

Be Beautiful

INTRODUCTION

¹¹ *Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

Peter says in verse 11, you're foreigners and exiles in this world. What does that mean?

It means we don't fully belong here. That though we live here, there is something about this world system that we will never fully, nor should we fully, fit in. That there are certain values, and language, and perspectives, and art, and beliefs, and traditions, and goals that are different, even counter, to the larger culture that we find ourselves in.

You're different. When you're a foreigner and exile, you're different. You know it. They know it. And they often don't like you for it. It seems to be a natural human tendency to view outsiders with suspicion.

And to watch these outsiders very, very closely.

Which is why, Peter says, be very, very careful then how you live. Live such good lives in the eyes of those around you, that they are forced to say, *"You know, they may be different from us, but they're different in a good kind of way."*

Church, that's what we're going to talk about these next several weeks. God has called us to Be Different (in a good kind of way).

Let's unpack this now, phrase by phrase...

¹² *Live such good lives...*

The word here for "good" means that it's beautiful. In other words, be beautiful. Peter says there ought to be something about the way we may live, that inspires others.

What kind of goodness will inspire others to do the same?

It is a life characterized by good deeds. Notice with me in this same verse that Peter connects the idea of living such good lives with doing good deeds. He doesn't give us the privilege of defining for ourselves what it means to live a good life. He says, do good deeds.

It is a life characterized by good morals yes, (that's verse 11), BE good. But also, DO good.

Acts 9—Dorcus

Our lives are to be characterized by service and sacrifice and kindness and generosity to others. This is someone who has lived with a servant posture toward others and has actively sought to bless others consistently and faithfully with the talents, and gifts, and resources that he or she possesses.

... among the pagans...

It's very interesting to me that Peter states specifically that we are to live these beautiful kind of lives *among the pagans*.

In other words, not simply among ourselves. Not simply within your family. My life--your life—is to be lived in such a way that the pagans (in this context, we might say unbelievers) see it. They observe it. They're witness to it. In fact, they may be recipients of it.

Matthew 5:13-14

¹³ *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

¹⁴ *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

See your what? Your good deeds.

Returning to our passage in Peter:

...that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Listen, this is not going to be easy. Remember.... . You're different. You know it. They know it. And truth be told, at first, they don't really like you for it. Because the natural tendency is to watch an outsider with suspicion. To hold a predisposed "I don't like you" attitude, because you're different.

How many of you know that the unbelieving world is most critical it seems of Christians who hold to different values and beliefs as them?

They are watching. They are ready to find fault. It seems the world is already ready to say "Aha! Caught ya!" And then smear the name of Christ in the media because of our hypocrisy, and moral failures, and unrighteous anger.

Peter knows this. And he says, ***Listen. You can't stop them from watching you. Just make sure they "catch ya"... doing good.***

Don't just be good. Do good. Be different in a good kind of way. Be beautiful. Live a beautiful life. Because as you do, the world will notice. And it will create opportunities for the Gospel.

Personal Reflection/Discussion Questions

- 1) Why do you think that Peter tied the idea of living good (beautiful) lives among the pagans with good deeds?
- 2.) How does our status as "foreigners" and "exiles" impact the importance of this command?
- 3.) What happens when believers are NOT rich in good deeds?
- 4.) Are YOU currently performing your good deeds in a way that is obvious to unbelievers? What unbelievers are you directly impacting?
- 5.) In what way(s) can you more strategically and intentionally do good deeds "among" unbelievers?

