

1st PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 2:11-12

Lesson #10

Introduction

By way of introduction, I want to point out that the Bible isn't always treated uniformly by preachers and teachers. Now I acknowledge that some preachers don't even believe it's all true, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about preachers who do claim the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scriptures, but still don't always put the same emphasis on all of the sections. And I have to admit that sometimes I might fall into this category myself. I'm one of those who puts a lot of weight on heavy doctrinal matters, and so, when I get to the practical issues, I have to discipline myself to give them the same gravity of treatment. And this is one of those situations.

The emphasis of Chapter 1 was predominately doctrinal in its nature. In Chapter 2, verses one through 10, the emphasis switched to a combination of doctrine and application. But now, in verses 11 and following, we're talking altogether about application. Peter is speaking about the responsibility of Christians to behave in a manner that's fitting for this royal priesthood, this holy nation, which has been chosen to proclaim the excellencies of the living God who has called us out of our previous darkness and into His marvelous light. (vv.4-10)

As we discussed last week in those first 10 verses, unless the conduct and behavior of Christians is in conformity to that of Christ, then we aren't doing the job for which we were called and commissioned. As I stated in that lesson, the great commission is far, far greater than just getting unbelievers to walk down an isle and make a profession of faith; it's about taking those who do make a profession of faith, and teaching them the divine truths of scripture, by which they are transformed into Christlikeness, as a living testimony to the moral and virtuous excellencies of God, if in fact they are truly born again, and not just temporary stony ground enthusiasts. Anything less than this is not a fulfillment of our great commission, and to settle for less is slothful, if not downright sinful.

To assist us in carrying out that responsibility, Peter now gives us verses 11 through 25, and then continues with even more, all the way to the end of this epistle in Chapter 5. So, we'll be working our way through these verses so that we might reaffirm what is acceptable spiritual worship and what is not, and understand how we are to conduct ourselves in this world as ambassadors of Christ Jesus, and living proclaimers of the moral and virtuous excellencies of God.

We seem to get an abundance of preaching on the **benefits** of being a Christian, and there certainly are massive benefits, but have you noticed how very little preaching we seem to get on the **responsibilities** of being a Christian? As I was preparing this lesson plan I got a package in the mail from the Voice of the Martyrs organization. It only takes a minute or two of browsing through that material to see just how much some believers are asked to pay for their proclamation of the name of Jesus Christ. The gospel presentation that we hear in this country at least, is never about the cost, in fact, we love to say that it doesn't cost anything, because Jesus paid it all, and for us it's all about gain and profit and benefit. It will make our lives fuller, easier, and more worthwhile we are told.

If this be so, then what happened to the gospel that Jesus preached to His disciples? What happened to the gospel of Matthew chapter 16, and Luke Chapter 9, where the Lord told His disciples that following Him may very well cost them their lives, and for the vast majority it actually did. And for many around the world in this present age it is still doing that. There are those being removed from their homes, displaced from their countries, put into prison, tortured, and even murdered simply because they name the name of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. These precious saints are faithful unto death because they know and believe that they will receive the crown of everlasting life. No stony ground believers here, these are the real thing. These are front line Christians called by the Lord into battle for their faith. These understand the Lord's words concerning taking up their cross and following Him. In this country we think taking up our cross is putting up with an annoying neighbor, or being stuck in a traffic jam. I fear we are utterly unprepared if we ourselves are ever called into front-line action for our faith.

As you sit in church next Sunday morning, enjoying the comfortable seating, and the delightful air-conditioning, and the beautiful surroundings, and the pretty music, ask yourself what you would do if everything you owned, all your property, and your freedom, and maybe even your life were in jeopardy, if you continue to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ. What would you and I do if we were faced with this situation? Don't think for one minute that this can't happen. It happened to the apostles, it happened to the first century Christians, it's been happening to Christians since shortly after Pentecost, and it very well could happen to you and I in our own lifetimes. Make no mistake, I desperately hope it does not, but if it does, I fear that the churches of our country have left their people completely and utterly unprepared. We never even speak of the mandatory responsibilities, and possible potential costs of discipleship, only the benefits.

The Christianity that we've been taught in this country, for at least the last 100 years, isn't even close to the Christianity of the Scriptures. A well-known Christian preacher called it Christianity light, which is a very apt description. It tastes great and it's not very filling. Where in the holy Scriptures do we find such a Christianity described? Very simple, nowhere in the holy Scriptures do we find such a description of Christianity. Those who are called by God, and are chosen to be sanctified by His holy Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ, and are being built up as living stones into a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, are undergoing this process because God has appointed them to be a visible demonstration to the whole world of the excellencies of His divine virtues. To think that such a calling has nothing to do with responsibilities and costs is patently absurd. And for our churches, and their pastors, to virtually ignore this whole aspect of Christianity is a serious breach of responsibility. Therefore, may we not be guilty of perpetuating this error, and be faithful to preach the whole counsel of God, all of the marvelous benefits, and all of the inescapable and non-negotiable responsibilities, just exactly as did our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, I have titled this lesson, and perhaps this series of lessons:

A Christian's Incontrovertible Responsibilities

(1) Conduct Among Gentiles:

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:11-12

Here in verse 11 Peter says he urges the saints. Peter's use of the word "urge" doesn't signify that what he's going to say is optional. Peter was an apostle, but still only human, and therefore has only the power to urge and exhort, only God has the authority to command. So Peter urges the saints by way of exhortation and warning to comply with the commandments of God. The first of which is to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

But before we discuss this, let's look at what he says when he calls the saints aliens and strangers. Peter is using this terminology to signify that the chosen of God have been, and are in the process of being, sanctified and transformed such that they do not comfortably fit into a normal pagan society. They are so different from the people around them that they both feel and appear as aliens and strangers to the rest of society. In fact that is exactly what we are called to be. We are called to be both alien and strange to the ways of the world. We are told not to be friends with the world, which means friendly and comfortable with the ways of the world, the behaviors of the world, the views and perspectives of the world.

We cannot maintain a friendship with the world and all of its ways, and a friendship with God at the same time. We are called to make a choice. But the truth of it is, if we have truly been called, through sanctification and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, then the choice has already been made by virtue of the regenerated heart and transformed mind, and our calling is to work out that salvation day by day with fear and trembling amidst a hostile community. (Phi 2:12)

Every true Christian should understand this verse. Every true Christian should rightly understand what the Scriptures spoke concerning Lot, as he lived among the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Every true Christian is tormented every day by the fleshly lusts and evil practices that society considers perfectly normal and acceptable, but violate the commandments of God. Any person who believes they are a Christian, and has been born again, and yet doesn't understand and identify with this concept, and genuinely suffer this feeling of alienation from society, is either very immature, or not truly a Christian at all. Those who are chosen and sanctified by the Spirit of God cannot, and absolutely do not want to cozy up with the world and its lustful ways. Neither will they condone disobedience to God.

Which moves us now into the last part of this sentence. Peter says we are to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. It would be very simple for Christians to abstain from fleshly lusts if those lusts had no means to allure and tempt Christians. But this is the catch isn't? While in our hearts we consider the lustful ways of the world abhorrent, nevertheless, at the very same time, there is an element within us which we call the flesh, which is still attracted by these former practices. This is the essence of the apostle Paul's heart felt outpouring to God in Romans chapter 7 where he declares that he agrees wholeheartedly with the commandments of God in his inner self, and his transformed mind, but nevertheless at the same time there is something that still lives in him, and us, that he identifies as sin, and it works through the weakness of the flesh to cause us to, all too often, end up doing what we don't want to do, and not doing what we do want to do.

One might say, that's ridiculous, we never do what we don't want to do. If we didn't want to do it, then we wouldn't do it. And if it were simply a matter of logic, this argument would be absolutely correct. But human beings are complex creatures, and situations can involve many different factors, some of which are positive and some of which are negative, and sorting through all of them, and coming to a final decision, often involves conflicts of feelings even among unregenerate humanity. And this situation is greatly amplified with those who have been born again by the Spirit of God.

You see the unregenerate man has a heart that loves to sin. Therefore his heart attitude and his flesh nature are in perfect accord. What his flesh seeks for pleasure, his heart thoroughly approves as well. This is why society so readily accepts the things which God calls sinful abominations, as simply alternative styles of life. Because in the heart of man, that's all they are to them. How God sees these things is totally irrelevant to them. When their flesh nature seeks gratification through the most abominable lusts, their mind says "yes" this is fine, because it's what I really want to do, so it must be okay. If it wasn't okay then why would I want to do it? And furthermore doesn't my wanting to do it, by itself, make it okay, because after all, I'm a consenting adult? Don't I get to choose for myself what's right for me?

But, it's not so simple for the chosen of God, for those whose hearts have been regenerated, and whose minds have been transformed to conformity to Christ. Those who have freely accepted the Lordship authority of Christ, and the sovereignty of God and his Commandments over their behaviors. Now we have a transformed spiritual mindset, or we might say a set of heart attitudes, that are not in conformity with the inherent nature of this fleshly body in which we live.

In his epistle to the Galatians, speaking precisely on this subject, Paul said: *17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not [always] do the things that you please.* (Gal 5:17)

This opposition of flesh versus Spirit, results in a continual warfare within every genuine Christian. And this warfare takes place in the mind. The conscious volitional mind is the battlefield where these two forces collide head on. There are those who think that this warfare takes place in some ethereal place in the recesses of the subconscious, or in the heart, but that is not what the Bible describes. It describes a warfare that takes place in the conscious mind. Speaking on the same subject in his epistle to the Romans Paul says:

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:4-8

Those who argue that this warfare takes place in the heart fail to realize that this can't possibly be so, because unless the heart has already been regenerated by the Spirit of God, there isn't even a reason for the warfare. It is precisely because the heart has already been renewed, and the mind transformed into Christlikeness, which is the very cause of this warfare. And the conscious mind is now processing data that is coming from this regenerated spirit, and at the very same time receiving data from the old flesh nature which is in direct conflict. And this is why Paul tells us that if we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, then our resultant choice of behaviors will be in conformity thereto. But if we set our minds on the things according to the flesh, then our resultant choice of actions will be hostile towards God, because the flesh nature is totally incapable of subjecting itself to the laws of God.

It is with our conscious regenerated minds that we are commanded by Scriptures to make daily, even moment by moment decisions, concerning our actions, behaviors, words, and attitudes which are in conformity to our regenerated spirit and transformed thinking. Which things are in conformity with the Commandments of God. To further enforce our point we have Paul's words to the Colossians where he said:

5 Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient, 7 and you once walked in these things when you were living in them.
Col 3:5-7 (HCSB)

Please note that Paul didn't say that these things had already been put to death for us by our regeneration, but rather instructs us to put them to death ourselves because we have been regenerated. The tragic reality that every Christian eventually runs into in their life is that even though their heart has been changed, and their thinking renewed, those old desires of the flesh have not gone away. At first we don't understand, we question whether we've really been saved, been regenerated, and don't understand why these old desires still have such a sway over us. It takes some study of the word, and spiritual maturity before we understand that only our spirit has been renewed, this flesh body in which we live will never be renewed. It must be metaphorically put to death, moment by moment and day by day, and then eventually even literally put to death and replaced with a whole new spiritual body, but that doesn't happen in this lifetime. (Phi 3:21)

In this lifetime we have been destined by God for spiritual warfare, and that is exactly what the Scriptures equip us to do. To succeed in this battle against the flesh. These holy scriptures provide everything necessary for life and godliness in this present lifetime. (2Pet 1:3) It is the knowledge of God, provided in His holy Scriptures, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, that empower every believer to be successful in this battle against the flesh and its desires.

Oh make no mistake, no soldier ever comes out of this battle unscathed, and unscarred. Every soldier takes his share of wounds and defeats, and his uniform is well marked with bloody stains, but we are protected by the power of God all along the way, and our eventual victory is guaranteed, because it is Christ Jesus whom we serve, and to whom we belong, and His victory is a certainty. A soldier who is called into action, but hides in his foxhole and never comes out to do battle with the enemy, is worthless to his commander and his army. And in very like manner, anyone who claims to be a Christian, but never engages themselves in direct hand to hand combat with the enemy of sin and disobedience to the word of God, is worthless to his Commander and his army. Every soldier must actively engage the enemy - sin.

It is very common to hear it said that we ourselves aren't required to engage in warfare with sin, because, Jesus did that for us on the cross, and now our only responsibility is to rest on the finished work of Jesus Christ. This is one of those subtle half truths that so easily trick those who are ignorant of the scriptures. What makes a half truth so dangerous is that it is half true, and not understanding the scope and context can cause the uneducated to accept anything else whatsoever that's attached to that half truth as also being true, even if those attachments aren't true, and the context is totally skewed. This is precisely what Satan did in the garden of Eden, and it's still popular and effective today.

In Matthew chapter 7 the Lord used example, after example, after example, to drive home a major point. Which was, that not everyone who says they are a Christian really is one, and the way we can know the difference is by observing whether or not we are obedient to the commandments of God. Many will proclaim a vibrant and loving relationship with the Lord, but only a very few will authenticate it with their obedient lifestyle.

Paul told the Romans: *13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

Romans 8:13-14

Don't let yourselves be deceived, It is those who practice righteousness who are righteous said the Apostle John. And so says Paul in this verse. This doesn't describe a people who are simply resting on a prior deed by the Lord Jesus for their present and future righteousness. These are those who are actively working out that righteousness daily in their own lives, as a visible demonstration of the excellencies of the virtues of their Redeemer and their God. Which is why they are called a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. We do not simply serve ourselves, we serve our God and Redeemer.

Coax them down the aisle, dunk them in the water, and move on down the tracks. This train don't brake for righteousness. It don't slow down for discipleship training in all those things that the Lord instructed His disciples, and commissioned them to teach to others. (Mat 28:19-20) We need to understand that there is no commission to make **converts**, there is a commission to make **disciples**, and the difference is not just semantics. Today we are wholly given over to making converts, but it appears that it's at the very expense of making disciples.

We want to make converts out of everybody to keep them out of hell, but God wants only a few specific chosen disciples, to train as priests in holiness and righteousness, to serve before Him as a testimony to His own excellencies of morality and virtue. If we don't do that, then we're not a part of His chosen people and His holy nation. And it makes no difference what we say, or even what we think we know. There is an invisible spiritual power working in the hearts and minds of all the true elect that cannot be missing or permanently dormant. God's chosen and regenerated will respond, that is bear fruits, that are visibly displayed by a life of agreement with, and obedience to, His commands. Unless there is such a power at work within, and an acute awareness of the raging spiritual warfare with the old flesh nature, then any claims of a genuine relationship are very difficult to authenticate. Concerning this Paul also said:

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Romans 8:9-10

I can say with unflinching certainty, that in my 30 years plus as a Christian, I have never met a single saint whom I really believe to be a genuine Christian, who has not been acutely aware of their own failure to perfectly live up to the high calling of Christ Jesus, and doesn't freely acknowledge the difficulty of the relentless struggle, the raging and tiresome warfare, with the innate fallen human nature. And looks forward with great anticipation, to that day when this body of corruption is replaced with a new sinless and incorruptible body, like unto that of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1Cor 15:50-57; Phi 3:21)

But, sadly this heart attitude is strangely not the prevailing one amongst the membership of our churches, at least most of our churches. Because, our churches consists of predominantly unregenerate membership. Therefore the churches are filled with people who don't feel like there's anything wrong with sexual promiscuity, fornication, abortion, homosexuality, adultery, same-sex marriage, Darwinian evolution and all of the most popular cultural trends of the day. And they either can't understand, or worse, feel contempt towards the genuine Christians who value the Commandments of God that forbid these things. Their thinking and affections are right in line with those of the atheistic culture, but yet they still go to church on Sunday and call themselves Christians, and speak fondly about going to heaven when they die.

There is no warfare going on in their minds and hearts, the only minor warfare they have is with the few genuine Christians that are in their churches, but they don't pose much of a threat because they're generally gentle and understanding and non-confrontational. The unregenerate truly have no idea why the genuine Christians make such a big deal of these things, and seem to be so troubled by them, when they themselves consider these things perfectly normal and acceptable cultural prerogatives, and their own attitude to be loving and tolerant towards all. (Except the scriptures)

One need only spend a few minutes in almost any church business meeting for these two perspectives to become abundantly clear. One's world view is either Godly, or it's earthly, and the difference is very easy to recognize. If you happen to be one of the genuine Christians that have set in your church's business meetings, and listened to people discuss plans and actions that are based entirely on cultural trends, pragmatism, pop psychology, and personal opinions, which entirely ignore, and often even directly oppose, the clear commandments of God, then you know exactly what I'm talking about. If you're one of these Christians, then you've watched your committee chairmen, and your deacons, and your general membership adopt, and accept, and approve, actions that violate the scriptural Commandments of God.

If you're anything like me, and you've experienced these things, you came out of those meetings asking yourself how in the world this can be. How can those people which you assemble with, and sing with, and worship with, possibly take such a casual and cavalier attitude toward obedience to the commandments of God? The answer is provided for us by the holy Scriptures, and we've already quoted several of those passages. What we do defines what we really believe.

The verses that we're studying right now are verses which instruct us in the manner of behaviors that are mandated by God for those who are called into His royal priesthood, and His holy nation. It is entirely by our obedience to the commandments of God that we carry out our priestly duties. A priest that disobeys his God will not long remain a priest. And a nation that lives contrary to the commandments of God will certainly not be called holy. We have been told by our verses that the purpose that God has in mind for choosing us, and calling us out, and sanctifying us by His Holy Spirit is to bring us into obedience to Jesus Christ, which obedience provides a visible display of the moral and virtuous excellencies of God. It is for this demonstration that we have been saved, not just to keep us out of hell. A failure on our part to love and honor and appreciate those virtuous excellencies of God, and demonstrate such by an obedient lifestyle is a failure of our priesthood, and a defilement of our holy nation.

An army of disobedient priests, and a nation so large it cannot be counted, is of no use whatsoever to God in the display of His moral and virtuous excellencies, if it does not visibly demonstrate those morals and virtues in its own daily lives, and will be told by God to depart from Him, because He never knew them in the first place. (Mat 7:21-23) The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that obedience to God is not optional, compliance to His commands is the unmistakable characteristic of regeneration, and to present a gospel that in any way minimizes, let alone eliminates, this indispensable component, is to literally preach another gospel that isn't taught in the Scriptures. The great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ is to preach a gospel that brings the chosen of God into complete obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, as a visible display of the moral and virtuous excellencies of the Father. Nothing less than this can be called a fulfillment of that commission.

For example, God sent his prophet and told King Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites. All of the people, all of the cattle, and all of the goods. King Saul went and destroyed the vast majority of the Amalekites, and the vast majority of the goods and property, but he didn't get it all, he left a very small remnant. And what was God's response to this? Did he congratulate Saul on a job well done by coming so very close to total compliance, and only leaving a small remnant? Those of you who are familiar with the Scriptures know the answer to this don't you? The Lord God was furious with King Saul, so much so that He declared that Saul would be removed from his kingship, and replaced with another, for failing to totally and completely fulfill the Commandment of God. Coming close gained him no favor whatsoever, in fact it gained him serious rebuke, harsh judgment, and complete rejection of his office.

It is by no means a stretch of imagination, or misapplication of context, to apply this principle of compliance to the commands of God to that of the New Testament preacher and evangelist. To preach a partial gospel, that comes pretty close to what we are commanded, but falls a little bit short because we want to enhance its results according to our own opinions; I assure you will elicit the very same response from the Lord Jesus Christ as King Saul God from God. Our present day practices, and our present day gospel presentation, is short of the mark. We have stripped the gospel of its responsibilities of obedience to God, and repentance from sin, to the point that it is no longer the biblical gospel, it's another gospel, which we have knowingly reshaped according to our own feelings and opinions.

King Saul argued that it was good to save the very best of the cattle, and some of the gold, because this could be offered to God. But the true desire of God is expressed by the prophet Hosea where he declares:

6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

We don't get to tell God what's good for Him, or what's good for us, He tells us those things. He has made His choices and decisions from before creation, and our responsibility is obedience. He did not solicit us as advisers, He chose us as His children, His priests, and His holy nation, to display to the rest of the world the excellencies of His virtues. And strict obedience to His commands is our entire means by which we carry out this priesthood. Any deviation whatsoever is a defilement, not an improvement, regardless of our intentions or opinions or personal feelings.

I suppose there are endless ways that I could use to say what I'm saying and to make the point that I'm making. But by now I hope that we all understand the whole point here. God has predestined a particular people for a specific purpose of His own choosing. He has provided all of the necessary means to call out and prepare this particular chosen people for that work which He has predetermined.

For these chosen people there is a very specific toolset which has been provided by God for them to carry out their designated task. The toolset that God has given them is His Commandments, as set forth in the holy Scriptures. They are neither expected, nor allowed, to substitute their own private tools in the accomplishment of their task, but are to be very careful and faithful in the use of those tools which the Lord has provided them. As God's priests, their loyalty, and absolute first priority, is to their Lord whom they serve, thoroughly understanding, and fully acknowledging that this demands unconditionally surrendering their own self-interests, and putting His concerns before their own. This is a nonnegotiable requirement for authentic priesthood service.

There are many who seek this office as priests for personal reasons. For financial support, or respect and honor among the community, or for the power and authority that they perceive that it affords them. Sadly there is no shortage of such false priests. But the Lord knows who they are, and will make short work of their deceptive ministries. And they will pay a severe price for their deceptions. They will be easy to identify because they will not hold the word of God and his Commandments in high regard, but will offer worldly substitutes to entice ungodly followers. They will hold up a form of religion, even claiming to be Christian, but by their actions will utterly deny the power that it has to transform lives and empower obedience to the Word of God.

If we are truly His chosen people, if we are as living stones being built up into a spiritual house that constitutes a holy priesthood, who has been commissioned by God to serve as a visible demonstration to all mankind of the unfathomable moral and virtuous excellencies of the true and living God, then our only toolset is His Commandments, and our designated function is the application of those Commandments in our own daily lives, for the fulfillment of our priestly duties to which He has called us for His own glory. This calling, by divine decree, puts us into direct warfare with Satan and the world system of sin and lust and disobedience to the Commandments of God. Our own fallen flesh nature will be an unrelenting enemy, seeking to impede our priestly service, but we have been empowered by God, through His indwelling Holy Spirit, to prevail in this warfare, and carry out our priestly service to God, as we live out our lives in joyful obedience to his Commandments, and by so doing, demonstrate to the world the manifold excellencies of the God we serve.

My dear listener, If you are not aware of a war raging in your soul over your friendship and acceptance with the world and all of its ways and ideas and values, versus all the things you feel in your heart and mind are righteous and holy and Godly, then you aren't likely really a soldier in the Lord's army - at least not yet. But He can make you one of His own, if it's His will to do so. And He said that He will never turn away any who are drawn to Him and His righteousness, if they confess their sins, seek for repentance, ask for His forgiveness, and that precious gift of saving faith. But you must understand what you are asking for. This will not likely call you to peace with the world, but rather warfare with it, and with yourself as well, but it will bring you to peace with God like you have never known. We don't get to choose peace with the world **and** peace with God, they are mutually exclusive by divine decree. One must be at war with one, to be at peace with the other. God accepts no truce, nor declares any cease fire with sin and Satan, and don't be deceived, there is no such thing as a neutral camp that maintains a friendly relationship with both sides. This is the ultimate either/or situation. You are *either* in God's priesthood *or* you are under Satan's dominion.

Conclusion:

Now to sum all this up by way of conclusion, the verses that we are studying in this lesson, and more that are forthcoming, are an explanation and description of exactly what exemplifies this chosen people, this holy nation, this royal priesthood, chosen by God from before creation, that was described in our previous verses. These verses describe a priesthood, and a holy nation of people who are identified as such because of their very obvious differences in moral attitudes and virtuous behaviors amidst other peoples and cultures and natures which are radically different from their own.

Not just in customs and practices, or even in physical appearances, but rather by a very distinct difference in morals and virtues that are consistent with the Commandments of God. This is God's purpose for this priesthood, this is His purpose for a holy nation here on earth during this age, and nothing short of this is a fulfillment of that great commission to His elect. If it does not, by its own behaviors, exemplify the excellencies of His own nature, then it is not what He has called it to be, regardless of how big it might get.

Godly behaviors, moral excellence, abstinence from the former lustful and sinful ways of life, freely and openly demonstrated without apology by a holy nation of priests, in the very midst of a hostile and contrary humanity. It is for the spiritual maturity it affords His children, and the display of the virtuous excellencies of His own glory, that is the very purpose that the Scriptures give us for God's calling us to salvation from our sins and still leaving us here on this earth. And yet doing all of this humbly, gently, and with genuine heart felt concern for the salvation and welfare of our fellow man, and the manifold glory of our God. May His excellencies ever be exalted to the ends of the earth, and the riches of His glory made manifest to all creation. Amen.

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07/13/10