

The Soul At War

1 Pet. 2:11-20

Introduction:

1. Reading 1 Pet. 2:11-12.
2. These verses stand as an introduction to the rest of the Epistle of First Peter.
3. Because of our unique relationship to Christ; because we are a people for God's own possession there are behavioral implications.
4. This passage provides a logical transition point between Peter's development of the unique relationship that we have with Christ and the behavioral implications associated with it.
5. The structure here is similar to what we see in other texts of Scripture, especially in Paul.
 - a. Romans 1-11 provides the theological foundation for what is stated in 12-16. 12:1-2 provides the pivot point.
 - a. Galatians 1-4 provides the theological foundation for the behavioral implications addressed in 5-6.
 - b. Ephesians 1-3 provides the theological foundation for the behavioral implications stated in 4-6.
 - c. Colossians 1-2 compared to 3-4 provides a similar construction.
6. What behaviors does Peter see as resulting from our being a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people for God's own possession? First, he speaks generally, and then addresses certain specifics and follows it with an admonition to resist the devil casting all our anxiety on the God who cares for us and who has all dominion (1 Pet. 5:6-11).

Discussion:

- I. The transition statement and its general assessment (2:11-12).
 - A. He addresses his hearers as "aliens and strangers." Cf. 1:1.
 1. They are aliens, strangers in the world because of their unique relationship to the Lord.
 2. They are called out of darkness and into His marvelous light.
 3. They are God's people; His spiritual house; redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. [This affects their conduct (1:17).]
 4. They live as strangers and aliens in the world.
 5. Do you regard yourself as a stranger and alien? Paul said, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior."
 - B. He urges them to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.
 1. Others have described this as a cultural war. Ex. John Stott in his work on the Sermon on the Mount titled his book The Christian Counter-Culture.
 2. Notice that the fleshly lusts are roughly equivalent to the behavior of the Gentiles (v. 12; cf. 1 Pet. 4:3ff). The Gentiles represent the people of the world. Note the contrast between the Gentiles, the people of the world and the people of God's own possession.
 3. These fleshly lusts war against the soul. I fear that we do not comprehend the destructive nature of these lusts and thus "flirt" with them.

- C. We are to keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles that they may be influenced to glorify God in the day of visitation (v. 12). It is not clear whether these are Gentiles converted that glorify God at Christ's coming or those who now recognize that the Christians were right and glorify God even though they are the objects of His judgment. It is probably the later.

II. Specific instructions. While the instructions involve specifics this is not to be interpreted as an exhaustive list of all the behavioral implications.

- A. In the area of submission (2:13-3:12).
1. To every human institution (2:13-17).
 2. Servants to masters (2:18-25).
 3. In marriage (3:1-7).
 4. In summary (3:8-12).
- B. The war sometimes involves suffering (3:13-4:19).
1. We are to endure it patiently (2:20).
 2. We are not to revile in return, nor utter threats (2:23).
 3. We are to entrust our souls to Him who judges righteously (2:23).
 4. We are to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead (3:8-9).
 5. We must keep our tongue from evil and our lips from deceit. We must seek peace and pursue it (3:10-11).
 6. We are to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts (3:15). Making a defense here is not about arguing our enemy under the rug. It is about giving reason about why we are who we are and why we behave the way we do. It is with gentleness and reverence.
 7. Christ is victorious and we will be too (3:17-4:1).
 8. So we are not to live for the lusts of men, but for the will of God (4:1-6).
 9. The end is near (4:7-11).
 10. But don't be surprised at the difficulty. Keep entrusting your souls to a faithful Creator (4:12-19).
 11. "Serve God Willingly" is the title of Chapter 5 in the NASB. It summarizes the thrust of the text.
 - a. Shepherds must serve this way.
 - b. All of us need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God realizing He cares for us and even though we suffer it is but a moment. He will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us.
 - c. He has the dominion!

Conclusion:

1. In the war against the soul we will win.
2. Suffering is characteristic of the war.
3. Our response will follow the example of Christ.
4. God will exalt us at the proper time.

