"Lower Thirds" Material
1-24-20
Pastor Ben Cross

The Chet Bitterman Family

We should not be surprised by hostility toward Christians (cp. **1 Peter 4:12**).

We are an enigma to those who don't know Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:15 *The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself judged by no one.* People who know Christ, who have the mind of Christ through the Spirit of Christ, have a coherent world-view that **makes sense** (judges) of life as it is in this world. Those who do not know Christ do not have the capacity to make sense (judge) of us or him.

1 Peter 2:11-12 *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that* ***when*** *they speak against you as evildoers, they* ***may*** *see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

These two verses serve as a kind of heading or central idea that Peter applies over the next two chapters to how we relate to *ungodly governmental authorities*, *unjust lower authorities, unhappy marriages*, and *unkind people* in general.

There is both a negative side and a positive side to our being an enigma to the world as Christ-followers.

1. The negative side of our enigma as God's people

v. 11 *Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

While our status in heaven before God is splendid (**1:22-2:10**), our state on earth is split (**2:11**).

Our flesh—the capacity to be pulled toward desires that we think will satisfy us more than God, to seek life apart from God (**Ephesians 4:22; Galatians 5:17**).

Until Jesus returns and redemption is fully applied to our physical bodies (**Romans 8:23**), we are a mixed bag.

This present reality makes our status before God and our state on earth somewhat of an enigma.

God wants us to learn, by faith, to put off our flesh and put on Christ.

This reality should make us humble and empathetic people.

There is no place for an air of superiority or self-righteousness judgmentalism in God's people. We have been graced with Christ's mind through Christ's Spirit. God, in his great mercy, saved us, and yet, if we fail to abstain from our fleshly passions, we are as capable of doing evil as any unbeliever.

Churches are not filled with perfect people; they're filled with forgiven people,

"passions" = over-desire = wanting something good, but it's too important to you

Genesis 4:6-7 *Why are you so angry?...The desire of sin is contrary to you* (waging war against you)*, you must rule over it.*

We must put off the *over-desires* of our flesh and put on the *deepest desires* of our new heart as holy, royal priests (**Ephesians 4:22-24**), because, although our flesh may be our strongest desires, in Christ, they will never be our deepest desires.

Rather than war with the world and people in the world, we need to take care of the war inside ourselves.

There, but for the grace of God, go I.

2. The positive side of our enigma as God's people

v.12 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that* ***when*** *they speak against you as evildoers, they* ***may*** *see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

"on the day of visitation" = when Christ's returns as Judge

Few people are ever initially drawn to God through good preaching. What opens their hearts to the reality of Jesus is seeing him through our good deeds.

Unbelievers are drawn to Jesus, because they see something so real, so different, so compelling in us, they want in.

1 Thessalonians 1:8-9

The honorable conduct of good deeds of God's people = the enigmatic example of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:20-25 *If when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Jesus was an enigma to his family (**John 7:1ff; Mark 3:31ff**) and to his enemies (**Mark 15:29-32**). Yet, some in both groups came to faith in him (e.g., Pharisees, James) and will glorify God when Jesus returns.

Jesus wasn't a doormat. There's a place for verbal protest.

Politics and religion will never change the heart of America, but the honorable conduct of good deeds performed by God's holy priests, in the power and wisdom of Christ's Spirit, can!