

## “ ‘Alien’ Lifestyle”

*1 Peter 2:11-12*

The world seems to be overtly interested in aliens or creatures from outer space. Governments are ~~wasting~~ spending billions of dollars on looking for other life forms ‘out there’. Every now and then there’s a book or a TV special about UFO’s and possible alien encounters that people supposedly have. Well, I’ve added my own collection of alien sightings and want to show them to you here: [PowerPoint slide of various pictures of the church family].

Obviously these are real people; you and me. The Bible describes the people of God as aliens and strangers. We are exploring one of those passages today in 1 Peter 2:11-12,

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

The idea of an ‘alien’ is of a life form that is not from here. This is not far from the biblical definition. The Greek word for ‘alien’ refers to people living in a foreign country who do not have the right of citizenship. That makes sense. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you are a citizen of heaven. That is your new home, the place of your citizenship. We live on earth now but we have renounced our citizenship to it and now have it with God.

The Greek word for ‘stranger’ means you temporarily live with people whom you don’t belong to. So if we’re a citizen of heaven who lives temporarily on earth, how are we demonstrating to citizens of earth that our citizenship is in heaven? The apostle Peter wrote his first letter with this intention.

Ch. 2:11-12 functions as the key verse to his letter. It is the hinge on which the entire book swings. Up to this point Peter has been describing the great salvation we have in God, who by His grace sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins so that we might live a new kind of life. A holy life, a set apart life one that is now being built into a holy relationship with God on the foundation of Jesus to be living stones, offering spiritual sacrifices and reaching others with the gospel of grace.

Ch. 1:1-2:10 is the theological root of who we are, and 2:11-12 turns it to the practical implications of what that means, with 2:13- to the end of the book the areas of life in which we are to show we are God’s people and not living for the things that earthly citizens only live for.

So if we’ve been saved from sin and need to live a holy, set-apart life from sin, this is where Peter starts in describing what an ‘alien’ lifestyle looks like. So he says in v.11

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

Abstaining from sin is an ongoing battle for us aliens because we’re not in heaven where sin does not exist. We’re surrounded by sin. We still have a sin nature. Sin is everywhere. How do we abstain from it? Peter tells us to be

# **Diligent to Separate Yourself from Sin's Temptations**

## **(2:11)**

The letter of James describes how we sin. In James 1:14 we read,

*<sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

We have healthy desires but we also have sinful desires. We are attracted to do, say, think something that is contrary to God's Word. We move toward it because it promises us a temporal joy all the while ignoring the painful consequences of death; death, which means separation. The consequences of sin separates us temporarily from God and the person we sin against. We fall into the temptation to hurt someone verbally (a common sin) because we don't distance ourselves from it. 'Abstain' means separate it from it. Put distance between you and the temptation. In this case the distance is time, patience. *"Be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to become angry. For anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires"* (James 1:19-20).

So when we've been hurt and are tempted to sin by hurting back, close your mouth, wait, think of the consequences. Do I want to create death between this person and me? Hopefully not. That's just one example. What helps us create that separation between sin and abstention? Remember...

### ***You are loved (v.11a; 1:1-2:10)***

There is no perfect translation of the Bible and the NIV's 'dear friends' is weak and misses the point. The word is literally 'beloved'. It means highly valued over other people. God has valued us higher than unbelievers. He loves every person He has made but loves even more those who have placed their faith in Him. This is what Peter has been explaining since he started his letter.

God's elect (v.1), chosen (v.2), given us living hope (v.3), imperishable and kept in heaven for us (v.5), inexpressible joy (v.8), bought with the precious blood of Christ (v.19), born again (v.23), being built into a spiritual house (2:5), chosen people, holy nation, royal priesthood, people belonging to God called out for darkness and into His wonderful light (2:9), now His people (2:10).

God loves us more than anyone else. We hate to disappoint the people who love us on earth. Let's work at pleasing the one who loves us most. That's a good motivator to put distance between ourselves and sin's temptations. Another motivating factor not to sin is, remember

### ***You have a new identity (v.11b; 1:1-5, 13-16)***

'Aliens and strangers' refers to our new relationship to-wards the world. Our identity now lies with God. We are His citizens, His people, called to call people out from the darkness of this world. As God's citizen there are expectations for us to show we belong to Him. We are here temporarily. We are visitors, earth's guests.

*To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:*

We're not just chosen, we're chosen for something; obedience to God. As God's children, Peter explains in 1:6-9 that even the trials we face have a purpose; to refine us, make us more mature. A new identity means a new purpose in life. In 1:13-16 he already said,

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." <sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

'Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you' not the things the world has to offer. And there are many good things that we can use and enjoy but, it will one day be all burned. So remember, focus on the things that last. Don't conform to the evil desires you had. We're different now. New identity. New purpose. New way of thinking. New attitude. New lifestyle.

And now we have a new enemy. Remember,

### ***We're at war (v.11c)***

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

Later in his letter Peter will write,

*<sup>5:8</sup> Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

*<sup>10</sup> And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

When we accepted Christ we gained Satan as our enemy. He lost one when we turned to Christ. He knows we are God's and he'll still do what he can to make our life not look like a citizen of heaven. So when we sin he has a minor victory. And the more victories he has the less attractive our life will look to our unsaved friends and family. They won't see a big difference between us and any other citizen on earth.

Our soul is who we really are. The heart, the mind and personality. Who God made us to be when He breathed His Spirit life into us at salvation on top of the abilities and gifts He designed is to have. So sin attacks our soul. We can be forgiven and we can be restored (as Peter knows so well) but they are scars left because sin always leads to smaller deaths; separations. Relationships are damaged. As God's citizens and aliens to earth, let's create distance between us and sin's temptations. If the temptation is physical or visual, create space. Turn things off. Go a different direction. Get an accountability partner. When the temptation is mental or verbal, listen, be patient, fill your mind with God's Word. There's a great example only a few verses back. Ch. 2:1-3

*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Someone has hurt you. You cling to it, stew on it, think about it and are tempted to hurt back. Peter says get rid of it; don't go there, abstain, create distance. But there's a gap. Fill the gap with the

pure spiritual milk of God's Word so you can grow up in your salvation. There's two cravings here; the craving to retaliate which results in bitterness or the craving of God's Word which makes you better, mature. Since you've tasted and seen that the Lord is good. You know what obedience tastes like. What trusting God tastes like. Isn't that better than the bitter taste of hurting someone?

You will always have to fill the gap that temptation leaves. Don't just get rid of it, replace it with Godly pursuits. Because what's the goal of the citizen of heaven/alien to earth life? Be diligent to separate yourself from sin's temptations so you will

## **Live a Useful Life** **(2:12)**

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

'Live such good lives.' 'See your good deeds'. The word good means 'beneficial, useful, productive'. The good you're doing that will help others. God wants us to avoid sin and live as His citizens by making our life productive so that

### ***It benefits even the unsaved (v.12a)***

The 'pagan' of course refers to the citizen of earth. The unbeliever. Here's the filling in part from abstaining. Abstaining from sin replaced with benefitting the unsaved.

### ***Even though they speak maliciously about you (v.12b)***

It's almost like God anticipates our excuses. 'Benefit her or him! Yeah but you don't know what they did/said ...' this is the epitome of what it means to be follower of Christ; you follow Christ and do what He did. A few verses down we read in v.2

<sup>21</sup> *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* <sup>22</sup> "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup> *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

'I didn't sign up for this!' Actually, we did. Remember how the chapter started? '*Rid yourselves of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, slander ... live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong ... when they hurled their insults don't retaliate.*'

Why shouldn't I retaliate? We have to be always thinking ahead, think of the future.

*they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

"Why do we do anything as a believer? Whether we eat and drink or whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31). Here too. Peter says some might get saved!

### ***So that God may be glorified through your witness (v.12c)***

Unbelievers don't glorify God. But they might if by our godly witness and non-retaliatory response to their hatred and seeking to serve them and do them good, they might see with their eyes and come to faith in Christ. And at the final judgment they will glorify God for how He used us to point them to Christ. They saw that we were God's citizens not living like the rest of the world but by Jesus' example. And they figured out what Jesus came to do by how we treated them. And they realized God loved them too.

We might never see that result until the day He visits this world, but that's why we keep looking up and forward and keep His purposes before us. Earlier I said this is the hinge of the entire letter. And now Peter will go on to explain how this alien life should look like

***In every area of our life (2:13-4:11)***

If you have your bibles open, look at the next section. In 2:13-17 he says this is how you respond to authority and government. In 2:18-25 he says this is what an alien lifestyle looks like on your job. In 3:1-7 he says this is what an alien lifestyle looks like in your marriage and home. In 3:8-4:11 he says this is what an alien lifestyle looks like between fellow believers. And then in 4:12-19 he says this is what an alien lifestyle looks like when we're attacked by the unsaved. Which we'll look at this section in more detail next week.

Every area of our life and every relationship of our life is an opportunity where we can demonstrate that we are aliens to the sinful philosophies of this world and citizens of heaven by our speech and behavior. This is a daily challenge, because we only see this world in front of our eyes. From the moment we wake up til we go back to bed (and even as we lie awake at night) we have to remind ourselves this world is not our home; that we're just passing through. But that we have a divine purpose to demonstrate the love of Christ to those who have yet to receive Him. Even though they slander us, God still loves them and our seeking their benefit may indeed result in their salvation, which glorifies God. Let's pray for the wisdom and strength to live an alien mindset and lifestyle one day at a time for the glory of God.

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