

Subject: *The Battle for Your Soul*

Scripture: *1 Peter 2:11-12*

Christ predicted that one of the signs of the end times would be “wars and rumors of war.” Even now there are several wars: the war between Ukraine and Russia, the war between Hamas and Israel, and the ongoing war against terrorism. There is also a war that is not reported in the news. There is a war that involves every Christian on earth. It is war that will go on as long as we’re in this world. It is a war against the soul. In our text Peter mentions two key components of this war.

1. Our Inner Battle (vs. 11)

A. We have an identity (“dearly beloved... strangers and pilgrims”)

Peter addresses them as, “dearly beloved,” as he reminded them of God’s great love for us. We have a duty to the One who loves us so much. “I beseech” means to urge or beg in a passionate way. This is the same word found in ***Romans 12:1*** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Peter also appeals to them as “strangers and pilgrims.” “Strangers” (see also 1:1) means foreigners, resident aliens. The Greek word *paroikos* means “alongside the house,” so a stranger is one who lives alongside the native people of a country. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. Philippians 3:20 says that “our citizenship is in heaven.” “Pilgrims” means aliens, outsiders who are passing through a land on the way to their homeland. In 1:17, Peter said to “pass the time of your sojourning here in fear (reverence for God).”

Hebrews 13:14 *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

B. We have an enemy (“fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”)

These are not only sexual desires, but all sinful desires that appeal to the flesh (greed, pride). These are desires that come from our fallen, sinful nature (*Gal. 5:19-21, works of the flesh...fruit of the Spirit*). The flesh doesn’t refer to the body, but to unredeemed human nature. Christians have a redeemed soul in unredeemed flesh. We are born again, but our new nature lives in conflict with our old sinful nature. The word “war” means to carry on a military campaign. Paul describes this lifelong battle.

Romans 7:21-24 ²¹ *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.* ²² *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:* ²³ *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* ²⁴ *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Our own fleshly desires war against the soul. Have you ever heard anybody say, “I am my own worst enemy?” It’s true! Believers have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Peter only mentions one—the flesh, the internal enemy. The desires of the flesh can destroy our life and damage our testimony.

C. We have a strategy (“abstain”)

Abstain means “to hold yourself away from” fleshly desires. This is a command, not a suggestion. It requires self-control, and self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Our strategy is to keep the desires of the flesh under the Spirit’s control.

Galatians 5:16-17 ¹⁶ *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* ¹⁷ *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

2. Our Outward Behavior (vs. 12)

A. The believer’s conversation (conduct)

Conversation means “conduct, lifestyle” (see 1:15). Honest is the word for “good.” It means excellent, noble, lovely, gracious, fair to look at, or winsome. It is the purest, highest, noblest form of goodness. Among the Gentiles is a reminder that unsaved people are all around us.

B. The world’s accusation

They speak against us as evildoers (vs. 12) – Evildoers means people who should be punished. These are some accusations made against early church (1st-2nd century):

Christians were accused of *insurrection* – rebelling against Caesar and Roman gvt.
They were accused of *atheism* – they wouldn’t worship the Roman gods and goddesses and they wouldn’t worship the emperors who claimed to be gods
They were accused of *cannibalism* – “This is my body...this is my blood”
They were accused of *immorality* – the love feast was celebrated with communion
They were accused of *hurting business and industry* – some businesses were connected to the worship of false gods (for example, Acts 19:24-27)

C. The world’s observation

Although the world speaks against us, they are still watching us. One of the key verses in this section is **1 Peter 2:15** *For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Silence is used of muzzling an animal. It means to reduce an adversary to silence, as it were, taking the accusation right out of his mouth. It is by our good works which they will behold (observe). Notice that—by your good works, *not* your good words, *not* your good intentions, *not* your good image. Alexander Maclaren said: “The world takes its notions of God most of all from the people who say they belong to God’s family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. In fact, they see us, they only hear about Jesus Christ.”

D. The Lord’s visitation

The day of visitation is an Old Testament concept, a very common expression. God would visit in one of two ways. He would visit in blessing or in judgment. In the New Testament, all of the references to a visitation of God refer to a visit of redemption, a visit of blessing. **Luke 1:68** *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.* **Luke 19:44** *...thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.* The truth in verse 12 is that when unbelievers around us see our good works they will be ready when the Lord visits them in grace and opens their spiritual eyes. They will respond in repentance and faith and glorify God because they have the changed lives of true believers.

In evangelism it's important not only what we say, it's how we live. We need to have a life that silences the critics, a life that convinces unbelievers of the reality of the Christian faith. One man said, "Show me your redeemed life and I might believe in your Redeemer." We are the only Bible the world is reading.

The Gospel according to You

All teachings we find in the Bible
Are facts we know to be true;
You must live them to make them the Gospel...
The Gospel according to you

Many read not the words of the Bible;
I will tell you what some of them do...
They are reading the book you are writing...
The Gospel according to you.

There's great power In Gospel preaching
The Bible teaches that this is true.
But the sermon most likely to influence others
Is the Gospel according to you.

God help us to be faithful to Jesus,
To live all His teachings so true,
So that all may see His Spirit
In the Gospel according to you

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day;
By things that you do; by things that you say.
Others read that gospel, whether faithless or true!
Say! What is the Gospel according to you?