

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expositional Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 2:11-25**

### 21- How to Live as Aliens and Strangers- Part 3 Turning Persecution Into Praise

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June 3, 2018

#### **1 Peter 2:11-25**

**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.

**13** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

**14** or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

**15** For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

**16** *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

**17** Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

**18** Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

**19** For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

**20** For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

**21** For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

**22** *WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;*

**23** and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

**24** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

**25** For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

To the Glory of God

Now several years ago, during a very intense time of fasting and prayer, God came near to me and began to bring great conviction into my heart concerning my Service to Him, my Obedience to Him. And I began to question my own heart as to *why* I was "serving Jesus Christ", and what exactly was my *motivation* for "obeying the Commands of the Lord". And that conviction led me to delve deeply into the Scriptures where I ran across several obscure verses that, before this time, I simply brushed off and ran past. Here is one, from **Psalms 90:14**, where Moses sang:

**O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.**

And since this verse was sung by the man used by God to pen down the first five Books of the Bible about 1,450 years before Jesus was born, I began to see that what this verse says is the way things have *always* been. So, as you read through the 66 Books of the Bible, you see that there are two great Passions that are specifically detailed throughout every Book:

1. God's Passion for His Own Glory
2. The Passion of the Human Heart to be Happy

Now because this is in the **Psalms**, we know that this was actually a *song* that Moses sung in the Hebrew language. But this is *not* simply a song that is *inspiring*, like many of the songs we sing, but this is actually an "inspired song". So, this verse is not just *interesting*, it is

*inerrant and infallible*. And it holds the key to our Service toward God and our Obedience to God.

Now, over the centuries since he wrote this, we have lost the music to all 150 of the **Psalms**, but God sovereignly preserved the words for us so that we would not just *read* them, but *understand* them and *believe* them, and then *apply* them to our lives. And the dynamic that Moses puts forth here is that our singing for joy and the gladness that covers our entire lives is the result of us being "satisfied" in God, in the morning, by His Lovingkindness. And so, this verse brings together those two great Passions:

1. God wants us to be satisfied in Him in Who He is (illustrated this time by the Divine Attribute of His Lovingkindness [Mercy]).
2. We want to sing for joy and be glad all our days.

But, as we study this, we see that this is not only a *song* that Moses sung, but it is also a *prayer* that Moses prayed. God wanted Moses to be satisfied with His Lovingkindness, and Moses wanted to be like this. So, he prayed about it and he sang about it.

And that caused me to begin to see that the pathway to *me* singing for Joy, and of *me* being glad all my days, is *not* in the accumulation of this world's goods or in indulging in my carnal lusts. No, the key to *me* singing for joy and being glad all my days was *me* first becoming satisfied in God!

So, sin is what people do when their heart is *not* satisfied in God. Yet, no one sins out of "Duty". We are tempted to disobey because sin promises us some measure of happiness and satisfaction. And, like Eve, we become mesmerized and deceived by the promises that sin makes to us. And so, the very nature of Temptation is that when we are tempted, we see Obedience to God as a *hinderance* to our joy.

From the time we are born we are taught to want to be happy and joyful and glad, but we are *not* taught to be satisfied in God. And so, we go to money, and we say, "*Satisfy me!*" And we go to fame and power, and we say, "*Satisfy me!*" We go to sex and material possessions to receive our joy and gladness, but we do not normally or naturally go to God to be happy. We normally see serving God as "what we are *supposed* to do". And so, the happiest Being in the Universe becomes Someone we dread, and Someone we hesitate to embrace. And His

Ways become quickly melted down into a "labor" and a "work" that we have to "perform" or "do".

So, when we sin, we seek satisfaction from what has been made and what is passing away, while *rejecting* the very Fountain of Living Water, Who wants us to be happier than we can even imagine and Who would satisfy us fully and become the very Source of our Joy and Gladness.

So, the picture that is painted by the world (and sadly by many in the Church) that "serving God" and "keeping His Commandments" and "obeying what the Bible says" is dry and dull and boring, and is accomplished by human effort and discipline, and is carried out because of Duty and Obligation, is a terrible lie. God wants us to be happier than anyone else. You have never for five minutes wanted to be as happy as God wants you to be happy.

But because He is God, and because He is Omniscient and knows everything about everything, God knows that us indulging in sin and us living in rebellion and us walking in disobedience and us not magnifying God's Own intrinsic Value will only accomplish two things:

1. God will *not* be glorified.
2. We will *not* be happy.

You see, God is the only Being in the Universe where "Self-exaltation" is the *highest* Virtue and the most *loving* Act. God is the most "God-centered" Person in the Universe. God is *totally* "God-centered", *radically* "God-centered", *completely* "God-centered". And this is why people don't understand Predestination or the Ways of God on the earth. Because *everything* that God does, from choosing unworthy sinners for Salvation before they are even born, and before He even made the world, to using little boys to slay giants with rocks, everything that God does He does to show Himself mighty and glorious and wonderful!

And, normally, that Truth would exclude us ever having any joy. Because, normally, either somebody else is first, or we are. And so, if we are ever going to be happy, we need to put *ourselves* and *our* interests first. And that is true with everything *except* God. Because, in God, the fullness of *our* Joy is found only in us making much of God. So, it is God's exaltation of *Himself* that is the pathway to *our* eternal

Gladness. So, Sin robs God of the Glory that belongs to Him, and Sin robs us of the joy that God intends for us.

And instinctively we know this is true when we examine what we are going to do when we get to Heaven. Because, in Heaven, with eyes that have never seen evil, and with ears that have never heard crying, and with mouths that have never uttered unkindness, with hands that have never engaged in wickedness, with feet that have never run to mischief, we will worship God forever! In Heaven *all* of the sin and *all* of the barriers and *all* of the filters and *all* of the hinderances will be gone, and we will see God as He really is. We will behold God in the fullness of His unfiltered Glory. And what will be our response? Two things:

## **1. God will be glorified**

### **The Revelation 5:11-14**

**11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,**

**12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."**

**13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."**

**14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.**

## **2. Our Joy will be full**

### **Psalm 16:11**

**In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

Since God is the best and the most glorious and most beautiful and most worthy Being in the entire Universe, God knows that the very *best* way to *love* us is *not* by helping us to indulge in fallen cravings that seek to exalt *us*, but by *removing* the barriers that keep us from

exalting *Him*. Because only by us seeing God as our highest Treasure, can we ever reach the fullness of Joy.

For example, when you go to the mountains and walk up to the top, many times you see a bubbling spring of water. And that spring flows naturally out from the rocks, and then flows down the mountain because of gravity and becomes a powerful river.

But, at the top, the spring just flows all by itself. So, what can a human do to properly show respect for the spring? Should we go to bottom, to the mighty river, and fill up our canteens, and then walk back up and pour the contents of our canteen into the spring? Would that honor the spring? No. Why not? Because, I don't have the power to add anything to the value of the spring.

Emptying the contents of my canteen into the spring doesn't make the spring to be more glorious than it already is. Why? Because what I am giving *to* the spring came *from* the spring. So, I'm not really contributing *anything* to the value and the worth and the beauty and the importance of the spring by dumping what I got from the spring back into it. I'm simply taking what the spring gave me and pouring it back in. And this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said:

### **Romans 11:33-36**

**33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**

**34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?**

**35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?**

**36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.**

So, how do you honor the spring? How can we show respect for the spring? The way you glorify a spring of living water is *not* by hauling buckets of your own "self-wrought labor" up from the valleys of humanity and dumping them in the spring and saying, "*There, be enriched, O, spring.*"

No, the way you glorify a spring is by recognizing how thirsty you are. You honor the spring by forsaking every *other* kind of drink. And you honor the spring by walking up to the spring and falling prostrate

before the spring and drinking deeply from the spring, and saying, "*Ah!*" And then, in the strength that the spring provides, you go forth and beckon others to join you in honoring the spring.

So, the one, true, living God, Who is revealed in the pages of Scripture, is that Spring. And that is why the Prophet Jeremiah was so stunned when he saw Israel turning away from God and cried out:

**Jeremiah 2:13**

**For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.**

In other words, the great Sin of the world is the *failure* to pursue happiness with enough intelligence and enough passion to *forsake* the broken cisterns of the fleeting pleasures of sin, and come and drink deeply from God until we are satisfied.

So, what I am teaching here is that following Jesus and serving God and obeying the Commands of Scripture can actually become *enemies* of the Cross, unless we serve and follow and obey solely because we have been truly smitten with love *for* and delight *in* God. We make God look terrible if we pursue submission to what He said based in mere "Duty" or "Obligation". Because, that allows us to glory in our own efforts at Obedience. And that makes us a Pharisee.

But we make God look glorious if we have come to the reasoned conclusion that Jesus is utterly magnificent and our passion to be happy and God's Passion to be glorified meet together under the Banner of gracious Obedience. And God only looks even better and better if we do that under intense persecution.

So, the reason I have tried to bring this information to you *first* is because there is a danger in reading what Peter says here in this Passage, and then going forth to obey without understanding the dynamic that unless our Obedience and Service and Submission to God is bathed in the pursuit of God's Glory and our Joy, then God will not look great and we will not be happy. Look again at what Peter says in verse 11:

**Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

Now there are several very large and very important refugee relief efforts underway, right now, all around the world. Tens of millions of human beings are being driven from their homes and businesses because of war and famine, and because of the activity of drug cartels. And many of the wealthier nations of the world in combination with Christian Organizations are laboring non-stop to help these people find safety and comfort.

But, according to the famous 20<sup>th</sup> Century Psychologist, Abraham Maslow, these tens of millions of people basically need three basic things:

1. Shelter
2. Food/Water
3. Clothing

... and everything else they might want or need flows out from these three things. Maslow developed what he called "Humanistic Psychology" that taught that human beings do what they do based on their need for these primary things. Of course, major American Universities took what Maslow taught and propagated it all over the world, not in the least part because Maslow categorically denied the Fall and Original Sin.

But, later in life, Maslow saw the utter failure of his so-called "Hierarchy", and he began to ask very serious questions like:

"Why don't more people self-actualize if their basic needs are met?"

... and ...

"How can we humanistically understand the problem of evil?"<sup>1</sup>

Now contrast what Maslow taught with what the Apostle Peter told the refugees of his day, who had been driven from their homes because of intense persecution at the hands of Nero, when he said:

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<sup>1</sup> Rennie, David (2008). "Two thoughts on Abraham Maslow". *Journal of humanistic psychology*. **48** (4): 445–448. doi:10.1177/0022167808320537.



**Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

So, I ask again: *"Is this the single most important issue that you instruct believers, who are being persecuted and driven from their homes?"* Evidently, if you believe that God the Holy Spirit "moved along" Peter to write this down. So, over against the so-called "primary needs" based in "humanistic psychology", we see clear, inerrant, Instructions from the pen of an Apostle who teaches, *infallibly*, that *the* single most primary need for believers is *not* food, water, and shelter, it is *not* that their pagan tormentors let up on the persecution, and it's *not* even that they live or die. The single most important issue that God desires for His people is that they see Him as the Fountain of all Living Waters, and they respond to what they see with faithful obedience to the Savior Who lived and died and rose again.

And the reason I'm bringing up all that I have said before is that I don't believe for a second that "serving God out of Obligation or Duty" can make you the kind of person who will be faithful and obedient under these kinds of circumstances. I don't think that *ginning up* your own will-power can make you the kind of person who will see that "faithfulness" outweighs living. I don't see a single example of that anywhere in the martyrs of the Bible. I don't hear any of them talk about things like "Discipline" or "putting forth more effort" so they can "die well" for Jesus. When I'm looking in the Bible for examples of how God's people faced persecution and hardship and trouble and certain death- here is what I read:

**The Acts 7:55b-60**

**55 ... being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;**

**56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."**

**57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.**

**58 When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.**

**59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"**

**60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.**

... and as these evil men were allowed by God to stone Stephen to death, here is what they saw:

#### **The Acts 6:15**

**And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.**

... this had nothing to do with dry "Obligation" or joyless "Duty" or self-righteous "Discipline". Stephen did not remain faithful to God in the face of certain death because he was "supposed to", or because it was the "right things to do". No, Stephen saw the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, and he was supernaturally empowered to *love* what he saw, and then be changed into what he saw. You simply can't "work that up", you can't *manufacture* that, and you can't fake it.

And so, Peter's Commands in this section are *not* about us leaving Grace aside and becoming Sanctified through works of the flesh. We *cannot* drink deeply of the Fountain of living Water to be saved and then serve God by resorting to more fleshly activity. No, we are *sanctified* "by Grace and through Faith", the very *same way* we were *saved* "by Grace through Faith". We will *obey* God "by Grace through Faith", even as we were *saved* "by Grace through Faith", or else God will *not* be glorified and we will *not* possess the fullness of Joy. The "Grace and the Faith" that *saves* is also the "Grace and the Faith" that *sanctifies*.

So, I tremble before you as we now begin to get into the nitty-gritty of what Peter is saying here, because I fear that, as we focus severely on "what" Peter tells us to do here, we might lose sight of "how" and "why" we are to obey. So, let's begin with his Apostolic Command in verse 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.**

Here, Peter is instructing the “scattered aliens”, and us, on just *how* we are to turn those who persecute us into people who will join in *with* us to praise the glorious Name of Jesus. And here, we will not do it *primarily* because of what we say, but on *how* we utterly *abandon* ourselves to live for God and obey His Word while living underneath the persecution that God has allowed them to give to us.

And notice that we are told to “**keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles**”, *not* having been gloriously and mercifully *delivered* from the persecution, and *not* after having been *relieved* of the unjust and unfair treatment, but while we are still in it.

And this Truth illustrates a dynamic that I have learned since God revealed Himself to me through my intense study of the Bible:

- ✓ God is *Sovereign*
- ✓ God is *absolutely* Sovereign
- ✓ God is absolutely Sovereignly *over everything*
- ✓ God is absolutely Sovereign over everything – *all the time*

... and that means that there are no “accidents”, there is no such thing as “coincidences” or “unplanned events”. There is no such thing as “chance” or “fate”, but God is *absolutely, totally, completely* in charge of *everything* that happens, from the sun rising and setting, to the galactic expansion of the Universe, to the politics of my nation, to the hairs on my head turning white, to my heart beating the next beat, to the persecution of His Own people, and to what we perceive to be “hurtful”, “unfair”, and “unjust” things that seem to suddenly come upon us.

And not only is God that wise and majestic and powerful, but the one, true, and living God, Who is revealed in Scripture is also Good, and He is Kind, and Merciful. And He never forgets His people.

And that means that the trial that has come upon you, seemingly out of nowhere, is a *pre-determined* and *planned* Event that God has sent to you specifically for one reason: so that you can be changed in the fire of that trial, and so that you may share in the very Holiness of God. But Peter says here that by beholding our transformed lives, even the Gentiles will glorify Him.

Therefore, because that is true, God’s children, who have been called by His Name and chosen to be the instruments on whom God displays the Glory of His Grace, should never faint in the trial. We

should not become “weary of well-doing”. We should not slow down or ease up or pace ourselves. Because if what the Bible says about God and why God allows suffering to come to His Own people is true, then we should not only *survive* the trial, but we should actually *thrive* in it.

So, the motivation behind why people, who are under intense persecution, should keep their behavior excellent among the very people who are persecuting them, is the Promise of God that what God is doing *in* them and *through* them and *for* them, in the fires of this trial, is what will equip them to share in the very Holiness of God.

There is *nothing* here in verse 12 that would lead us to believe that Peter wants these scattered aliens to simply “hold on”. There is nothing here that would lead any of us to believe that Peter wants these persecuted believers to take on a *defensive position* so they could simply “outlast” their tormentors.

No, Peter clearly says here that when the persecution gets the hardest, we are to believe *better* and hope *more* and trust *stronger* and obey *from the heart*, and live even *more* godly. Peter says:

### **Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles**

... and the word that was translated here into English as “**behavior**” comes from a Greek word (*anastrofee*; Strongs #391), that has to do with a person's *normal, daily life*.<sup>2</sup> And the word that was translated as “**excellent**” comes from a Greek word (*kalos*; Strongs #2570), that means: *beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent; good, excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to its ends; beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence, praiseworthy; morally good, noble; honorable, conferring honor; affecting the mind agreeably, comforting and confirming*.<sup>3</sup>

So, we are to “keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles”. We are to live this life with excellence. In other words, saved people do not merely “hold on till the storm passes by”. The Bible teaches that the Trial is actually a gift from a loving God that will allow us be able to bring God glory, and that will empower us to experience the fullness of Joy better and more fully than if we had never gone through the Trial.

So, we are actually made “better” because of the storm. We see God more clearly, we behold His Glory more purely, We obey more easily,

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and we understand more fully than if we had never suffered. We are made to be more like Jesus in the fire than we would have if we had *never* suffered harm. *That* is exactly what the Bible teaches about the suffering of His people. And that is what the Bible has always taught about the suffering of His people. And so, one of two things is true:

1. The Bible is a lie, and God is a psychopathic monster, Who loves to see His Own people hurt.
2. The Bible is true, and God is Good to allow horrific pain and suffering precisely because He loves us so much. And so, He's not about to allow us to remain the way we are, but will change us so that we may share in His Holiness.

Now over the last couple of Sermons, I tried to show you how that what you *believe* is connected into how you *live your lives*. So, "careless believing" will lead to "careless living". "Sloppy theology" leads to "sloppy lives". Being "nonchalant about Doctrine" will make you "nonchalant about how you live your life".

And so, striving to understand Divine Truth properly, correctly, and fully will *always* translate into an ongoing "striving" to *apply* what you have learned to your daily life. And, like I said, you can't wing this, you can't gin this up, you can't manufacture this, and you can't fake it. It's either real or its contrived. It's either genuine, or its superficial, it's either passionate or it's dry rote.

And so, the key to obey what Peter is saying here is *not* to simply "try harder" or "put forth more effort". No, that is what Abraham Maslow taught. But Jesus and His Apostles taught that the *first* thing that we do, and the *second* thing that we do, and the *third* thing that we do, and the *only* thing that we do is that we come to Fountain of Living Waters, and we see how glorious He really is. And, in seeing that, we sense our own dryness. And so, the fruit of seeing God, the response to beholding the Glory of God, is that we confess our great thirst.

And what do we "do" when we finally see? Do we then run off and obey? No. The very first response to seeing is that we come to God. So, we first draw near, we come, and we come *often*. And when we come, we confess that all of our efforts and all of our discipline has not quenched our thirst. In fact, those things have only made us *more* thirsty.

So, we come to the Water *desperately*. Coming to the Water is not “nice”, it isn’t just “good”, coming to the Water is a matter of life and death. And, if it isn’t, if coming to Jesus to drink of Him is not really that big of a deal, then we will remain dry, and the Gentiles, the unbelievers, will see no difference in us than they see in everyone else, and they will not know that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe.

But when we come to Jesus as though there are no other options, as though there is no “Plan B”, as though there is no other Solution, when we come to God desperately, that unless God, in His Goodness, allows us to drink of Him, we will surely die, then Peter said that those who persecute us will understand that what makes us be like that, surely, is *better* than gold or silver, or even life itself, and the persecutors will join in with us to praise the Name of the Lord!

Peter says here that as the Gentiles, the unbelievers, behold our “good deeds” that flow out from a life that has been changed by beholding the Glory of God, they won’t be able to brush it off. Because living like that is patently *unnatural*, and it is certainly *not* normal.

So, we come *desperately*. And then we drink. And it won’t be “polite drinking”, it won’t be “delicate drinking”. The way we drink of Jesus is the way that people, who are on the verge of dying from thirst, drink. And so, we drink *deeply*, and we drink *often*, and we drink as though our lives depend on it. And because we judge this Fountain to be the best and the only one that can quench our thirst, we prove that we believe that, by forsaking all other drinks, because God is the only drink that keep us from perishing.

Now keep in mind that the pagan Romans thought that Christians were atheists, in that they rejected the many gods of the world and worshipped only the one true and living God. The Gentiles also thought that the “little Christs” were cannibals, because they spoke often about “eating the flesh” and “drinking the Blood” of their Savior. They also thought the “people of the Way” were sexually perverted, because they spoke often about loving each other, and of greeting one another with a “holy kiss”.

But, perhaps the issue that caused the “followers of Jesus” the *most* trouble is that they did not look at Caesar as a “god”, and they looked at Government as a creation of God that was different from the Church, but something that should be operated according to the Principles of the Word of God. So, the deepest and highest loyalty of

genuine believers was to Jesus Christ, and *not* to the State. And this caused great conflict because the Roman authorities considered Christianity to encourage insurrection and anarchy.

And yet, in the midst of all this distrust, Peter tells the believers to:

**Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles...**

Now look at the very next phrase:

**... so that ...**

... now this is a phrase that is used about 992 different times throughout the 66 Books of the Bible. So, this is a very *common* expression that God the Holy Spirit used a lot. And this phrase is used to convey the purpose or the reason behind why God tells us to do different things. For example, **Genesis 18:19** says that God chose Abraham...

**... so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.**

In **Leviticus 18**, God gave His people very *narrow* restrictions on how they could express themselves, *sexually*...

**28 so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you.**

**29 'For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do *so* shall be cut off from among their people.**

In **Deuteronomy 11**, God repeated the various Commands that He gave to His people in the first four Books...

**so that you may prolong *your* days on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.**

And in the New Testament, in **Titus 2**, the Apostle Paul gave Instructions on how women, sixty years old and older were to teach younger women....

**Titus 2:5b**

... **so that the word of God will not be dishonored.**

... meaning that if older women did *not* teach the younger women, and if the younger women didn't listen, then the Word of God *would* be dishonored. Then he taught how Church Leaders should behave ...

**Titus 2:8b**

... **so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.**

... and finally, the Apostle taught how slaves, servants, and employees should act on the job...

**Titus 2:10b**

... **so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.**

... and here in **1 Peter 2:12**, the Apostle was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to tell the persecuted believers of his day that they were to live their normal, daily lives in such a way that displays *what* they think about the Bible and *Who* they believe God to be....

... **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.**

So, in the very areas where the Gentile unbelievers are suspicious about them the *most*, in the issues about which they doubt the Christians *more often*, in the areas where their belief in the Bible and their love For God has caused them to experience the *most* persecution...

... **in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers...**



... it is in *those* areas where we are to live beyond reproach, with the highest degree of integrity and honesty. Why? So that, the Gentiles will see our "good works"...

... **because of your good deeds, as they observe *them* ...**

Now what exactly are these "**good deeds**"? There is no reason here in the text to assume that these "good deeds" are great and astounding or breathtaking works. No, they are simply the normal way you live your daily life, as you struggle against the lusts of your flesh, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, to live humbly and joyfully in submission to the Authority of Scripture, to the Glory of God. And as the unbelievers see you doing this *constantly, ongoingly*, God the Holy Spirit will deal with them in an amazing way. Because living like this is not normal. They don't live like this. So, why are you living this way? Your living like this is an outward *reflection* of the God you love, and of the God Who has purchased you, and how glorious you think He really is. Now look at what Peter says will happen:

**they may ... glorify God in the day of visitation**

Now Peter used an interesting word here. He doesn't use the Greek word that *guarantees* that all Gentiles will actually do this. He doesn't say, "They *will*..." Rather he says, "**They may...**" They *may*, they will be *able* to glorify God. And what Peter means by this is that there won't be any "artificial barriers" to the Gentiles glorifying God.

You see, when God's people don't serve God, when those who say they believe the Bible live *contrary* to what the Bible says, it puts a hindrance, a blockage, a barrier in front of the unbeliever. When the Prophet Nathan confronted David over his sin, look what he told the king in **2 Samuel 12:14a**:

**However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme...**

When the normal, daily testimony of the lives of God's people is that we don't live any differently than anybody else, we prove that the God we serve is really not that big of a deal. We testify with our lives

how *great* or how *ordinary* our God is. And when the unbeliever sees us fall, he laughs and says, *"I knew there wasn't anything to it"*. So, our *refusal* to magnify the God we say is glorious by our transformed lives gives rise to the unbeliever blaspheming God.

But, when we live as those who have become smitten with love and admiration of the God who has captured our hearts, we prove to the world how glorious Jesus really is. And even though God still has to sovereignly bring to them the Miracle of the New Birth, they *may*, they are now *able* to join in with us, and glorify God.

So, us, keeping our behavior excellent before the Gentiles, *especially* when we are being persecuted by these very same Gentiles, will allow these unbelievers to see the Value and the Worth of the Christ we serve. And they will wonder after Him and give His glory.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.