, understanding. We didn't resist them. We asked our questions. We were very gracious in our response. We said, “We understand. Thank you for your assistance. We realize the pressure you are under.”

We didn't realize it, but both of us had our name tags on, and it had pastor Bruce Bickel, and my other friend had his name. And the lady looked up at our name tags, and she said, “Oh! Now I know why you guys are talking differently, because I see you're pastors.” Then I realized, “Oh my! I've got my name tag on!” (*Laughter.*)

But that's a good illustration. I don't mean to call attention to myself, but the point is this. “Out of the overflow of the mouth, the heart speaks.” Are they going to realize that you're an insider, or an outsider? Peter says, (*paraphrase*), “Don't do that!” And the reason that you don't do that is because you recognize your heavenly citizenship. You represent the kingdom of God. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes, Bruce. It's interesting that you talk about the way that we talk versus the way that the world talks.

Bruce: Uh-huh.

Don: A lot of times, even family members, some of who I am not sure of their salvation, when I call a fellow believer “brother,” they don't understand why I do that, and I explain to them that we're brothers in Christ, and they have a hard time with that. It's interesting that you bring that up.”

Bruce: Absolutely. I was with a friend the other day, and I introduced this young lady who was with me, who happened to be an African-American, and I said, “I would like you to meet my sister.” They looked at me and thought, “What?” (*Laughter.*) “What did your parents do?” So you're absolutely right, Don. They don't understand our language.

Now we've got to be careful, careful not to use what I call “Christianese,” just for the sake of making yourself feel good. “Oh, I'm spiritual just because I'm using the right words!” So you don't go and talk about the hypostatic union, and other things like that, and just immediately ride off. Just be careful. What I'm saying is, choose phrases reflective of who you are as a citizen—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and so forth. You can come up with expressions like that. Be careful not to use Christianese.

I review a lot of grants at my work at PNC, about fifteen hundred a year. A lot of them are from Christian organizations. Now I'm really amazed at how, in their grant applications, they are writing to somebody who may not know or understand their

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language, but they use all of this theological stuff. Someone is going to take a look at that and say, “What in the world are they talking about?” so, if you’d like to be involved in a ministry of redemption to teenagers at risk, what do you mean by redemption? So you’ve got to be careful not to use Christianese. That’s what I’m saying. Ted?

Ted: I was thinking also about, not only in terms of the language, but, at a more profound level, those people who were lining up at the ticket counter. They were looking to be ministered to, and people had a different idea of how to minister to them. They were looking to the agent to be the minister to them, and you were looking to find ways to minister to the agent.

Bruce: Thank you. Remember this. All of life is preparation for ministry. Ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you. You and I have a lot to give away to people. We’ve got love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, long-suffering, self-control, gentleness, against which there is no law. We’ve got a lot of stuff to give away. Look for opportunities to live as an outsider in an insider world. That’s what Peter is saying.

And you do that because you understand this. My citizenship is in heaven. It’s not in this world. And so, therefore, I’m going to act differently and I’m going to speak differently.

One of my Puritan friends says this about our tongue and our speech. “What is in the well of your heart will show up in the bucket of your speech.” Thomas Watson said that words are the looking glass of the mind. Jesus says it this way. “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

So the manners of the believer are strange to this world. Our language is strange to this world. We talk differently, because we are outsiders in an insider world.

Look at 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 4. Now one of the things that is going to happen is that people are going to look at you, and not understand why you don’t join in with them. Look at 1 Peter 4:4. “With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you.”

Now what’s going to happen, friends, is that the manner of believers is strange to this world, and the greatest difference is that believers “live by faith, and not by sight.” Do you feel uncomfortable being an outsider in an insider world? You see, we’ve got to learn to feel comfortable in that. And that may take some time, just because of our maturity in Christ. Instead of pursuing the values of the temporary world, we have to live a life of having a heavenly conduct. So the reason for our heavenly conduct is understanding our heavenly citizenship.

So, in verse 12, we come to the next admonition that Peter gives us. “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.” He’s basically saying this. As an outsider, keep your conduct with insiders honorable. Who are you trying to honor?

Participant: God.

Bruce: God. Not the people, but you’re trying to honor God. That’s what I mean. You are to be honoring God in your conduct with the insider world.

There is another reason why we should not derive our values from the system of this world, and that is because we should abstain from sinful desires. Now first of all, here

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are the reasons why we do this. The outside world takes careful notice of our good works, and they are less likely to slander the church. There is a possibility, as they see your good works, that they are less likely to slander the church. And secondly, in the future, they will glorify God, should God be pleased to grant them repentance unto eternal life. There may be some reason that they would glorify God, if God is pleased to grant them salvation, because they said, “We experienced the conduct of an outsider in an insider world.”

Now I want to give you some history. I want you to bear with me, because I want to read you a couple of passages from some historical books that I’ve done in my study. I want you to understand the context of why Peter is talking about this. I’m going to describe for you the culture in which Peter was writing this passage, in this book.

Now you’ve got to understand the absolute difference that he is describing, encouraging the people of the kingdom of God to live a life in the midst of this culture that I’m going to describe for you, in the Roman culture. So let’s listen to some of the description. And understand, that’s why it’s so important in your hermeneutic to study the Scripture, and to understand what is going on culturally. Peter is saying something that is so radically different to the church of Christ that it has a wonderful impact. Just listen to some of this.

In a book called *Roman Life and Manners Under the Earthly Empire*, here are some things that historians say. According to one historian, “They,” (the Jews), “taught the proselytes, above all, to despise the gods, to renounce their fatherhood, to disregard parents, children, brothers and sisters.” According to another historian, “Moses taught the Jews not to show anyone the way, nor to guide the thirsty traveler to the spring, except if he was a Jew.”

Now that is what the culture said about the early church. Another one describes it this way. “In the reign of Antiochus, the Jews every year fattened a Greek, then having solemnly offered him up as a sacrifice on a fixed day in a certain forest, ate his entrails, and swore eternal hostility to the Greek culture.”

Now that’s what people were saying about the church. And what does Peter say? Don’t live like the insiders, because you’re an outsider.

Let’s continue on. “These were the things which the heathen had persuaded themselves were true about the Jews, and, later on, the early church. Apart from these slanders, which were attached to the Jews, there were slanders directed particularly against the Christians themselves and the early church in the Roman Empire.”

Here are some of them. Here are some of the slanderous things said about followers of Christ, about the outsiders.

“The Christians were accused of cannibalism. This accusation took its rise from a perversion of the words of the Last Supper, “This is My body. The cup is the new covenant in My blood.”,” “So the Christians were accused of killing and eating a child at their feasts.

“The Christians were accused of immorality, and even of incest. This accusation took its rise from the fact that the Christians called the meeting the *agape* feast, or the love

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feast, and the heathen perverted that name to make it mean that the Christian feasts were sexual orgies at which nameless and shameless deeds were done.”

So that’s what the culture was saying. Now what does Peter say? Don’t act like that! You’re an outsider in this insider world culture. It is so radical what Peter is writing to the culture of his day. It’s equally radical for us to understand that we are outsiders living in an insider world.

“The Christians were accused of damaging trade. Such was the charge of the silversmiths of Ephesus in Acts chapter 18. They were accused of tampering with family relationships, because often their homes were, in fact, broken up, when some members of the family became Christians, and others were not. They were accused of turning slaves against their masters, as Christianity indeed gave to every man a new sense of worth and dignity. They were accused of being haters of mankind. Indeed, the Christians did speak of it, as the world and the church were extremely opposed to each other.

“Above all, they were accused of disloyalty to Caesar, for no Christian would worship the emperor’s godhead, and burn his pinch of incense, and declare that Caesar was lord, for to him Jesus Christ, and no other, was Lord.”

That’s the culture in which Peter is writing this letter, and he says this. “I urge you, as sojourners, to abstain from evil passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” Keep your conduct honorable among the culture I just read about. Now how in the world are you going to do that? You’re not going to do that unless you think right. You’ve got to think right before you act right. If you act right, then you’re going to feel right. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes, Bruce. Today, you know, what are we sometimes called? Bigots, right, because we think there’s only one way to God, or that marriage is between a man and a woman, or whatever. So, maybe not to the degree in Rome, but certainly, sometimes in our culture, we’re called bad names too.”

Bruce: Absolutely. My point in all of this is to help you understand the context in which Peter is writing, because you and I can take that same understanding, apply that in our culture, as Don has just helped us do, and realize that we have been given the same instructions in this world system that Peter gave to the system of the early church in the system of Rome. You’re a sojourner. You’re an exile. Your citizenship is in heaven. Make your conduct honorable to God among the Gentiles.

Now let me read on. For Peter, there is only one defense, to live in the culture as an outsider, and that is that your life would prove the accusations obviously false. In other words, you defend with your life. You don’t defend with your mouth. You defend with your life. Your defense is your life, not your mouth. How often do we defend ourselves with our mouths?

Exodus 14:14 is one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture for me. “I will fight for you while you remain silent.” Sometimes your best defense is to keep your mouth shut, and just live a life that is going to obviously refute their accusations, because they see your conduct as an outsider in an insider world.

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Peter says, in verse 12, “Keep your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds, and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Now the word *good* is an interesting word in the Greek text. It means “honest,” but it also means “lovely, fine, attractive.” It means “admirable in the eyes of those who have no moral sense.” So, in other words, he is saying, “Let your conduct be good.”

Now who defines good? Scripture defines good. God defines good. The system of this world does not define goodness for us. As outsiders, we have our conduct to honor God, as a best defense of the accusations against us.

Our defense is our life, not our mouth. I would say this, brothers. If you and I have to defend our actions with our mouths, we’re in trouble. Now, later on, Peter is going to say this, in the context of submission and suffering. “Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you.” And we’ll get to that in a moment, in a couple of weeks. There is a point when you get to the realization that I do have a hope within me. In the midst of this suffering, I’m submitting to the Lordship of Christ, and I have hope that nobody else has, and I have an answer for that. I’ll let my life demonstrate itself, so that you’ll ask me how I manage that. Then I’ll give you an answer. You lead with your conduct, not with your mouth. You lead with your life, not with your words.

If you are accused, and they are right, then you and I need to listen to them, and not defend verbally. If we are accused, and they are wrong, you don’t need to defend yourself. Let your conduct do that. Do you understand the difference? If they accuse us, and they are right, we need to listen. If they accuse us, and they are wrong, we don’t need to defend it verbally. Just let our lives do that. “I will fight for you while you remain silent.”

Notice what Jesus says in Matthew 5, verse 16. “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.” That’s what Peter has in mind.

Let me make some applications of this for us. Then I want to give you the rest of the story in that book that I read for you about the accusations against the Christians in the early Roman Empire.

Let’s make some applications of the doctrines we’ve just learned, about this heavenly conduct and heavenly citizenship. First of all, this. Because we are strangers in this world, we cannot accept the world’s laws, the world’s lifestyle, and the world’s standards. We are citizens of the kingdom of God. It is by the laws of that kingdom that we are to guide and direct our lives. That’s why this is a reason for holy living.

Now that does not mean that we’re rebellious. I’m not saying that. All I’m saying is that you and I have a different standard by which we live as outsiders in an insider world. You and I do not derive our values of goodness, and the definition of goodness and decency from the system of this world. We take it from the Scripture, because we are citizens of the Kingdom.

We must take full responsibility for living our lives upon earth. That is our responsibility. But we must also take full responsibility to be obedient to the laws of

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heaven while we are on this earth. That’s the duality in which we live. And that’s why salvation helps us understand what it means to be submissive.

I think a second application would be this. The more sincerely that you and I are living, as outsiders, the more the world will criticize you. But the more the world criticizes you, the more we should live to give them no reason to criticize us. In other words, when you live like an outsider, the world is going to criticize you. The more they do that, the more reason we ought to live a life of holiness, so they will quit criticizing us.

I’m always told by people of this world when I talk to them, or when they’ve heard me speak, or something like that, they say, “You’re intolerant. You don’t tolerate things.”

I say, “I’m open minded, but not at both ends.” (*Laughter.*) But one of the accusations that they are going to give against us, other than being “holier than thou,” and so forth, is that “you’re intolerant. You don’t tolerate things.” Well, we’re called not to tolerate things because of the citizenship in the Kingdom in which we live. We do that with gentleness and kindness. Let our conduct reflect that.

Let me give you something else, to understand the rest of the story, because, remember, Peter was writing to a roman culture, who slandered and criticized the Christian faith, and made all kinds of false accusations and lies against them. He’s saying, (*paraphrase*) “Don’t defend that verbally. Defend it with your life.” Now let me read, from the same book, what happened several generations later.

“The amazing fact of history is that, by their lives, the Christians actually did defeat the slanders of the heathen. In the early part of the third century, Celsus made the most famous and the most systematic attack of all upon the Christians, in which he accused them of ignorance and foolishness and superstitions of all kinds, but never of immorality.” He never accused them of immorality.

“In the first half of the fourth century, the great Christian historian Eusebius could write that “the splendor of the worldwide and only true church, which is always the same, grew in magnitude and power, and reflected its piety and simplicity and freedom, and the modesty and purity of its inspired lifestyle and philosophy to every nation, both Greeks and barbarians. At the same time, the slanderous accusations, which had been brought against the whole church, also vanished, and they remain our teaching alone, which has prevailed over all, and which is allowed to be superior in all of its dignity and temperance, and in divine and philosophical doctrines, so that, later on, none of them ventures to affix an accusation upon our faith, or any such slander, as our ancient enemies formerly delighted in doing.” that’s a quote from the *Ecclesiastical History*.

In other words, what Peter wrote, people took to heart. We realize that our heavenly conduct is an expression of our heavenly citizenship. And that was what they used to defeat the slanders against the early church in the roman and Greek empires

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: Isn’t it sad that the Barna studies indicate that isn’t the case anymore?

Bruce: Yes. Speak to that, Bill. That’s a good point.

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Bill: Barna has a history of doing various surveys, and one of his surveys takes a look with regard to what does the church do today, and when it comes to conduct, it says that we’re no different from anybody around us.

Bruce: well, that’s true. Barna is an agency that does all sorts of surveys within the Christian church worldwide, and one of the things that he has discovered is, several years ago, he did a survey, and he said that sixty per cent of all American teenagers say they have a personal relationship to Christ. Sixty per cent of all teenagers. And then he contrasted it with the conduct, and said that something is amiss. They really are not, or they don’t understand, because their conduct should reflect their belief system. If you don’t think right, you’re not going to act right, and you won’t feel right. Yes, please?

Participant: What if you had the ability to help another group of Christians who were being suppressed—

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Participant: And it leads to the conduct of what you should be believing?

Bruce: And what do you do?

Participant: What I’m saying is, how do you deal with someone who is expressing tyrannical types of values?

Bruce: Oh, I see.

Participant: And you have the ability to stop that, and you know that that’s not right. And you know they’re not going to talk to you, and you risk the chance of them persecuting you.

Bruce: That’s correct.

Participant: I’m confused in this stage of my life.

Bruce: well, I would be, too, if I were in that situation. All I can say is that you do the best you can, and trust Christ with the rest. That’s all I can say. That’s all you can do. Do the very best you can, and trust Christ with the rest. If you’re in a position to stop something, then stop it. The consequences may be out of your control. But all I can say is, do the very best you can. Live the life that Peter is calling us to live, and then trust Christ with the rest. Yes, Jay?

Jay: I have a little bit of a struggle, and I just want to say this in regard to our heavenly conduct, and just thinking that we are to preach the Word. And, being led by the Spirit, we have to share the word of God. So I just want to ask, in regard to, you know, if we say, “Just let your conduct show,” and we don’t have any words, it’s just really that, a lot of times, the majority of the time, it’s because the word of God is not being preached in our world, even in the workplace. So, in that, it seems like it’s just really easy to be a copout, not to share the word of God, as we’re being led by the Holy Spirit, when the Holy Spirit gives us the words to speak to others. So I would just ask, in each case. All right, here is a fine line. It could be a copout for someone to say, “I don’t have to say anything. They’re just going to see my conduct.” But they need to know that we believe in Jesus Christ.

Bruce: No, you’re absolutely right. That’s where the Holy Spirit is the One who guides us into all truth. The real issue here is not what you’re going to say; it’s when you say it. It’s a matter of timing. All I’m saying is that Peter is teaching us this. Let your

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conduct be the reason for somebody to ask you why. That’s what he’s saying. Your conduct must lead your conversation. If you start off with conversation, and there is no conduct evidence, then they will be less likely to believe it, because they’ve seen nothing about your words. So let your conduct lead your conversation. It’s a both/and, not an either/or. And the real issue, Jay, is timing. Is this the right time for me to say something, to defend something?

How did we start the bible study at PNC twenty-four years ago? A young woman walked into my office and said to me, “Can I ask you a question?”

And I said, “As long as it’s not about banking.” (*Laughter.*)

And she said, “It’s not about banking.”

And I said, “What’s your question?”

And she said, “Why should I be saved from my sins?”

I said, “Who said that you should be?”

And she said, “I was listening to the radio driving in today. I was flipping the dial, and some guy was talking about repentance and faith, and I thought I’d ask you that question.”

My next thing was, “Why are you asking me?”

And she said something like this. “Because you just seem to be different.”

Now that’s all I was looking for. I was looking for a point of entry, because I wanted to see this. Was my conduct the reason that she came to me, or was it some other reason? When I realized it was my conduct over the years, that she had seen me live my life as a banker at PNC which gave her a reason to question something about me, now I had the freedom to converse with her.

So I brought her into my office, and we went through the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. And, about an hour-and-a-half later, she said, “You know, this is wonderful! You’ve answered my question. I’ve got some friends who would like to talk about that.”

I said, “Why don’t you bring them next Thursday?” We’ve been meeting every Thursday for twenty-four years.

Men: Oh! Wow!

Bruce: It’s a matter of timing. Peter is saying this. Let your conduct lead your conversation. That’s the perfect balance. When your conduct is such that people come to you and say, “How in the world can you do this? Why is it that you’re different?,” now you are an outsider living in an insider world. Now you’ve got a reason to preach the doctrines of Christ.

You’re right, Jay, there is a real fine line of sensitivity. But trust the Holy Spirit, and just keep that in balance—conduct and conversation. Yes, sir?

Participant: The question that is always a matter for me, personally—

Second Participant: Speak up, please.

First Participant: Okay. With mergers and acquisitions, I was always surprised. The company that was hiring the other said, “Quit telling everything that’s wrong with their company.” And the best illustration that I ever saw was that the CEO of the other

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company said, “Well, would you help us clean up our act before we come back.” And that would lead to a line of questions.

“Well, we want to hire you now.”

“No. We want high standards before we let you apply.”

And they circle in to, “Why do you have high standards? Why do you even care?” (*Unclear.*)

He said, “I don’t sell something that is inferior.” And it sort of led itself into the Christian life.”

Bruce: Okay.

Participant: That’s always amazing to me. People walk into something, and they want to buy something. (*Unclear.*) why do I want to buy something that’s bad?

Bruce: Right. Good point. Let me give you a summary statement. Yes, go ahead.

Participant: I don’t want to get ahead of you. Hopefully, you’ll talk about this. But, in verses 13-18, the honor and authority and submission is something that’s stuck in my head. With someone from your military background, I’m just asking. Would you kind of delegate that to a future lecture just about submission?

Bruce: That’s next week.

Participant: Okay. (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: The next verses will be what does it mean to be submissive? Remember, the character qualities are these for a disciple. What are they? Self denial, self sacrifice, and self submission. Submission to what? To the Lordship of Christ in your life. That’s what we are submissive to. We need to learn how to do that in our culture, because we’re not submitting to the system. We’re submitting to the Person and work of Christ’s Lordship in our lives, which is manifested and demonstrated by our submission to society. How do we work that out? That’s what we’ll get into next week.

Let me give you a summary statement on what Peter has taught us. The strongest missionary force in the world is a noble, holy life that honors God. Holiness is the practical implication of living a life that is pleasing to God.

Peter gives us two reasons for righteous living, and those would be these: understanding your heavenly citizenship, and understanding your heavenly conduct. You and I are outsiders in an insider world. Let our conduct precede our conversation. When you do that, you have the wonderful opportunity to be the means by which the gospel of Christ can be portrayed in a dying world. And may it be so, for Jesus’ sake. Yes, please?

Participant: Here is one more thing about Barna. The ABS, the American Bible Society, did surveys in this area. And they did find one group of Christians that seem to live differently than the culture at large, and they were people who were engaged in Scripture at least four times a week or more. So that kind of involvement with the Word is good.

Bruce: Amen! Did you hear that? That’s significant research. Thank you for sharing that. May that be encouraging to us, and I’m so grateful for the faithfulness of you men coming here every Friday, just showing up so that we might sit at His feet, and that He might teach us. So thanks for that word, Jim. That’s very, very encouraging.

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Let’s pray, brothers. Father, it’s a difficult task which You assign to us because of our heavenly citizenship, that is, to have heavenly conduct as an outsider in an insider world. We just don’t know how to do that, Father. So we pray that You would give us reasons for righteous living by helping us think correctly. Keep us in Your word. May Your word guide our every step, guide our feet, and be a light unto our souls. And may it be so, for Jesus’ sake, that our conduct would lead our conversation, and that the glory of God would be administered to this world, as we live an outsider life in an insider world. And all of God’s brothers said, “Amen!” Thank you, men. (*Applause.*)