

The Gospel on Display

Reflecting the Gospel Through 1 Peter 2:11-12

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Please go ahead and turn with me to your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 2. We're going to begin with verse 11 for tonight. As a way of introduction, Christian, I want you to remember the day when that moment you understood yourself as an enemy of God, hostile to Him, enmity against God, as the Word of God puts it. In an instant moment when you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you were no longer an enemy. You were no longer hostile to the very God of all relationships. Do you remember that moment, that magnitude, that huge weight of burden just being completely removed? That is the greatest thing, the relationship between you and God through the Lord Jesus Christ that must be taken care of on this side of heaven. That was taken care of. The shock factor doesn't just stay for you within a day. It stays with you day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade. If God gives you that much time, century, but you get to see it in your sanctification that the day you were no longer an enemy of God, something changed in your life that you knew this is something new that has happened in your life where you're on a different path now altogether. Yes, there's ups and downs, but the ultimate trajectory is to the glory of God. He must increase, Christ must increase, and you must decrease. This is the overwhelming thrust of your life, that He must increase that I might decrease, that contrast. I want you to just get a sense of that weight, that weight of glory that God has placed in your life.

It starts with your relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it affects all other relationships in your life. The immediate change that happens is the one you thought was an enemy, a Christian witnessing to you, a Christian praying for you, a Christian doing good things for you, is now you are a friend to each other at the deepest sense, which is agape love, which only Christians can experience that love for one another. Then it goes further out. It broadens out. God says, "No, it's not just between me and myself, and not only between the Christians, my brothers and sisters, but now it's extended to the world." Extended to the world. If you can think of it, it starts with you and God Himself, the Lord Jesus, then expands out to Christians, your brothers and sisters in Christ, and extends further out to the world. You are to minister out of that centeredness.

We see it played out beautifully in our time in the study of 1 Peter. We've experienced what salvation looks like to a believer, that it was starting off with election. We didn't choose God. God chose us. Though we were scattered about, though our lives were just a mess. Of course, I'm not talking about specifically in the text, but I'm just saying specific to this. Unlike the Jews, they were scattered because of a reason. As a Gentile believer, you were in a life of a mess. You were disorderly. You preferred the things of the world more than things of God. Then you saw that it was the Spirit of God in you that you could no longer disobey God. Whenever you disobeyed Him, He chastened you, didn't He? He would chasten you again and again and again because of His love. You are now able to obey Him. What a clear assurance of our salvation. It

was because it was wrought by the Spirit of God in verse 2. Then you were able to, out of your lips and out of your heart, say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He experienced the mercy that you were going in a direction. He stopped that from happening. You wanted to go your way. He stopped it. That's what mercy is. He didn't give you what you deserve. He extended His mercy. We see that in verse 3, abundantly. How many times have you gone astray, and He stopped it from happening? That wasn't you. That was God through His Spirit. That's why His mercy is going to continue to extend out. Even as you go astray, He's going to make sure you come back. Come back. Come back.

It's abundant mercy that you have this hope that because Jesus is resurrected, you are resurrected, that you have this new hope. Whatever hope you had that was going like this, now it's secure in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it's what anchors you for everything else in your life, however your life may go. Everyone that's in this auditorium, I'm sure, is unique in their trials, unique in the sense of the timing as well, unique in the age, unique in where you are located. But God is there for you, isn't He? We can sense it when we come together in a gathered group like this, where we can share things and go, "Yes, I know what you're going through because I'm going through the same similar thing, and we can share in that agape love." Because we're experiencing it in one God, one Lord, one Spirit. We're all united.

Now we're going to go to the text, verses 11 and 12. Just a big picture is the picture of a Christian's life is a battle. It's a battle as well as a witness. In many ways, this is the gospel on display. Christian, because you are saved doesn't mean you're not going to battle in this life. It's just a different battle you're in. It's a spiritual battle. You're no longer an enemy of God, but you are now a witness and a testimony to a hostile world. If you don't feel hostility towards the world, check your testimony. Are you really living out a life that is all for the Lord Jesus Christ and your display of the gospel? Because if you are, you will experience hostility throughout your life, to a small degree to a large degree, depending on your witness of what God has done in your life that you want to share it with the hostile world.

Verse 11 introduces a new word. If you look, we're not going to touch it right now, but high view, we're looking at this word "dearly beloved." It's the first time it's come in this instance, and we're not going to see it again until chapter 4, verse 11. This word is so important before we go into all the things that we are to battle out. Let's go into the word "dearly beloved." This word has the emphasis of intensity, sincerity of what? The second part of that phrase, of love. Dearly beloved, in fact, conveying an earnest affection. It has a sense of, "I'm pouring out my whole heart to you in this word, dearly, beloved." The beloved signals something that we don't often say to ourselves. We say love, but we don't say the word beloved, do we? Because it's very unique in this way. It's a connection to God's love. This phrase highlights that not only Peter's love, which is that part "dearly," that's Peter speaking. "I deeply love you with all sincerity, with all earnestness." I want you to know that God loves you even more because only God's love is incomparable to our love. That word "dearly" is like the closest thing that, humanly speaking, can share to somebody. That word "dearly." It's ultimately that "dearly" word is rooted in God's love for us as Christians, which comes out in another way where the word "precious" in His sight, where we saw that in the previous text, is another sense of it. He highly wants to lift us up and be honorable. He wants us to be honorable.

How are we going to be honorable? He's going to lay it out for us in the rest of the text. He wants us, as we're reading, to grasp the address of this part of the letter. He wants us to see the force of this love that God has towards us. It's for our well-being. His love is always for our well-being. His love is always for our ultimate good.

We go to the next part of the word "beseech." This word means with urgency, persuasiveness. "I plead with you. Act in a certain way." Not in a confusing way. A certain way. That's what that word "beseech" means. Anytime you hear the word "beseech," what comes after means, "This is the way I want you to act in this certain way." The emphasis is continuing on that in that verse. Look with me. It says, "as strangers and pilgrims." We saw this previously in verse 1. We saw the word "stranger," chapter 1, verse 1. Then we saw another word, "sojourners," chapter 1, verse 17. Sojourner has a different emphasis than the word "pilgrim." We saw "stranger" twice. Now you see "sojourners" once, and now we see this word "pilgrims." All these words are important. Sojourners is the idea of, "I have foreign status. You have foreign status. This is not your main citizenship." Another way of putting it, your citizenship is in heaven, and what your status is here is like alien. This is foreign land to you. This is temporary residence to you. The word "pilgrim" has a different emphasis: you are traveling with purpose to a specific destination. Just keep that in mind as you take in these words.

As a Christian, do you at times feel that this world isn't your home? Does that come to your mind again and again? Because that's one way that God is at work in your life, that this text, "stranger and pilgrim," speaks to you. You have this tension of feeling uncomfortable here on this earth. What I mean by that is the things of the world, not the good things of God, but just the world system. Something just makes you feel uncomfortable. Every time it goes against the Scriptures, it just rises up. That's not you. That is God at work in your life. He brings about the tension because you have a new nature now. Anything that is opposed to God, it will cause tension in your life. What about less interest in the pleasures of this world? It doesn't interest you ultimately, but when you hear about God and the Word of God, that is what interests you. Again, another tension appearing in your life, and that's all happening internally. Everything that's happening from the external, there's this tension.

We touched on it last time, that you were once not a people. We were once not a people, but now we are the people of God. It's a reminder that we were bought with a price, that we were redeemed by Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. There was a purpose behind Him dying on the cross. It wasn't just only, which is important, paying for our sins, but that from that moment on, there was a change in the inner man. In the inner man, you are now people of God, a people of God.

With all that has been said in this text, verse 9 of chapter 2, God called us out, every child of God, out of His darkness, out of darkness of this world and into His marvelous light. That means all forms of darkness dominated by sin and evil. Anything that's dominated by sin or evil, He has brought us out of that. We are no longer dominated by sin. That's not the thing that controls us. It doesn't dominate us. Evil doesn't dominate us anymore. What dominates us now is God's marvelous light. That's what dominates us. A change has happened. We can't change that. Can you change your dominating eye or dominant arm? That's God. It's creation. When He creates something in you that you have no control over, He changes everything in the course of your life. It is another way to praise the Lord for what He has done because this complete transformation

that happens where you are in a state of constant sin without control in spiritual darkness, but now made new to a life of purity and a life where you are having a direct relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not just a light that has no change. That's not what "marvelous" means. It has a sense of with amazement. That's what "marvelous" means. But it's joined with a fear of God. Remember the time when Moses stepped on holy ground? It wasn't just light that affected him. He was affected with holiness. That's what holiness brings. It brings about this fear of God. His presence is felt. It's not just seen. That's the idea of this word "marvelous light." It causes us to reflect His glory and proclaim all of His excellencies to the world. We talked about that, preached about that last week.

Now, let's go to the next part of this text where it says, "abstain from fleshly lusts." Notice the word says "fleshly lusts." In a previous text, we saw the word just mentioned as "lusts." That was found in 1 Peter 1:14, where it read like this: "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." Here we see lusts, but now with this word included, "fleshly." What we see here is that in that situation, it showed us and explained to us the calling. You see in the text, we're called to be obedient children, called not to fashion ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance. We are called out of ignorance. We are called out from disobedience, and the Spirit does that in verse 2. He does the work of obedience in our hearts, and He's the one that purifies us from our former lusts. But here in this part of the text in chapter 2, verse 11, it provides applicable, practical application. We're going to see it now in the day-to-day. How does it look like? That was our calling. Now, what are we called to, and how does it look like practically? This is where we're going to see it.

Just before I go into it, this is something that we must be well aware of if you haven't been well aware of on a daily basis: the Christian's first and greatest difficulty is with himself, bodily passions around him with no sense of holding himself under control. But now as a Christian, we have been given power that once we did not have control, and we do now. We see that in Galatians 5:23. We have self-control. Again, it's because of the Spirit we have control. We must depend upon Him constantly in our battle with ourselves because we are the first part of the battle.

He says, "abstain." Abstain on this word means an active holding back. You are actively thinking about these things that you're supposed to be aware of, and you're supposed to hold back. That's the thrust of the word "abstain." Hold back, refuse to go into these certain types of sins. That's "fleshly lusts." He calls it out. It's fleshly lusts, a thing that you're supposed to hold back on. You're supposed to refuse because those desires of the flesh will always cause spiritual harm. It will always cause spiritual harm. Peter commands it: "Look, strangers and pilgrims, abstain from those passions that work in you that are against God. The flesh wages war against the soul."

We're going to see those things that he talks about. I want you to refer back to chapter 2, verse 1, because here Peter told us the works of the flesh. He listed it: malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and slander. Remember that word "slander." Keep it in the forefront of your mind because I'm going to go back to that. These are called out before, and we are to wage war against these things that attack our soul. "War" is a strong word. It's not a little fight that he uses as an expression. No, he uses a very strong word, "war." It's the idea that these fleshly lusts are an active service, engaging in a definite campaign against the immortal part of the man to what? Destroy your joy,

your peace, and your usefulness. We'll get to that in chapter 4, verses 2 and 3. But that is what fleshly lusts attack: your joy, your peace, and your usefulness to God. There's no form of sin so directly or so ruinously affects the spiritual life, which are the sins of the flesh. Keep that in the forefront of your mind.

Verse 12: "Having your conversation," another way of putting it, your behavior, "honest," another way of putting it, excellent, "among the Gentiles." These are any unbelieving Gentiles. We worked out verse 11 with a sense of this inward part of your life that must be worked out first as a priority before attacking the outward part of our lives among non-Christians, among the unbelievers around us, and it's reflected again: the outward reflects the inward part of our lives. What is the outward part of our lives? It's not simply just saying no from doing worldly things. That's not it. That's not waging war to just say, "No, I'm not going to do this. No, I'm not going to do that." That's not the thrust of the word "war." It's more than that. In fact, when I looked at this, I was like, "Oh, that's interesting. It's not in the negative. It's actually in the positive action." Never think again, "Oh, this is a negative thing I'm supposed to do." It's actually a positive thing. What is it? To be honest and good works. That is good. Amen. That is good. God has given you the ability to be honest and to do good works.

All believers in any kind of business that you are in, dealing with people of all sorts, you can show your praise to God by your honesty at work or at school. Wherever you are, Christian, He has given you the ability to be honest. That's one of the greatest witnesses you can be in this world. That's something that you do every day, day in and day out: you can display your honesty. That's a witness to the world. Amen. What is that word "honest"? I looked it up, and it's the idea of being simple in your words. It means be straightforward with sincerity, the purest, highest, noblest kind of goodness. That's a lot to take in, right? But it's the idea of this in a nutshell. It's all those words I just said. It's goodness that comes into sight. It should be visible. Outward life, goodness shown in the sight of men. That's the sense. The sense is to do it regularly. That's the motivation in this text: to do it daily, to make yourself attractive, winsome in your character, that when people look at you, they go, "There's something different that I want to know about this person. Why is he so good? Why is he so honest here and honest there when he could have just easily done a little bit of fudging or done a little bit of, you know what, no one's going to see this?" No, it's because you know, Christian, that God sees everything.

If He sees everything, you're going to be honest, you're just going to be good. He has changed the whole way you perceive and your perspective in life. Always remember that it's something that we can all very easily lose track of. That's why this word "war" is, it's a sense, it's ongoing. This war doesn't end. It's not like the wars in this life. It is going to continue on, this war, until Jesus Christ comes back in His second coming or we go to the Lord first. Just remember that. But again, the thrust is good. It's positive. That word "nobility" is quite a word. It's characterized, this word "nobility." I didn't want to take this one word out and explain it a little bit more because it is part of that word "honest." It's the idea of having spiritual wisdom, the idea of having spiritual might, that this power that you have is not from you, it's from God. Of course, the wisdom as well. Then God puts you in the highest rank of His family, comparing you to His Son, Jesus Christ. What higher rank than we have, that we are joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ in one part of the text. Here's our eldest brother. We are part of this amazing family of God.

Another reminder of this nobility that we are and we will be. It is things to come. But spiritually, we are positioned that way. God sees us as such, as if He was looking at His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. That should overwhelm you. That should cause awe in your life in a positive way, what God is doing in your life, the goodness as He's doing in your life, that out of this love, it must start with love. That's why He says, "dearly beloved." He doesn't go, "Hey, do this as a priority." No, He says, "Make sure you know you are loved by God," because love of God must come first before being obedient to God. That's the order He puts here. You must sense that love because out of the heart of obedience comes out first a heart of love. He loves you. He loves you like Jesus. Did not Jesus experience God's love perfectly? Did He not obey Him perfectly? Friends, we have our example, our great example of Jesus, perfectly loved, perfectly obedient. Of course, we're not going to be perfectly like Him, but we follow an example. Amen. We follow in His example.

Now, let's go to the next part of the text: "that whereas they speak against you as evildoers." Remember I told you the word "slander." This is where slander comes into play. It's where "evildoers," this word "slander." The early Christians, Dr. MacArthur wrote this, he said the early Christians were falsely accused of rebellion, such as terrorism, burning Rome, atheism, no idol worship, no emperor worship, cannibalism, rumors about the Lord's Supper, immorality because of their love for one another, and so much more. They were being slandered left and right, called out as evildoers because here's the association they thought: because in their time at night, because Christians were meeting at night at the beginning, first early church, and because they were doing things at night, I won't name things, but they were doing things right of lust and all types of fleshly sins of the flesh. They thought that we were doing the same thing. How wrong they were, how wrong they were. Amen. They were slandering for the just out of sheer thoughts what they were doing. None of that was connected to the way that they lived. None of it. Whatever horrors they connected with the Christian's life was all wrong because Christianity continues on. Christ continues to save. It still continues to do the good work in our lives, beginning with our salvation.

Let's continue on: "They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." This is, again, the outward display of the Christian life, the local church in relation to the world or in our community here in the local church of Calvary Road Baptist Church. Titus 2:7-8 puts it this way: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." Another way of putting it: by looking at your godly life, all the things that they put against you will be put to shame. Your life, the gospel on display, your lives as living it out in the day-to-day, in the workplace, in the school place, in your home, whatever the unbeliever will criticize you of, they can't criticize you of the godly life that you live, and who are you to return it back to, that they would one day glorify God. Amen. That they would one day, just like we were able to glorify God upon our salvation, that they may also glorify God. That's what will come out of their lips. It's, of course, up to God's timing. For us, we have the responsibility to always remind ourselves why we are still here on this earth. Why hasn't God brought us out from this world?

John 17, Jesus's high priestly prayer, He prayed that He would keep them from the evil one. That's the main thing that you should see in your life, that you're being kept away from the evil

one because Jesus is praying for you on a daily basis. He is interceding for you. Peter clearly alludes to Matthew 5:16, where it says, "Let your light shine before others, the unbelieving world, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." The word "visitation" speaks of redemption. In Luke 1:68, it reads this: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people." It's a joyful declaration of God's faithfulness and the realization of His promises to redeem His chosen people through the coming of the Messiah. Again, chosen. We've been chosen. He chose us in this generation, and He has brought us to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Peter is teaching here that when the grace of God visits the heart of an unbeliever, if he is chosen, he will respond with saving faith and glorify God because he remembers the testimony of believers he had observed. How many times, Christian, have someone come up to you and say, "You know, your witness affected part of my salvation"? You should hear that more than not. It's a good thing to pray for, that you might be a witness to an unbeliever in your life.

Let's continue to live out this way that God has intended for us. He has empowered us. He's laid it out for us how we are to live, what to avoid, but always to ground it with He loves us. He wants the best for us. These are all good things. It's for our goodness. It's for His glory. Keep all these things in mind as you go out from this door, and you know Monday comes, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, come back here. This is what you're going to experience in the day-to-day life because here, from this pulpit, it just helps you to be centered to hear the Word of God preached to you, the Holy Spirit working in you, Christ being exalted in you, and that you will be able to have that going forward in your day-to-day life. There will be no gap between Sunday and Monday. May you experience more of God's goodness, more of witnessing opportunities, and ultimately that the gospel will be on display, that Jesus Christ will be exalted, so that people will come to know Him, and that they would glorify God. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for Your Word. You are so good. God, You are so loving. God, You want us to be resting in that before we even think about anything else. Our relationship with You through the Lord Jesus Christ is above all else the most important relationship that we ought to have on this earth. But it's not to end there. It's to start there, but not to end there. Help us to do that as well with our brothers and sisters in this local body and with other Christians outside of our local body. Help us, Lord, to love one another as Jesus loved us. Help us to display that so that, as Jesus said, "they would know that you're my disciples if you have love for one another," that is out of this love, the gospel on display here in this church but also in our workplace, in our school, wherever we may be, in our homes. God, that the gospel be extended out from the center out. God, You are so good. The good news, help us to remind ourselves the gospel is good news because Jesus Christ is altogether good and He is lovely, and we are to worship Him, we are to love Him and adore Him as well. Lord, help us to live out this ordered life that You intended for us as Christians. I pray for our lost loved ones here as well, Father, that they may sense, God, everything that we are as Christians is because of You. Anything that's good comes out of us. Anything that's honest, anything that is of Your love is from You. Help them, Lord, that they would see beyond us, of all of our imperfection, and see the perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ, to see the perfect sacrifice that He made on the cross for their sins, that they can die to their sins and live a resurrected life. The life that You intended, full of love, full of

purpose, full of glory in You. I pray that You would do this mighty work. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.