

As if we didn't have enough things to worry about in our country today, we are hearing more and more about a relatively new weapon in the hands of America's enemies - cyber warfare. Cyberwarfare is an attack on computer and information systems. These attacks can disable financial and organizational systems by stealing or altering classified data. The goal is to disrupt normal operations like communications, fuel, power and transportation infrastructures. We're not just talking about hacking your email. Cyber warfare can be used to sabotage things like electronically controlled valves in nuclear power plants, switches on the electrical grid, machines that keep people alive at hospitals, pressure regulators on natural gas pipelines, and on and on. Hundreds of thousands of lives could be at stake if we are attacked in this way.

I tell you this to emphasize another kind of cyberwarfare that is the subject of our passage today. Of course, Peter wasn't talking about computers but he was addressing a sort of spiritual cyberwarfare, a malicious tactic that impacts every follower of Jesus Christ. Turn to 2:11.

If you were to divide 1 Peter into two parts you today's passage the dividing line. From 1:1 to 2:10 Peter has emphasized "being." You ARE vv. 9-10. 2:11 is a hinge verse moving us into the part of the letter that deals with "doing." 2:11 and 12 must be taken together since v. 11 is the means and v. 12 is the end goal.

God's goal is His glory. Throughout the scriptures all the works of God are intended to display His glory. God's glory is visible manifestation of His invisible attributes. Just think of how prominent the glory of God is in scripture. The Bible instructs us that...

God created us for His glory. "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, *whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.*" Is. 43:6-7

God saved us for His glory. "God destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will *to the praise of the glory of his grace* which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved." Eph. 1:5-6

Jesus was preoccupied with God's glory. In his final prayer in John 17 Jesus says, "*I glorified thee on earth*, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do." (Jn. 17:4). He came into the world to glorify His father.

In the end, God's glory will be splendid and unmistakable. All redemptive history is summed up with a description of the New Jerusalem where we shall live forever. "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for *the glory of God is its light*, and its lamp is the Lamb." Rev. 21:23

The glory of God is not only God's goal but **Our goal is God's glory.** That is why the Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with the question, "What is the chief end of man?" "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." How do we glorify God? By our good works. 1 Pe. 2:12. Peter simply repeats something he heard Jesus say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and *give glory to your Father* who is in heaven" Mt. 5:16

Everything we do should reflect the beauty and the splendor and the perfection of God. The purpose of life is the glory of God. But here is the rub. We have a very real enemy who will do everything in his power to prevent God from receiving the glory that is His due. And according to Romans 1, he is doing a pretty good job. Paul explains why God does not receive the honor He deserves from those He created for His glory. And no one can plead ignorance.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**” Ro. 1:19-23. In other words, man chooses to worship the created over the Creator.

God’s glory is obscured when the passions of the flesh sabotage our souls... 1 Pe. 2:11. The devil is a cyber warrior. He is far more interested in your soul than he is in your body. Every decision I make is informed by a process that begins in my soul. If the enemy can reprogram my soul then I will live life with one overriding objective – to gratify the desires of the flesh at the peril of my soul. That’s why Jesus asked the question, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul?” It is possible to be a smashing success in this world and an abject failure in the thing that matter most – the glory of God.

Spiritual warfare is fought on two fronts – in my body and in my soul. The soul is the immaterial part of us that includes our mind, will and emotions. In Peter’s day, there was a teaching called Gnosticism that separated the two. Gnostics believed that the body was inherently evil so you could do whatever you want with it and remain spiritually pure. The Bible rejects this false dichotomy. Even though “our struggle is not against flesh and blood,” it has flesh and blood implications. Conventional warfare goes after physical targets. Cyber warfare goes after the systems behind those targets. The devil attacks our Internal Operating System by inflaming the passions of the flesh. If he can get us to focus on the physical then we will neglect the spiritual. It’s like a stranger offering candy to a child. The child is so focused on the candy they are clueless about the intentions of the stranger.

So Peter says, “abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against the soul.” “Abstain” (ESV, NASB, NIV) = “keep away from” (NET, NLT), “avoid” (NCV). It is a word that conveys the idea of keeping your distance. The “passions of the flesh” are any desires that shift your focus away from the excellencies of Christ and God’s marvelous light. (2:9). You have exchanged what God values most for things that are of no value to God. They destroy your soul or your internal operating system that ultimately controls your behavior.

So how can I “keep my distance” from the passions of the flesh? In vv. 13-17 Peter invites his readers to make a decision that leads to the kind of behavior that glorifies God and compels others to do the same. Submission is the foundation of all godly behavior. The desire of the flesh is to rebel. And when I submit to the desires of the flesh I rebel against God. Instead of becoming more alien in the world, I join the ranks of millions of rebels who refuse to submit to God.

Let me offer five reasons why submission is so important for us as resident aliens.

1. Submission is a prerequisite to salvation. God has established authority for the orderly functioning of all of life...v. 13. In the Godhead, "the head of Christ is God." (1 Cor. 11:3). In Genesis...Adam was to be the head of wife. The fall occurred because of Adam and Eve's rejection of authority. God said, "Don't eat," they said, "Let's eat." Satan offered them freedom from authority. Submission to God's revealed will is the essence of salvation.

2. Submission is an expression of faith and God loves faith. In fact, Hebrews says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God. "Be subject" (v. 13) is a military term that means, "to order under." It means to willingly bend my will to the will of another. That takes trust. Luke 7:1-10...The response of the centurion got Jesus' attention because he was the only one who understood that submission to authority is the essence of faith. Faith isn't believing the invisible it is obeying the Invincible. When I trust God I am letting go of my will and submitting to His.

3. Submission silences the critics of Christianity...v. 15.

4. Submission is the only path to freedom...v. 16. Submission is not easy...v. 17. But submission glorifies God and sets us free. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." The truth doesn't set you free. Knowledge of the truth and submission to the truth sets you free.

Some of us here today need to surrender our will to God's will. Until we surrender we will never know true freedom. Until we surrender the world will have no reason to listen to us and God will have no reason to be pleased with us. Don't miss four important words in v. 13, "For the Lord's sake." Those words remind us that God's agenda is far more important than my own personal freedoms. Write this down...BYSSIW...Because you say so I will.

Before we come to a time of communion I want to remind you of one other reason that submission is important. **Submission inspires faith.** On February 15, 2015, ISIS released a film showing the beheading of twenty-one Coptic Christians on a Mediterranean beach. Their last words were "Lord Jesus Christ." One of the twenty-one was an African named Mathew Ayairga. Matthew was not even a Christian but he got rounded up in Libya with the others and spent several days imprisoned with them. When they were all herded down to the beach to die, one by one each man was given a choice: convert to Islam or die. "Do you reject Jesus Christ and submit to Allah?" One by one each man said "no." After witnessing the courageous faith of these other men, Ayairga decided to become a follower of Jesus himself. On camera, one of the terrorists asked, "Do you reject Christ?" Mathew responded boldly, "Their God is my God." His first act of submission was to be martyred for his new faith. His submission resulted in death but this man made a wise investment. He could save his life but lose his soul. So, he bravely decided to lose his life in order to save his soul. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul?"

Today is a Sunday set aside to pray for the persecuted church. Today, 200 million people are enduring persecution because of their faith in Christ. 90% of people killed for their faith are Christians. More Christians died for their faith in the last century than in the previous nineteen centuries combined.

- Pray persecuted believers would know the hope God gives (Ephesians 1:18).
- Pray the Holy Spirit would strengthen them (Ephesians 3:16).
- Pray persecuted believers would know how much God loves them (Ephesians 3:17)
- Pray they would know how to share the gospel and that they would fearlessly tell others about Jesus (Ephesians 6:19-20).

- Pray persecuted believers would have access to a Bible.
- Pray they have the courage to remain in their homeland.
- Pray for believers who have been rejected by family and friends. Pray that God would surround them with a new Christian "family" who loves them and supports them emotionally and physically.
- Pray for God to be an advocate for women who are particularly vulnerable to physical abuse as well as the loss of custody of their children because of their faith.
- Pray that God would provide persecuted believers with jobs and safe places to live.