

Having described the lofty position and hope of these poor, dispersed saints of Jewish descent Peter now exhorts them as to their conduct while here on earth. He addresses them as strangers and pilgrims. But that is what they literally already were. Not by choice, but they were not in the God given land of their ancestors. Perhaps they were settling down in the place they had landed. But Peter is not concerned about that. He is concerned about their (our) attitude, manner of life and conduct because we are now “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for a possession; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now **the people of God.**” We are those who are to be, **by choice**, strangers (aliens) and pilgrims (passing through on a trip to a destination) in this earth. We are not of this world.

*John 17:13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 ¶ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 ¶ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

This passage gives the Lord’s mind for all believers down through the ages and especially today.

Sometimes exhortations about conduct relate to the believer’s tendency to love the world, 1John 2:15, and to become conformed to it, Romans 12:2. But here the apostle teaches that our born again souls are subject to attack. Not only from evil teachings that attack our spiritual lives but from plain ordinary lusts that spring from within us. From the flesh. From that old Adamic nature we all are born with. These **war against the soul!** These arise from within one’s heart and wage something similar to an organized military campaign against one’s own soul. They come unbidden from within or can be aroused by things seen, heard, read, felt through the senses. Things encountered inadvertently or incidentally during our walk on earth, or things invited by our excursions to places we know where lusts will be stirred. For they are not at all unpleasant to that old nature in us. **But they war against the soul!** And sometime they overcome the soul and we fall. We sin. This is the normal course of events for the **unsaved**.

*James 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath*

*conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

But this is not to be the norm for believers. These excursions into sin may take us physically to a place of temptation, such as videos or TV, some novel or magazine, movies, plays shows, concerts some sporting events, some eating places, touring some exhibits, etc. Or they may simply be entirely within the mind, fantasizing the fulfillment of some lust. Fleshly lusts vary but are plainly marked out in scripture which describes such conduct of both Old Testament and New Testament characters. The Ten Commandments point up some fundamental types. We are to abstain from lusts, to flee them.

Sometimes we think we have a “besetting sin” which attacks us more vigorously and more often than others. One can become so occupied with “fighting” a certain lust that other lusts are overlooked and they conquer us before we realize what is happening. Occupation with lust is never healthy whether fighting it or indulging it. Occupation with One who is superior to any fleshly gratification we could ever dream of is what saves us from a fall. We are to **abstain from** them **not fight** them. They may war against our souls but the victory is not through fighting but simple abstention. Not just abstention from carrying out what we might lust to do, but not entertaining the lusts that come unbidden into our thoughts.

The other exhortation Peter gives is about their conduct toward the Gentiles they were living among. Historically Jews have never seemed to have an easy time being accepted by their Gentile hosts. Here, as Christians of Jewish descent, these believers were under double jeopardy to suspicion and distrust. Those Peter was writing to were already suffering, being slanderously spoken against as evildoers. Peter doesn’t rally them to protest against unfair treatment, discrimination, or intolerance. He, very practically, encourages them to conduct themselves in such a way that their good conduct would witness positively to the reality of their Christ. Peter asserts that God would surely visit those who were evil speaking about them with some awful hardship or tragedy in an effort to bring them to repentance. God does things like that in love to sinners. When He did, they would remember the good works of suffering saints they had observed earlier and be drawn to seek the Lord as their Savior and subsequently glorify God. Preaching isn’t necessarily involved. Just a godly life and good works, a quiet witness. These are effective to lead others to salvation, when they are later visited by tragedy. See 1Peter 3:1-2 for a similar example. So we are to be lights, shining **in** this dark world, but not **of** it..

By Ron Canner, December 8, 2004