



The First Letter of Peter  
**Bible Study Session 9**  
**1 Peter 2:11-12**  
**“Living Above the Flesh”**



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**Greek NT**

11 Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς· 12 τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλήν, ἵνα, ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσι τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς.

**La Biblia**

**de las Américas**

11 Amados, os ruego como a extranjeros y peregrinos, que os abstengáis de las pasiones carnales que combaten contra el alma. 12 Mantened entre los gentiles una conducta irreprochable, a fin de que en aquello que os calumnian como malhechores, ellos, por razón de vuestras buenas obras, al considerarlas, glorifiquen a Dios en el día de la visitación .

**NRSV**

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

**NLT**

11 Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls. 12 Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world.



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**Introduction to Study.** The focus of the letter now turns a new direction with verses eleven and twelve. Peter will begin a series of admonitions on the responsibilities of the believing community to the outside world. Believers are reminded that not only are they being watched to see what impact their religion has on their life but also that they are obligated before God to present a positive witness about their God to their unbelieving neighbors. And this witness comes primarily through the way believers live, not just through their religious talk. The essence of this witness must be that believers are different people who live by noticeably different standards than do their pagan neighbors. The old clique of ‘being in the world but not of the world’ comes into view here and raises challenging issues related to how believers can achieve this very difficult balance. The passage remains vitally relevant to Christians in our world, just as it was to those initial readers in the middle of the first century.

**I. Context and Background<sup>1</sup>**

Several aspects of the background are important for a more accurate understanding of this admonition of

<sup>1</sup>Serious study of the Bible requires careful analysis of the background and setting of the scripture passage. Failure to do this leads to interpretive garbage and possibly to heresy. Detailed study of the background doesn’t always answer all the questions, but it certainly gets us further along toward correct understanding of both the historical and contemporary meanings of a text. This serious examination of both the historical and literary background of every passage will be presented in summary form with each of the studies.

Peter.

### a. Historical

**External History.** The history of the copying of this passage through the first eight centuries reflects a relatively stable transmission of this text. The United Bible Societies 4th revised edition Greek New Testament does not list any variant readings. This indicates that in the view of the editors no variation of wording in the existing manuscripts was considered significant enough to impact the translation of the text. The Nestle-Aland 27th revised edition Greek text does list some variations of wording, especially in verse twelve, that have a minor impact on meaning.

In verse eleven, some manuscripts (P<sup>72</sup> A C L P and others) change the present tense infinitive ἀπέχεσθαι (to abstain) to the present imperative verb ἀπέχεσθε (be abstaining). The meaning remains the same; the change is stylistic. The majority of ancient manuscripts read ἀπέχεσθαι.<sup>2</sup>

More variations in wording surface in verse twelve, but they have to do with grammar structure and writing style of this somewhat long sentence. **First**, a few scribes saw the long participle clause ('while possessing...') as too disconnected to the core admonition, 'I exhort you to abstain...', and then filled in a second core admonition, 'and I also exhort this, that you have a noble manner of living...'. **Second**, a few scribes read the present indicative καταλαλοῦσιν (they slander) as present subjunctive καταλαλώσιν (they might slander). Overwhelmingly the weight of the manuscript evidence favors the present indicative. Peter assumes this criticism is happening rather than presents a hypothetical possibility of it happening. **Third**, several scribes inserted ἐποπτεύσαντες (having observed) in place of ἐποπτεύοντες (observing) because the prior action of observing to that of glorifying is more natural to Greek grammar. Again, the weight of evidence favors ἐποπτεύοντες. **Fourth**, P<sup>72</sup> manuscript inserts ὑμῶν before τὸν θεόν, thus making explicit (glorify your God) what is already implicit in the text from the article τὸν.

Although detailed analysis of the variations in the wording of the text can become very complex and technical, my goal is that you, the reader, will sense the nature of these variations and how they seldom have much impact on the meaning of the words of the text. Most of the time those making the copies either accidentally misread what they were copying or else sought to 'improve' the language of the text to bring it more in line with how Greek was written in their time. Virtually never can one detect intentional efforts to change the meaning of the text.

The consequence of this overview of our passage is to establish that we can now exegete the words of the Greek text with certainty that they represent exactly what Peter dictated to Silas in the original composition of this letter.

**Internal History.** The central historical issue present in these two verses revolves around non-Christian criticism of believers: "though they malign you as evildoers" (ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν). This is closely linked to 3:13-16 which addresses the same theme:

13 Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? 14 But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; 16 yet do it with gentleness and reverence. **Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.** 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly Peter understood that some, perhaps many, outside the community of believers were falsely accusing the believers of being κακοποιῶν. What is in mind here is not made clear, although it may be defined more

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<sup>2</sup>The difference in translation is reflected in Ramsey Michaels' translation, "Dear friends, I appeal [to you] as aliens and strangers: renounce your natural impulses,..." who adopts the present imperative verb as the original reading, rather than the infinitive. [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Peter, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 114.]

<sup>3</sup>GNT: 13 Καὶ τίς ὁ κακῶσων ὑμᾶς ἐὰν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ζηλωταὶ γένησθε; 14 ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάσχετε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, μακάριοι. τὸν δὲ φόβον αὐτῶν μὴ φοβηθῆτε μηδὲ παραχθῆτε, 15 κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγιάσατε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἔτοιμοι αἰεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογίαν παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς λόγον περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος, 16 ἀλλὰ μετὰ πραΰτητος καὶ φόβου, **συνείδησιν ἔχοντες ἀγαθὴν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλεῖσθε καταισχυνθῶσιν οἱ ἐπηρεάζοντες ὑμῶν τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστροφὴν.** 17 κρεῖττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιῶντας, εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιῶντας.

precisely by Peter in 4:15 as “a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker.”<sup>4</sup> Peter assumes that these accusations represent καταλαλοῦσιν, i.e., slander.

Does this represent persecution of Christians? More precisely, does this assumption by Peter suggest that official governmental persecution of Christians was taking place? Some see the later statement in 4:12 -- “Beloved, do not be surprised at *the fiery ordeal* [τῆ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει] that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” -- signaling as much. During the late 50s to the mid 60s, Christianity was just beginning to attract the notice of Roman government officials as a distinct religious movement. Until then Christianity had been considered as just another troublesome sect of Judaism along side Pharisees etc. But with the massive influx of non-Jews into the Christian movement during this period of time, government authorities began realizing that the followers of the Jewish Jesus of Nazareth were forming a religious movement separate from Judaism.<sup>5</sup> Clearly with Nero’s blaming of Christians in Rome for the massive fire that he had actually started in the mid 60s, governmental persecution of Christians, separate from Jews, was begun. But this outbreak was local, and not universal across the empire. That would not come for several decades.

Thus, one must be cautious about concluding that widespread government based persecution of believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia was taking place at the time of the writing of this letter. Clearly, believers in this region were not popular and esteemed by the rest of the people, but the opposition they were facing does not seem to have been driven by government authorities as a systematic effort of the Roman authorities to stamp out this new religious movement. If any government involvement in the criticism of Christians took place in this region, it would have been by local authorities acting on their own.<sup>6</sup>

What was taking place in these Roman provinces in ancient Anatolia reflects suspicion of and hostility to a new religious movement where its members lived by standards of behavior that were dramatically different from the commonly accepted patterns. These norms followed by Christians had much in common with that of Jews in the region, and Jews were even a part of this new movement. But Christians were different from Jews and rejected many of the norms insisted upon by Jews, such as dietary codes etc. Peter’s language both here and throughout the letter body suggests that this hostility mainly took the form of verbal attack, and seldom if ever resorted to physical violence against the Christians.

Probably, one source of suspicion against Christians was that it embraced a diversity of ethnic and cultural heritages by its members. Most ancient religions in the empire had clearly defined ethnic orientations, and seldom reached out beyond their own individual traditional heritage apart from insisting on the converts adopting the inherited ethnic orientation of the religion. Christianity by this point was clearly cross-cultural and embraced individuals from every race and background. This clearly made Christians a point of suspicion.

## **b. Literary**

**Literary Form (Genre).** Beyond being a part of the letter body with all the implications that this carries, 2:11-12 stands as an expression of *paraenesis*, i.e., moral admonition.<sup>7</sup> Not only does the beginning verb

<sup>4</sup>1 Peter 4:15 NRSV: But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. [μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτῃς ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος]

<sup>5</sup>This severing of ties with Judaism was what posed problems. According to Roman law, no religious group could function legally unless they were a *religio licita* (a legally authorized religion). Judaism had this legal standing and thus could function. Christianity, as long as it functioned as a branch of Judaism enjoyed legal standing. When Christianity began distancing itself from Judaism in the middle of the first century, it moved into the status of *religio illicita* (illegal religion). Although Roman documents do not spell out the details clearly, the general sense is that for a religion to function outside legal status made participating in it an act of treason against Rome, and subjected one to possible execution. Some evidence exists suggesting the Christianity was first officially declared a *religio illicita* by Emperor Domitian in the 80s, but the details are not clear.

<sup>6</sup>One reason for the importance of careful analysis of this historical situation is that an older interpretive tradition assumed widespread government based persecution was behind First Peter. And, more importantly, that this reality was a decisive argument against Petrine authorship of the letter, since this kind of persecution could only be documented beginning at the end of the first century and not in the middle of it. Recognition of the lack of any signals of official government sponsored persecution in First Peter powerfully undermines the credibility of this non-Petrine origin view of the letter.

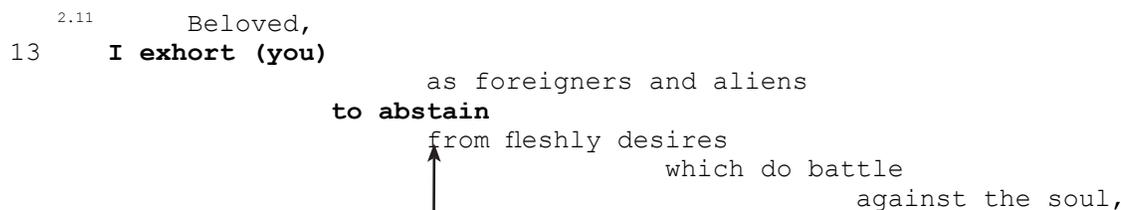
<sup>7</sup>“I exhort [you] (parakalō). This first instance of the author speaking directly (1st -person sing of parakaleō) introduces a combination of exhortation and encouragement that dominates the remainder of the letter. Exhortation, reflecting early Christian hortatory tradition (2:13–17, 18–20; 3:1–5, 7, 13–17; 4:1–6, 7–11, 12–19; 5:1–5a, 5b, 6a, 7a, 8a, 9a), is supported with encouragement drawn from Christological (2:21–25; 3:18, 22; 4:1a, 13; 5:4), Scriptural (3:6, 10–12; 4:17–18; 5:5c, 7c), and liturgical (4:11; 5:10–11) tradition.” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale

παρακαλῶ signal a new subject being introduced, it also introduces a long section of moral admonitions that will continue down through most of chapter four. The nature of the admonition introduced by παρακαλῶ carries the tone of 'I strongly encourage you...'. It has no threatening tones, but by coming as a vigorous encouragement from the aged and highly revered leader of the Christian movement, the tones of authority and importance of obeying are clearly present. The paraenesis here is not a distinctive sub-form as we will encounter beginning in the next pericope in 2:13, but instead it has a basic pattern of general admonition.

With moral admonition in the New Testament, one should pay close attention of how it is delivered. Especially in the letters of the NT, the weight of influence behind the admonitions is not based on a threat, "Do this or else....!" Instead, the forcefulness of the admonitions comes from the character and leadership role of the preacher / teacher delivering the admonition. In the modern world, preachers sometime today threaten their congregations, but this has no basis in the example of Jesus and the apostles. They, instead, appealed to the higher instincts of their readers / listeners coming out of a love for God and a desire to obey God in their lives. Their own example of living by what they preached gave their words forcefulness and influence as well. To be certain, they did not hesitate to tell their audience what God's will for living was, and they did so without compromise. Sometimes the consequences of not obeying in terms of God's punishment were laid before their audiences, but as a warning, not as a threat. Honesty demands that the divinely mandated accountability for one's decisions be included in the instructions given to God's people. But how this is done, the tone in which it is presented, -- all these play an important role in admonishing God's people to honor Him in their lives. Peter will give substantial insight into this with his encouragement to pastoral leaders in chapter five of this letter.

**Literary Context.** The literary setting for this passage has several aspects. The first two words in verse eleven Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ... ("beloved, I exhort....") clearly signal a new topic is being introduced.<sup>8</sup> From 2:11 through 3:12 at least we will notice a series of admonitions dealing with different Christian responsibilities. And actually, the admonitions will continue through 4:11 before the next major shift in literary form. This first pericope of 2:11-12 stand somewhat as a 'header' introducing the next several sections, as well as providing a foundational principle for these sections. The general theme is that of obligations to others: to non-believers, to family members, and to society in general. The encouragement to proper relationships with others continues in 3:13-5:11 but shifts to how to respond to harsh treatment from outsiders. The literary forms used in the remainder of the letter body are diverse and occasionally reflect considerable literary creativity either on Peter's part, or else, by Silas who was doing the actual writing of the letter.

**Literary Structure.** The block diagram below visually highlights the internal arrangement of secondary ideas to the core admonition in statement 13.



University Press, 2008), 457.]

<sup>8</sup>“This opening sentence of the body middle serves to introduce the major theme that is worked out in this portion of the letter: Christians who lack the legal rights and social standing as do exiles and aliens, and who are thus open to harassment on all sides, are to make sure their behavior does not give others an excuse to perpetrate such abuse.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *I Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 172.]

**Outline of Contents  
in First Peter:**

**Praescriptio: 1:1-2**

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**Proem: 1:3-12**

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**Conclusio: 5:12-14**

- *Sender Verification, 5:12*
- *Greetings, 5:13-14a*
- *Benedictio, 5:14b*

among the Gentiles  
 while possessing your noble manner of living  
 during which time they slander you  
 as evil doers  
 from your noble deeds  
 observing  
 so that they will glorify God  
 on the Day of Visitation.

The single sentence in verses eleven and twelve are built around the core admonition “I exhort you to abstain.” The ‘abstaining’ is defined by three expansion elements: 1) **as...**; 2) **from...**; and 3) **while....** The third expansion is the most detailed and has several ideas embedded inside it as well.

## II. Message

We will organize our study around the core admonition, and the expansion elements. This is the most natural way to try to understand the meaning of the text.

### a. Our responsibility to abstain, v. 11

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.

Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς

#### Notes:

The sentence begins with ‘beloved’ (Ἀγαπητοί), the first time Peter has used such direct address to his readers. Beyond serving frequently as a signal of a new topic in the letters of the New Testament, the term expresses endearment of the readers to the apostle Peter.<sup>9</sup> His exhortation to them comes out of his love for them, and he expresses this at the outset. Such a posture for admonishing others should always be remembered and followed.

Peters begins with an appeal to his readers to adopt a stance of distancing themselves from ‘fleshly passions’ (τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν). The verb παρακαλῶ is widely used in the New Testament (108 times) with a diversity of meanings that are built off the root idea of ‘calling along side of.’ This sense is for someone to provide aid or assistance when they come to the person. This help can be physical, but often in the NT it is to be verbal assistance in the form of encouragement and/or admonition.<sup>10</sup> The content of the verbal help can

<sup>9</sup>“25.45 ἀγαπητός, ἡ, ὄν: (derivative of ἀγαπάω ‘to love,’ 25.43) pertaining to one who or that which is loved—‘object of one’s affection, one who is loved, beloved, dear.’” [Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996), 293.]

<sup>10</sup>The Gingrich-Danker Greek lexicon lists five categories of possible meanings for : 1. to ask to come and be present where the speaker is, 2. to urge strongly, appeal to, 3. to make a strong request for something, 4. to instill someone with courage or cheer, and 5. to treat someone in an inviting or congenial manner.

**Meaning 2** is the one that is applicable to our text: “2. to urge strongly, appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage (X. et al.; LXX) w. acc. of pers. **Ac 16:40**; **2 Cor 10:1**; **1 Th 2:12** (but s. 5 below); **5:11**; **Hb 3:13**; ITr 12:2; IRo 7:2. The acc. is found in the immediate context **Ac 20:1**; **1 Ti 5:1** (but s. 5 below). Pass. **1 Cor 14:31**. τινὰ λόγῳ πολλῶ *someone with many words* **Ac 20:2**; also τινὰ διὰ λόγου πολλοῦ **15:32**. τινὰ δι’ ὀλίγων γραμμάτων IPol 7:3. W. acc. of pers. and direct discourse **1 Cor 4:16**; **1 Th 5:14**; **Hb 13:22**; **1 Pt 5:1**; direct discourse introduced by λέγων (B-D-F §420) **Ac 2:40**. W. acc. of pers. and inf. foll. (SIG 695, 43 [129 B.C.]) **11:23**; **27:33f**; **Ro 12:1** (EKäsemann, Gottesdienst im Alltag, ’60 [Beih. ZNW], 165–71); **15:30**; **16:17**; **2 Cor 2:8**; **6:1**; **Eph 4:1**; **Phil 4:2**; **Tit 2:6**; **1 Pt 2:11** (cp. Phlegon: 257 Fgm. 36 II, 4 Jac. p. 1172, 19; ELohe, ZNW 45, ’54, 68–89); **Jd 3** (the acc. is found in the immediate context, as Philo, Poster Cai. 138); ITr 6:1; IPhd 8:2; IPol 1:2a; Pol 9:1 al. W. inf. (acc. in the context), continued by καὶ ὅτι (s. B-D-F §397, 6; Rob. 1047) **Ac 14:22**. W. acc. of pers. and ἵνα foll. (PRyl 229, 17 [38 A.D.]; EpArist 318; Jos., Ant. 14, 168.—B-D-F §392, 1c; Rob. 1046) **1 Cor 1:10**; **16:15f**; **2 Cor 8:6**; **1 Th 4:1** (π. w. ἐρωτάω as BGU 1141, 10; POxy 294, 29) **2 Th 3:12**; Hm 12, 3, 2; AcPl Ha 7, 32. The ἵνα-clause expresses not the content of the appeal, as in the pass. referred to above, but its aim: πάντα παρακαλεῖν, ἵνα σώζονται IPol 1:2b.—Without acc. of pers.: w. direct discourse foll. ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι’ ἡμῶν· δεόμεθα *since God as it were makes his appeal through us*: ‘We beg’ **2 Cor 5:20**. Paul serves as God’s agent (like a ‘legate of Caesar’ Dssm. LO 320 [LAE 374]) and functions as mediator (like Alexander the Great, Plut., Mor. 329c διαλλακτής; cp. also the mediatorial role of a judge IPriene 53, esp. 10f; s. also CBreytenbach, Versöhnung ’89, 64–66). W. inf. foll. **1 Ti 2:1**. Abs. **Ro 12:8** (mng. 4 is also poss.); **2 Ti 4:2**; **Tit 1:9**; **Hb 10:25**; **1 Pt 5:12** (w. ἐπιμαρτυρεῖν); B 19:10.—W. acc. of thing impress upon someone, urge, exhort πολλά ἕτερα Lk 3:18. ταῦτα δίδασκε καὶ παρακάλει **1 Ti 6:2**. ταῦτα λάλει καὶ παρακάλει καὶ ἔλεγγε **Tit 2:15**. In the

range widely depending on the particular set of circumstances. The present tense of the verb underscores Peter's intention for this appeal to linger in the minds of his readers for some time to come.

The content of his appeal here is that his readers ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν. To abstain is expressed by ἀπέχεσθαι, which carries a range of meanings with 'abstain' being the meaning in five of the eighteen NT uses.<sup>11</sup> The readers are encouraged to put distance between themselves and their fleshly passions. One should note the present tense of the Greek infinitive here, which demands a continual distancing of oneself from these passions.

What is it that believers are to keep away from? τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν is Peter's answer.<sup>12</sup> The noun ἐπιθυμιῶν can suggest desires either good or bad.<sup>13</sup> But most of the uses stress the negative aspect. Clearly

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case of several of the passages dealt with in this section, it is possible that they could as well be classed under [mng 3].” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 765.]

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Thess. 4:3, 5:22, and 1 Pet. 2:11. The BAGD lexicon lists 5 meanings: 1. to receive in full what is due, 2. to meet the need of the moment, 3. idiomatic meaning in οὐδὲν ἀπέχει=‘nothing hinders’, 4. to be at some distance from a position, and 5. to avoid contact w. or use of something. It is the last meaning that applies to our text:

“**5. to avoid contact w. or use of someth., keep away, abstain, refrain from** mid. w. gen. of thing (Hom. et al.; SIG 768, 16 [31 B.C.]; PHerm 52, 21; StudPal V, 52, 21; 1 Esdr 6:26; Wsd 2:16; σου PsSol 8:32; τούτου TestAbr A 2 p. 79, 8 [Stone p. 6]; Jos., Bell. 2, 581, Ant. 11, 101; Just., A II, 7, 7 al.; Ath.) εἰδωλοθῶτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας *abstain fr: things offered to idols, blood, things strangled, and irregular sexual union* **Ac 15:29** (s. Lev 18:6–30), cp. vs. 20 (s. αἷμα 1b). πάσης ἀδικίας (Hyperid., Fgm. 210 τ. ἀδικημάτων; SIG 1268 I, 18 [III B.C.] κακίας ἀπέχου; Ath. 1, 2 τοῦ ἀδικεῖν) Pol 2:2; cp. 6:1, 3; Hv 1, 2, 4; 2, 2, 3; 3, 8, 4; m 3:5; Dg 4:6. τῶν κακῶν βοτανῶν IPhd 3:1; cp. ITr 6:1. βρωμάτων **1 Ti 4:3**. εὐχαριστίας κ. προσευχῆς *keep away fr: the Lord's Supper and prayer* ISm 7:1; the response to those who absent themselves from the Lord's meal is to discontinue social relations with them, vs. 2 (Schol. Pl. Euthyphr. 2 A ἀπέχεσθαι μυστηρίων=remain aloof from the Mysteries). τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν **1 Pt 2:11**; D 1:4. τῆς γλώσσης=control the tongue Hv 2, 2, 3. λατρείας Dg 3:2.—W. ἀπό τινος (oft. LXX; En 104:6; TestAbr A 4 p. 81, 4 [Stone p. 10]; EpArJer 143; w. ἐκ ParJer 7:37 [7, 32 Harris]): ἀπό τῆς πορνείας **1 Th 4:3**; cp. **Ac 15:20** (v.l. ἀπό); ἀπό παντὸς εἶδους πονηροῦ *fr: every kind of evil* **1 Th 5:22**. ἀπό παντὸς κακοῦ 1 Cl 17:3 (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). ἀπέχεσθε ἀπό τ. ἀνθρώπων *keep hands off the men* **Ac 5:39** D.—Pol 5:3; Hm 2:3; 4, 1, 3 and 9; 5, 1, 7; 5, 2, 8; 7:3; 9:12; 11:4, 8, 21; 12, 1, 3; 12, 2, 2; Hs 4:5.—DELG s.v. ἔχω. M-M. TW. Spicq.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 103.]

<sup>12</sup>“ἀπέχεσθε τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, ‘renounce your natural impulses.’ The phrase ἀπέχεσθε ἐπιθυμιῶν was long familiar in Greek ethical instruction (e.g., Plato, Phaedo 82C, 83B; Laws 8.835E). On the imperative, see Note a\* Because they are ‘aliens and strangers’ in Roman society by virtue of their election, Peter urges on his readers a clean moral break with the ‘natural impulses’ of their past (cf. ἐπιθυμία in 1:14; 4:2), impulses belonging to the ‘darkness’ out of which they have been called (cf. 2:9). With the adjective σαρκικοί Peter characterizes these impulses as merely physical in motivation and intent, centered on self-preservation and material well-being (cf. σαρκί or ἐν σαρκί with reference to the realm of physical life in 3:18; 4:1, 2, 6). Such ‘natural impulses,’ although not intrinsically evil for Peter, must yield to other, more vital considerations, centered on what he calls ‘the soul.’” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 116.]

<sup>13</sup>ἐπιθυμία, ας, ἡ (s. ἐπιθυμέω; Pre-Socr., Hdt.+)

#### **1. a great desire for someth., desire, longing, craving**

a. as a neutral term, in Hdt., Pla., Thu. et al. αἱ περὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἐ. *desires for other things* **Mk 4:19**. ἐ. πράξεων πολλῶν *desire for much business* Hm 6, 2, 5 (but mng. 2 below is also poss.). ἐ. τῆς ψυχῆς *desire of the soul* **Rv 18:14**.

b. of desire for good things (Diod S 11, 36, 5 ἐπιθ. τῆς ἐλευθερίας=for freedom; Pr 10:24 ἐ. δικαίου δεκτῆ; ἄνερ ἐπιθυμιῶν GrBar 1:3; Jos., C. Ap. 1, 111) ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχειν εἷς τι *have a longing for someth.* **Phil 1:23** (ἐ. ἔχειν as Jos., C. Ap. 1, 255; ἐ. εἰς as Thu. 4, 81, 2). ἐπιθυμία ἐπιθυμεῖν (Gen 31:30) *eagerly desire* **Lk 22:15** (s. on ἐπιθυμέω); ἐν πολλῇ ἐ. w. *great longing* **1 Th 2:17**. ἐλπίζει μου ἡ ψυχὴ τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ μου μὴ παραλελοιπέναι τι *I hope that, in accordance with my desire, nothing has been omitted* B 17:1. ἡ ἐ. καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία 21:7. ε. ἀγαθὴν καὶ σεμνήν Hm 12, 1, 1.

**2. a desire for someth. forbidden or simply inordinate, craving, lust** (as early as Plato, Phd. 83b ἡ τοῦ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλοσόφου ψυχῆ οὕτως ἀπέχεται τ. ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν κτλ.; Polystrat. p. 30; Duris [III B.C.]: 76 Fgm. 15 Jac.; then above all, the Stoics [EZeller, Philos. d. Griechen III/14, 1909, 235ff], e.g. Epict. 2, 16, 45; 2, 18, 8f; 3, 9, 21 al.; Maximus Tyr. 24, 4a μέγιστον ἀνθρώπῳ κακὸν ἐπιθυμία; Herm. Wr. 1, 23; 12, 4, also in Stob. p. 444, 10 Sc.; Wsd 4:12; Sir 23:5; 4 Macc 1:22; 3:2 al.; ApcMos 19 ἐ. ... κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀμαρτίας; Philo, Spec. Leg. 4, 93, Leg. All. 2, 8, Vi. Cont. 74; Jos., Bell. 7, 261, Ant. 4, 143) **Ro 7:7f; Js 1:14f; 2 Pt 1:4**. ἐ. πονηρά (X., Mem. 1, 2, 64; Ar. 8, 4) Hv 1, 2, 4; 3, 7, 3; 3, 8, 4; m 8:5. ἐ. κακῇ (Pla., Leg. 9, 854a; Pr 12:12; 21:26; Just., A I, 10, 6) **Col 3:5**.—Of sexual desire (as early as Alcaeus [acc. to Plut., Mor. 525ab]; lead tablet fr. Hadrumetum 7 in Dssm., B 28 [BS 273ff] and IDefixWünsch no. 5 p. 23; PGM 17a, 9; 21; Sus Theod. 8; 11; 14 al., LXX 32; Jos., Ant. 4, 130; 132; Ath. 33, 1 μέτρον ἐπιθυμίας ἡ παιδοποιία; Did., Gen. 151, 27 ἄλογος ἐ.) D 3:3. πάθος ἐπιθυμίας **1 Th 4:5**. κατ’ ἐπιθυμίαν (cp. Epict. 3, 15, 7; M. Ant.

Peter's repeated use of ἐπιθυμία in this letter falls into this latter category:

**1:14**, Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance (*ταῖς* πρότερον ἐν τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ ὑμῶν *ἐπιθυμίαις*).

**2:11**, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh (*τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν*) that wage war against the soul.

**4:2**, so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires (εἰς τὸ μηκέτι *ἀνθρώπων ἐπιθυμίαις*) but by the will of God.

Such desires typify unsaved pagans prior to their coming to Christ, and reflect complete ignorance of God. These desires stand in contrast to the will of God, and have a human origin, not a divine one. They originate from 'the flesh,' as the adjective σαρκικῶν specifies. To be 'fleshly' is to be guided by the old sinful nature, and not by the Spirit of God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3<sup>14</sup>). We are to follow the Spirit's leadership as the best defense against the influence of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16,<sup>15</sup> Rom. 13:14<sup>16</sup>). The old carnal nature poses serious threat to experiencing a true spiritual existence. Even though 'positionally' it has been crucified in conversion,<sup>17</sup> it remains a part of us as long as we live in physical bodies. And so believers must be constantly vigilant to guard against its destructive influence in our life.

The qualitative relative clause αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς specifies the basis for abstaining from fleshly desires. This relative pronoun αἵτινες, used to introduce the clause, goes beyond the normal relative ἣ, adds a tone of "which are of such a nature that...". The clause then defines an important trait that makes it imperative for believers to abstain from such desires. Such desires, Peter declares, do battle against one's ψυχῆς. The sense of ψυχῆς here is not just one's soul, but something deeper, against the very core of one's existence. The harmful impact of fleshly lusts on the physical life are clear and often dramatic with the violence found in our society. But far more pervasive and ultimately more damaging is the destructive impact on the interior of our life, down to the foundation of our spiritual existence. James reminds us forcefully (4:1), "Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within

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2, 10, 1; 2; 3; Just., A II, 5, 4; Ath. 21, 1) in accordance with physical desire alone IPol 5:2. πρὸς ἐπιθυμίαν τ. ἀνθρώπων Ox 840, 38 (Ps.-Pla., Eryx. 21, 401e πρὸς τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ σώματος—to satisfy the desires of the body; cp. 405e: gambling, drunkenness and gluttony are called ἐπιθυμίαι.—In Ox 840, 38, since the ν in ἐπιθυμίαν is missing and restored, the word might also be ἐπιθυμίας.). ἐ. γυναικός (Da 11:37) Hm 6, 2, 5; 12, 2, 1. Pl. (oft. LXX; EpArist 256; Philo) w. παθήματα Gal 5:24. In a list of vices (cp. Philo, Congr. Erud. Grat. 172, Migr. Abr. 60, Vi. Cont. 2) 1 Pt 4:3; D 5:1. ἐ. πολλὰ ἀνόητοι many foolish desires 1 Ti 6:9; νεωτερικαὶ ἐ. youthful desires 2 Ti 2:22 (WMetzger, TZ 33, '77, 129–36); κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐ. in accordance w. their own desires 4:3; cp. πρὸς τὰς ἰ. ἐ. Pol. 7:1; κατὰ τὰς ἐ. αὐτῶν AcPl Ha 8, 20 (for this: ἀνομίας AcPl BMM recto, 26, restored after Ox 1602, 27). αἱ πρότερον ἐν τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ ἐ. the desires that ruled over you formerly, when you were ignorant 1 Pt 1:14.—W. gen.: subjective gen. ἐ. ἀνθρώπων 1 Pt 4:2; τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν J 8:44; gen. of quality ἐ. μiasμοῦ defiling passion 2 Pt 2:10; cp. μιὰς ἐ. 1 Cl 28:1; βδελυκτὰς ἐ. 30:1. ἐ. τῆς ἀπάτης deceptive desires Eph 4:22. τῶν ἐ. τῶν ματαίων 2 Cl 19:2; cp. Hm 11, 8. ἐ. τῶν ἀσεβειῶν Jd 18. ἐ. τῆς πονηρίας evil desire Hv 1, 1, 8. ἐ. τῆς ἀσελγείας 3, 7, 2; the gen. can also indicate the origin and seat of the desire ἐ. τῶν καρδιῶν of the hearts (Sir 5:2) Ro 1:24. τῆς καρδίας ... τῆς πονηρίας 1 Cl 3:4. ἐ. τοῦ θνητοῦ σώματος Ro 6:12 (Ps.-Pla., Eryx. 21, 401e, s. above; Sextus 448 ἐπιθυμίαι τοῦ σώματος). τῆς σαρκός Eph 2:3; 1J 2:16; 2 Pt 2:18; B 10, 9. τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν 1J 2:16; to denote someth. to which desire belongs gener. vs. 17; σαρκικαὶ ἐ. (Hippol., Ref. 5, 9, 22; Did., Gen. 62, 3) 1 Pt 2:11; D 1:4; σωματικαὶ ἐ. (4 Macc 1:32) ibid.; κοσμικαὶ ἐ. worldly desires Tit 2:12; 2 Cl 17:3; ἐ. τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ Pol 5:3; εἰς ἐ. to arouse desires Ro 13:14; ποιεῖν τὰς ἐ. act in accordance w. the desires J 8:44. τελεῖν ἐ. σαρκός gratify the cravings of the flesh Gal 5:16; ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐ. obey the desires Ro 6:12; δουλεῖν ἐ. be a slave to the desires Tit 3:3; cp. δοῦλος ἐπιθυμίας IPol 4:3. ἄγεσθαι ἐπιθυμίαις be led about by desires 2 Ti 3:6. πορευεσθαι κατὰ τὰς ἐ. Jd 16; 18; 2 Pt 3:3; ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις (Sir 5:2) 1 Pt 4:3; ταῖς ἐ. τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου Hs 6, 2, 3; 6, 3, 3; 7:2; 8, 11, 3. ἀναστρέφειν ἐν ταῖς ἐ. Eph 2:3.—BEaston, Pastoral Ep. '47, 186f; RAC II 62–78. S. πόθος.—Schmidt, Syn. III 591–601. M-M. TW. Sv.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 372.]

<sup>14c</sup>for you are still *of the flesh*. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not *of the flesh*, and behaving according to human inclinations?"

<sup>15c</sup>Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify *the desires of the flesh*." (Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ *ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός* οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.)

<sup>16c</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires*." (ἀλλὰ ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ *τῆς σαρκός πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιῆσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας*.)

<sup>17</sup>Gal. 5:24, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified *the flesh with its passions and desires*." (οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ *τὴν σάρκα* ἐσταύρωσαν *σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις*.)

you?”<sup>18</sup> Paul describes an ongoing conflict between the flesh and the Spirit that takes place in believers (Gal. 5:17): “For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.”<sup>19</sup> For him, the key to success in this conflict is following the leadership of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:16). Failure to follow the Spirit’s lead opens a Pandora’s box of evil in the believer’s life, which Paul labels the deeds of the flesh.<sup>20</sup> Peter doesn’t go into such detail, but with this relative clause he clearly signals a common view.

This topic poses challenges. As long as we live in physical bodies, we are vulnerable to the temptations of the flesh. To be sure, the strangle hold over our lives by fleshly desires that prevailed before conversion has been broken by the coming of Christ into our lives. We are no longer bound slaves to the flesh. But we are not free from the potential influences of fleshly desires. What are these? As Peter makes clear in his three fold use of the term in the letter, fleshly desires are those that characterized our living prior to Christ (1:14), and they stand in opposition to the will of God in our life (4:2). As such they seek to destroy our very existence (2:11).

How do we successfully resist such fleshly desires? Peter calls upon believers to consistently do so. But how? The history of Christianity is littered with failed attempts to successfully ward off the temptations of fleshly desires. One of the most often repeated failures is asceticism. In the Christian practice of asceticism believers withdraw from society and live together in communes or monasteries, supposedly insulated from the temptations of the world. Probably Francis of Assisi (1181-1226 AD) is one of the best known monks. But withdrawing from society into a supposed ‘purer’ world is no answer, because these fleshly desires have their home base in our physical existence and we take them with us no matter where we go.<sup>21</sup> Periodically down through the years, heretical Christian groups have sometimes developed a religious schizophrenia theology that so splits the ‘soul’ from the physical ‘body’ that conversion only takes place in the soul and leaves the body untouched. In conversion, the soul is ‘made perfect’ and thus is untouchable by fleshly passions. Early expressions of such heresy arose in the second Christian century under the label of Gnosticism. Modern expressions of this old heresy surface in Pentecostalism and other places. Such false splitting of the individual into two largely unconnected parts not only has no basis in scripture, but represents a dangerous perversion of healthy personality development. Human beings are wholistic individuals, not disconnected compartments of soul and body.

How then do we abstain from fleshly lusts, in light of these failed efforts? Peter’s admonition is the starting point: we must make a clear decision to stand against every impulse that is contrary to God’s will for our life. And this commitment must be ongoing in our life, not momentary and spasmodic.

Crucial also to making this commitment to abstain is the realization of who we are spiritually. Peter calls upon his readers again to recognize that they are ὡς παροίκους καὶ **παρεπιδήμιους** (aliens and foreigners) in this world.<sup>22</sup> Coming at abstaining from such a posture is important. Already in 1:1, Peter has addressed his

<sup>18</sup>Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατενομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;

<sup>19</sup>ἢ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

<sup>20</sup>Gal. 5:19-21, “19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

<sup>21</sup>And without question the ‘mind over matter’ emphasis of Hindus and some other eastern religions offers no solution at all. These religious philosophies are built on the core principle of human self-effort, and seek to achieve their goals through meditation techniques designed to bring the ‘flesh’ under complete control by the mind. That some level of control can be achieved is clear, but such practices have absolutely no authentic spiritual value for bringing the individual closer to God through Jesus Christ.

<sup>22</sup>“The word πάροικος, originally meaning simply ‘neighbor,’<sup>15</sup> came in time, particularly in the east, to mean ‘resident alien,’<sup>16</sup> that is, one who, though not a full citizen<sup>17</sup> and hence having neither the obligations nor the privileges that fell to citizens,<sup>18</sup> nevertheless did have a recognized status and hence was not totally outside legal protection.<sup>19</sup> In the NT, it is most often used in the sense of ‘alien’ (Acts 7:6, 29; 13:17) but is applied to Christians in only one place (Eph 2:19) other than here in 1 Peter.<sup>20</sup>

“Παρεπιδημος did not come to refer to a class of people, but describes rather one who has settled in a given place on a temporary basis,<sup>21</sup> a sojourner, and hence without the recognized status even of a πάροικος. Rarer than πάροικος,<sup>22</sup> it occurs in the NT only one other time outside 1 Peter (Heb 11:13).<sup>23</sup> Both words describe people who were foreigners in an age when foreigners, however numerous they may have been particularly in the larger cities of the empire,<sup>24</sup> were *eo ipso* suspect,<sup>25</sup> and exile from one’s native land was one of the severest punishments that a city or state could impose.<sup>26</sup>” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, Bible Study: Page 8

readers as ἐκλεκτοῖς **παρεπιδήμοις** διασπορᾶς (chosen foreigners of the Dispersion). The significance of such a posture is to recognize that this physical life in the material world is only temporary and is not really home. Thus we can and should live rather detached lives from ‘things’ around us. To become absorbed by the accumulation of such stuff is to open our lives to the destructiveness that Paul warned the rich about in 1 Tim. 6:9-10, “9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.” Without question, we are material in our existence, and remain so even as believers in this life. Seeking God’s help with basic material needs is certainly legitimate, as Jesus taught us to pray in the Model Prayer, (Mt. 6:11): “Give us this day our daily bread.” And He continued to admonish believers to not worry over these basics in Mt. 6:25-34 (// Luke 12:22-31), but to live trusting God to provide these things. So how we approach abstaining from fleshly desires is very important.

In addition, Paul’s advice to the Galatians in 5:16-21 is important as well. Central to this advice is the assertion that only under the continual leadership of the Holy Spirit is victory over the flesh possible. The combination of serious commitment to abstain and consistent submission to the Spirit is essential to success in rising above the fleshly temptations that come at us.

### **b. Don’t loose your positive lifestyle, v. 12**

Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλὴν, ἵνα, ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσι τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς.

#### **Notes:**

This third expansion element of the admonition to abstain from fleshly desires is more complex and detailed than the previous two. Because of this, the participle phrase is often handled by Bible translators as though it were a separate sentence.<sup>23</sup> But the Greek phrase ἔχοντες... stands as a modifier of the infinitive ἀπέχεσθαι. This connection is important, and separating it into another sentence weakens this connection. The process of abstaining is to take place while believers are living a ‘noble manner of life.’ Peter sensed that a strong counter active to fleshly desires was τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ...καλὴν. And also important was that such a lifestyle was to be lived ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (among Gentiles).<sup>24</sup> The expression underscores behavior and

1996), 173-74.]

<sup>23</sup>Compare the following:

**NRSV:** Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

**NLT:** Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world.

**ESV:** 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.

**TEV:** Your conduct among the heathen should be so good that when they accuse you of being evildoers, they will have to recognize your good deeds and so praise God on the Day of his coming.

**HSCB:** Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do evil, they may, by observing your good works, glorify God in a day of visitation.

**NIV:** 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.

**LBLA:** Mantened entre los gentiles una conducta irreprochable, a fin de que en aquello que os calumnian como malhechores, ellos, por razón de vuestras buenas obras, al considerarlas, glorifiquen a Dios en el día de la visitación.

**LB (1984):** Enthaltet euch von fleischlichen Begierden, die gegen die Seele streiten, und führt ein rechtschaffenes Leben unter den Heiden, damit die, die euch verleumden als Übeltäter, eure guten Werke sehen und Gott preisen am Tag der Heimsuchung.

<sup>24</sup>“This verse continues the thought of v. 11, now giving the positive side of living as aliens in their culture. The call to conduct<sup>54</sup> that is recognizably good in the eyes of nonbelievers is not unique to our author,<sup>55</sup> and by this time is part of Christian tradition.<sup>56</sup> Underlying this call is the conviction that both Christians and pagans recognize good behavior,<sup>57</sup> yet without the idea that the ‘good’ is identical for both.<sup>58</sup> The exhortation to humility, for example, found in 5:5, runs counter to Hellenistic thought,<sup>59</sup> and the command to be holy as God is holy<sup>60</sup> indicates that good conduct for Christians is conduct in accord with God’s will.<sup>61</sup>” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 176-77.]

patterns of day by day living. By living a life built around spiritual values, rather than material values, believers not only presented a strong witness to their God, but additionally helped fortify themselves against the temptations of the flesh.

Embedded into this noble lifestyle was an important objective: ἵνα...ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσι τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς. Non-believers would observe the wealth of ‘good deeds’ done by believers and thus be compelled to praise God at the Day of Visitation. Their praise would be to acknowledge that the believers’ lifestyle had its origin in God and represented a superior way of living to theirs. This will happen in spite of the non-believers ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν (*slandering believers as criminals while the believers are living this superior lifestyle before them*). Thus on the day of judgment they will profoundly regret their false accusations against believers and be compelled to acknowledge that this way of living was produced by God Himself in the lives of the believers.

The observation of non-believers presently is ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες. The participle ἐποπτεύοντες only surfaces in the NT here and in 1 Pet. 3:20.<sup>25</sup> In the latter passage, the non-believing husband can be possibly converted to Christ after having observed “*the purity and reverence of*” the wife’s Christian life. In our text, non-believers carefully watch the behavior of their Christian neighbors day by day. What they see shapes their opinion of the religious faith of these believing neighbors. The construction ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων specifies the source of what they are observing. The actions (τῶν...ἔργων) of the believers are presumed to be καλῶν, an adjective that stresses the outward beauty and appeal of the actions of the believers. This is a similar emphasis on what the non-believing husbands observe in their Christian wives (3:2): τὴν ἐν φόβῳ ἀγνῆν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν. The wife’s manner of living (ἀναστροφὴν) is characterized by both ἐν φόβῳ (*reverence of God*) and ἀγνῆν (*purity*). Her actions motivated by her devotion to God reflect the purity of her commitment to her husband. In 2:12 the τῶν καλῶν ἔργων (*noble deeds*) reflect the Christian τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλὴν (*noble lifestyle lived among the Gentiles*). In simple terms, how believers behave themselves reflects the quality of their style of living. When that lifestyle is καλὴν (*noble*), it signals the presence and activity of God in the believer’s life.

This observation of noble deeds being done is contradicted, however, by what the non-believers are saying about their Christian neighbors: ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν. They are saying that believers are κακοποιῶν.<sup>26</sup> The usual sense of the adjective κακοποιός, when used as a noun such as here is ‘*criminal*.’ Literally meaning ‘*doing evil*,’ the word normally defined those breaking the laws of the dominating government. This is the general sense of the three uses of the word in First Peter: 2:12, 14, 4:15. Thus while the non-Christian neighbors observed a ‘*noble life*’ in their Christian neighbors, they verbally accused the Christians of being criminals. Such a contradiction is correctly labeled as ‘*slander*’ (καταλαλοῦσιν<sup>27</sup>) by Peter. What the pagan neighbors observed was a standard of living far superior to theirs, and this made them uncomfortable

<sup>25</sup>ἐποπτεύω 1 aor. ἐπόπτευσα (s. next entry and ὀράω; Hom.+; Sym. Ps 9:35; 32:13; Jos., C. Ap. 2, 294; Ath. 13, 2) **to pay close attention to, watch, observe, see** τι someth. (Polyb. 5, 69, 6; 31, 15, 10; Heraclit. Sto. 53 p. 75, 19) τὴν ἀναστροφὴν **conduct** **1 Pt 3:2**. Abs. ptc. (ἐκ τ. καλῶν ἔργων is to be taken w. δοξάσωσιν: BWeiss, Kühl, HermvSoden, Knopf; differently Wohlenberg, Vrede) ἐποπτεύοντες *when they observe them* (sc. τ. ἔργα) **2:12** (s. ἐκ 3γβ) s. HMeecham, ET 65, ’53, 93f.—DELG s.v. ὀπῶπα. M-M. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 387.]

<sup>26</sup>κακοποιός, ὄν (s. prec. entry; Pind. et al.; Hippol.) **pert. to doing evil** (Aristot., EN 4, 9 p. 1125a, 18f; Polyb. 15, 25, 1; Sallust. 9 p. 18, 19; Pr 12:4; AscIs 3:13; Ar. 13, 6 [fem.]) subst. **evil-doer, criminal** (schol. on Nicander, Alex. 569; PMich 149 [II A.D.], 10; 16 al.; Pr 24:19) **J 18:30** v.l.; **1 Pt 2:12; 3:16** v.l.; **4:15** (on support for the sense sorcerer s. ESelwyn comm. ad loc.). Opp. ἀγαθοποιός **2:14** (Artem. 4, 59 p. 238, 9; 11).—M-M. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 501.]

<sup>27</sup>καταλαλέω fut. 3 pl. καταλαλήσουσιν Mi 3:7; 1 aor. κατελάλησα LXX (s. two next entries and λαλέω; Aristoph.+; Polyb.; Stoic. III 237, 6 al.; SIG 593, 6 [II B.C.]; PHib 151 [c. 250 B.C.]; LXX, En; TestAbr B 12 p. 116, 20 [Stone p. 80]; Test12Patr; Philo [only in connection w. the OT: Leg. All. 2, 66f=Num 12:8 and Leg. All. 2, 78=Num 21:7]) **speaking ill of, speaking degradingly of, speak evil of, defame, slander** τινός *someone* (Ps 77:19 τοῦ θεοῦ; 100:5 τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ; TestIss 3:4, Gad 5:4; cp. Diod S 11, 44, 6; τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δόξης Theoph. Ant. 3, 30 [p. 268, 28]) **Js 4:11ab**; 2 Cl 4:3; Hm 2:2a. ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν **1 Pt 2:12** (cp. SIG loc. cit. ἵνα μηδ’ ἐν τούτοις ἔχουσιν ἡμᾶς καταλαλεῖν οἱ ...). Also κατὰ τινος (so mostly LXX, En) 1 Cl 35:8 (Ps 49:20). Pass. **1 Pt 3:16**.—Fig. (Ps.-Lucian, As. 12 τοῦ λύχνου) νόμου *speaking against the law* **Js 4:11c**.—Abs. ὁ καταλαλῶν *one who speaks evil* Hm 2:2 (three times).—M-M. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 519.]

enough to bring public accusations against their Christian neighbors that these ‘Christians’ were breaking the laws of Rome by their behavior. Their specific accusations are not spelled out here, although a possible hint at them may come in 4:15 with Peter’s admonition that no believer should be guilty of being *ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος* (a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or a mischief maker). Sinful people always feel uncomfortable around genuinely holy people. Sometimes that irritation rises to the level of leading the pagan to make false and defaming accusations against their Christian neighbor. Most countries in the western world have laws in place to protect innocent people against slanderous accusations. But such was not the case in the ancient Roman empire.

Peter’s reassurance of the believers is that although their pagan neighbors may slander them now, there is coming the day when they will be compelled to praise God for the godly lives of their Christian neighbors: *δοξάσωσι τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς*. The time of this sudden shift from criticism to praise is *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς*, “at the day of visitation.” The noun *ἐπισκοπή* has a variety of meanings.<sup>28</sup> Clearly here the sense is of a divine visitation prompting a response to Him at His visit. Although a few commentators try to see this in a positive way of signaling the ‘conversion’ of unbelievers either in a individual moment of divine encounter or at final judgment, the context of the letter, especially 4:17-18,<sup>29</sup> clearly demands that this day be understood as Final Judgment at the end of time.<sup>30</sup> In that moment, unbelievers will be compelled to speak truthfully in acknowledging that the noble living they observed in their Christian neighbors actually reflected the activity of Almighty God in the lives of these believers. This acknowledgement will be expressed as praise of God: *δοξάσωσι τὸν θεὸν*. Perhaps in a desperate move they will seek to avoid eternal damnation with a useless attempt to utter positive words to the God they treated with contempt all their lives. But as Jesus made pointedly clear in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:21), “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” Desperate words coming too late make no difference in the eternal destiny of these who have slandered God’s people for living by God’s standards.

Clearly from 2:11-12 we have a huge responsibility to live by God’s standards, and not by paganism. We

<sup>28</sup>“*ἐπισκοπή, ἦς, ἡ* (s. prec. entry; Lucian, D. Deor. 20, 6= ‘visit’; OGI 614, 6 [III A.D.] = ‘care, charge’; Etym. Gud. 508, 27= πρόνοια; LXX; TestBenj 9:2; JosAs 29, end cod. A *ἐπισκοπή ἐπισκέπτεσθαι* τινα of God; Just., D. 131, 3).

**1. the act of watching over with special ref. to being present, visitation**, of divine activity

a. of a salutary kind (so Gen 50:24f; Ex 3:16; Wsd 2:20; 3:13; Job 10:12; 29:4 al.) *καιρὸς τῆς ἐ. the time of your gracious visitation* (Wsd 3:7) **Lk 19:44**. *ἐν ἐ. τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ when the kingdom of Christ visits us* 1 Cl 50:3. *ἡμέρα ἐπισκοπῆς* **1 Pt 2:12** is understood in this sense by the majority (e.g. Usteri, BWeiss, Köhl, Knopf, Windisch, FHauk, et al.). S. also b below.—The gracious visitation can manifest itself as protection, care (Job 10:12; Pr 29:13; 3 Macc 5:42; Just., D. 131, 3; Orig., C. Cels. 6, 71, 8 [as providential care w. πρόνοια]) *ἐν ἐνότῃ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπισκοπῇ* in unity w. God and under God’s care IPol 8:3.

b. of an unpleasant kind (Hesych.= ἐκδίκησις; Jer 10:15; Sir 16:18; 23:24; Wsd 14:11; Theoph. Ant. 2, 35 [p. 188, 26]); *ἡμέρα ἐ.* (cp. Is 10:3) **1 Pt 2:12** is so understood by the minority (e.g. HvSoden, Bigg, Goodsp.; Danker, ZNW 58, ’67, 98f, w. ref. to Mal 3:13–18). S. a above.

**2. position of responsibility, position, assignment** (Num 4:16) of Judas’ position as an apostle *τὴν ἐ. λαβέτω ἕτερος* let another take over his work (not an office as such, but activity of witnessing in line with the specifications in **Ac 1:8, 21f**) **Ac 1:20** (Ps 108:8).

**3. engagement in oversight, supervision**, of leaders of Christian communities (a Christian ins of Lycaonia [IV A.D.] in CB I/2 p. 543; Iren. 3, 3 [Harv. II 10, 2] al.; Orig., C. Cels. 3, 48, 20) **1 Ti 3:1** (s. UHolzmeister, Biblica 12, ’31, 41–69; CSpicq, RSPT 29, ’40, 316–25); 1 Cl 44:1, 4.—DELG s.v. σκέπτομαι. M-M. EDNT. TW.”

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 379.]

<sup>29</sup>17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?”

<sup>30</sup>“The result of such observation, namely, the glorification of God, occurs on the ‘day of visitation’ (*ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς*). While it is possible that this could refer to the time of the conversion of the nonbelievers,<sup>80</sup> and has been suggested to mean the trial of Christians as wrongdoers not at God’s hands but at the hands of the civil authorities,<sup>81</sup> the use of this phrase in the Bible points rather to the time of the final judgment.<sup>82</sup> The thrust of the verse is therefore not that the good works Christians do will deliver them from unjust oppression when those who observe them are led to conversion, but that at the time of the final judgment nonbelievers will be brought to the realization that the Christians did what they did at God’s behest and with divine approval, and thus be led to glorify God.<sup>83</sup>” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia—a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 178.]

have been transformed by God's power in conversion; we now are obligated to live a 'noble life' with the highest standards of morality. This responsibility must be fulfilled even in the midst of slanderous criticism by our non-Christian neighbors. They must see God at work in our lives, and one day they will acknowledge it.

Much of contemporary Christianity suffers greatly from having compromised itself with the ways of the world around it. The non-Christian world looks at believers and doesn't see any real difference from themselves. Why then should they make a Christian commitment? The spiritual reality of eternity is hidden from their eyes. The richness of a relationship with God in this life is not understandable. They simply see worldly Christians and conclude that there's nothing of value in Christianity for them.

Over the centuries Christian groups have sometimes promoted being different from the world. Often, however, this difference is superficial and centers in wearing different kinds of clothes, not using make-up, fixing one's hair differently etc. Such 'differences' are phoney and not what Peter is talking about in this passage. Bumper stickers on our cars and crosses hanging around our necks carry no impact for Christ.



The primary way believers will impact their world is by how they live before their non-Christian neighbors. To be certain, this lifestyle must not be a 'do-gooder's' lifestyle. Self effort at doing good works will not have an impact! Mostly it will drive people away from Christ.

Peter's method is clear and forcefully presented: what non-Christians see in us must be τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν, 'a lifestyle' produced ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων, from noble deeds. Our ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν καλήν, 'noble lifestyle,' must reflect the activity of God in our life. This is why non-believing critics will be forced to praise God, δοξάσωσι τὸν θεόν, on the Day of Judgment. They won't praise believers; instead, they will have to acknowledge the activity of God in the lives of believers even though they refused to accept it at the time.

Here is the way to spiritual awakening in our world. This is the only way to spiritual renewal. Such is the key strategy in evangelistic outreach to the pagan world. Until a significant percentage of Christianity realizes this biblical truth, spiritual decline and deterioration will continue to happen in country after country. Christianity will continue to shrink and impact ever smaller percentages of the population.