

6. Learning to Live for Christ in the World

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live as the people of God. We saw that as Christians we are called both a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood. As the people of God, the Lord has called us to carry on His work in the world at this time. In order to be effective in that ministry, we want to help both our children and other Christians learn to live as the people of God. In this topic, we want to help our children understand how they can live for Christ in this world.

In 1 Peter 2:11-12 we read, “Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” As Peter began this section, we see that he had a great love for the Christians to whom he was writing. Our ministry to all Christians will be more effective as we practice the new commandment in all of our relationships with them. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We are called to love one another as we serve each other.

Peter wanted the Christians to understand his love for them because of the request that he had for them and for all Christians in the following verses. Peter pointed out the fact that as Christians we are strangers and pilgrims in this world. The word that is translated “strangers” means “*one who lives as a foreigner or stranger on earth due to the fact that our citizenship is in heaven.*” The word that is translated “pilgrims” speaks of one who comes from a foreign country to live with the people of that land for a period of time. Hebrews 11:13 says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Just as the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 recognized their time on earth was temporary, we as Christians also need to recognize that we are just here for a short time to do the work Christ has for us.

The word that is translated “abstain from” means “*to hold oneself off or to avoid.*” In 1 Thessalonians 5:22 we read, “Abstain from every form of evil.” Here, we see that we are to avoid fleshly lusts. Galatians 5:19-21 gives us a summary list of some of the things that are fleshly lusts when those verses say, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Here, we see that fleshly lusts involve many different kinds of sinful desires. These were the sinful desires that controlled us before we became Christians.

As we walk in the Holy Spirit and are led by the Spirit, He gives us His strength to avoid these sinful lusts. Peter points out the fact that such sinful lusts war against the soul. The word translated “war” talks about a military campaign or a soldier on active service. The word is used in

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 where we read, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.” As we walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” This is what makes it possible for us to have conduct (behavior) that is honorable among the Gentiles.

Those who are not Christians may try to speak against us and even accuse us of being evildoers. However, they will be forced to recognize as they carefully observe our actions that we are doing good works. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” As the world observes our good works, some of them will be drawn to the Lord. Those who reject will have no excuse when the Day of Judgment comes for them.

As a result, 1 Peter 2:13-14 goes on to say, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.” Here, we see that one of the things that we are to do is to submit ourselves to every ordinance of those that the Lord has placed in authority over us. The word that is translated “ordinance” is normally translated creature or created being. This would include all levels of governmental authority that have been placed over us. We are to place ourselves under these government authorities for the sake of the Lord so that all of our actions will bring honor and glory to Him.

Government authorities have two primary functions in their relationship to the people that they lead. They have been placed in authority by God to punish those who are evildoers. At the same time, God has placed them in authority to honor those who do good. Romans 13:3-4 says, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.” Here, we see that those who do evil will have a fear of those who have been placed in authority because they are afraid that they will be punished. In contrast, those who are doing good do not need to be afraid. Instead, God has placed them in their positions of authority so that God can bless us through them.

As a result, we see how we are to live for Christ as long as we are in this world. 1 Peter 2:15-17 says, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men--as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” Many times, Christians want to know how they can do the will of God. Here, we are told how to do the will of God in our relationships to those who have been placed in positions of authority over us. This is how we live for Christ in the world.

We see that it is the will of God that we do those things that are good. The word that is translated here “that by doing good” means “*to do something that profits others or to be a good help to*

someone.” Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to look for opportunities that will profit others and help them. As we make it our goal to do good to all, we see that the Lord says our actions will silence the ignorant words of those who deny God and speak from their lack of knowledge of God.

As Christians, we have been set free. However, we are not to use that freedom as a covering to do evil or commit sin. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that we have been given liberty so that we are free to serve one another in love. When our actions are motivated by the love of Christ for us, those actions will be pleasing to the Lord and silence those who do not know the Lord.

As a result, we are given a list of actions that will show that love as we live for Christ in the world. We are to recognize that we are the bondservants of God. Ephesians 6:6-7 says, “Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” We are to make it our goal that in everything that we do, we do it in such a way that it will please the Lord. That love will cause us to do four things as we live for Christ.

First, we will honor all people. The word that is translated “honor” means “*to have respect and place a high value on others.*” Ephesians 6:2-3 says, “Honor your father and mother’, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” Here, we see that the only commandment that contained a promise was the commandment to honor our parents. We see that as Christians we are to treat all people with that same honor and respect.

Second, we will love the brotherhood. The word that is translated “brotherhood” means “*those who are fellow Christians.*” This word is used one other place in the New Testament. 1 Peter 5:9 says, “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” The previous verse talks about the devil. Here, we are reminded that the devil causes all Christians to suffer because he hates God and all who serve Him. We are to love other Christians as Christ loves us.

Third, we will fear God. The word that is translated “fear” means “*to reverence God and to show that reverence by obedience to Him.*” 1 John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” A godly fear and reverence will take away our fear of people.

Fourth, we will honor the king (or other ruler in authority). This is the same word that was used when we were told to honor all people. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to place a high respect and value on all leaders. The Lord will work in their lives as they honor and value their leaders. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live for

Christ in the world.