

Warfare of the Soul

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[0 : 00] I want you to open up your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2.! We're not going to cover a lot of ground today, but we're going to cover two very crucial, very central verses, I believe, in this book.

So 1 Peter chapter 2, we're going to read verses 11 and 12. I'm going to ask you guys to stand together with me as we read from the Scriptures. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 11.

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.

And Father, take these words that your Spirit has inspired and apply them to our hearts. In Christ's name, amen.

[1 : 04] I did something this week that I don't really do all that often, although occasionally I will. But something was a little bit different this time.

What I did is I was driving around and running errands and doing various things, and I had my phone with me, hooked up to my car through the magic of Bluetooth and all those sorts of fanciful things.

And I decided I'm going to go online and listen to a couple of the most recent sermons that I preached. That's not a fun thing for anyone to do. Nobody likes to listen to their own voice because it never sounds the same as it does in your head.

And then if you're a preacher, you're constantly critiquing the way that you said this and the way that you did this. And so it's useful to do occasionally in order to improve your preaching ability, but it's really not a fun thing to do if you want to enjoy your drive around town while you're running your errands.

But nevertheless, I decided I'm going to go back and listen to a couple of the sermons. And so I did just that. What was different this time is I decided I'm not going to critique myself. I'm not going to do all that. I'm just going to listen to the Word and see.

[2 : 06] And what I found was that I have not done an incredibly good job of applying some of the things that I've been preaching over the last few weeks.

I thought, I needed that Word yesterday. Why didn't I listen to this yesterday? Or better yet, why didn't I remember what I preached a month ago yesterday when I really needed to hear that Word? And so I began to think, if that's true of me, and I'm the one spending a lot of time praying over and studying the Scriptures and then preaching it to you, if that's true of me that I tend to distance myself with only a matter of days or weeks from the Scriptures that we've meditated upon, and I don't always apply them in the situations in which I need them, it must also be true of you, and probably to an even greater degree because it's not resting on your mind all week long as you prepare.

How is it that we so easily move back into life and forget the words that God has spoken to us? How do we do that? We do it because we're easily distracted.

We do it because our hearts are drawn to other things. And it just so happened that this week, the text that we're covering is a passage in which Peter more or less gives a very brief, very short review of what he has said in the chapter and a half leading up to this passage.

[3 : 25] In fact, verses 11 and 12 here in the second chapter of 1 Peter are transition verses because chapter 1 all the way down through chapter 2 verse 10 are really a laying out of Peter's theology that he wants his readers to see.

Things that he wants them to know about themselves. Things that he wants them to know about Christ. About their relationship to Christ. Their relationship through Christ to God the Father. He's

laying out these things so that through most of chapter 2 all the way up through chapter 4, the middle of chapter 4, he can begin to apply in practical ways all the things that he's laid out theologically for us in the first part of the book.

And that's the way that most of the New Testament epistles are written. If you read most of them, about the first half of every one of Paul's letters is a lot of theology with some application mixed in. And then the second half of most of Paul's letters is a lot of application with that theology sort of pulled in here and there. And Peter's not doing anything a whole lot different.

He's going to begin to apply a lot of what he's already taught us beginning in verse 13 all the way down through the middle of chapter 4. But these two verses serve as kind of a pivot point, a transition.

[4 : 43] Peter helping us to begin to see how can the things that he's shown us about ourselves and about Christ, how can those things have very practical outworkings in our lives.

So that in reality, verse 11 is heavy on summary. And verse 12 is heavy on looking ahead to future application.

But let me show you some of the things in here. Just key off a couple of things that are going to remind us of all that Peter has told us. Now look in verse 12 first because there's something there that tells us about our relationship to the world now that we are in Christ.

Something has fundamentally shifted about our relationship to the world and to God because we are in Christ. And it's easy to miss, but I want you to look at verse 12 where it says, Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

Now you might miss an important point here if you forget that this latter is written to a mixed group of Christians of both Jews and Gentiles. There are probably as many if not more Gentiles among Peter's original readers than there were Jews.

[5 : 59] So it's a strange thing initially to think that Peter might address a largely Gentile audience by telling them to keep your conduct honorable among the Gentiles.

But a shift has taken place in Peter's thinking. A shift has taken place in our thinking if we've understood him rightly, particularly over the last couple of weeks of sermons that we've been looking at over the first ten verses of chapter 2.

Because one of the things that we have seen that Peter stresses is that when you're in Christ, you have been united to Him by faith, you have become a spiritual brother of Christ, God then becomes your spiritual father and you are adopted into the family of God.

But not only that, because Christ is the seed of Abraham. Christ is the remnant of Israel. He is the embodiment of true spiritual Israel.

All those who are in Christ become members spiritually of God's people. We become members of spiritual Israel. And I told you last week that that does not mean that God has replaced the nation of Israel with the church.

[7 : 13] That's not at all what Peter is saying. What it means, though, is that the true Israel, the real Israel, always identified in the Old Testament as the remnant.

As those who, in the midst of God's judgment upon the nation of Israel, those that God was going to protect in the middle of that judgment. That remnant, those true believers within the nation of Israel, are now represented and summarized in Christ, the true Israel.

I spent a lot of time last week going over that and teaching that. And I'm not going to spend a third week in a row going over that. Go back and listen to a couple of those sermons. But you've got to understand that point if this is going to hit home with you.

Because what Peter is doing now is he is assuming that now. He is assuming that the identity of his readers is they are the people of God. They are true, spiritual Israel.

And everyone outside of Christ is now regarded as a Gentile. Everyone outside of Christ is regarded as a Gentile. And if you don't begin to see and understand your identity in Christ as truly becoming a son of Abraham and a son of God in him, then you will not rightly understand your relationship to the world.

[8 : 34] You are now no longer a citizen of this world. You are a citizen of a heavenly kingdom and of a heavenly spiritual Israel.

And in fact, it's that very truth that drives the way that Peter addresses us in verse 11. Notice what he says. He says, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles.

That is not the first time in this letter that we have seen that kind of language. Chapter 1, verse 1, to those who are the elect exiles of the dispersion.

This is fundamental to our identity. We are exiles. We are pilgrims. We are sojourners in a world to which we no longer belong. You've got to begin to see yourself in that way.

If you see yourself as primarily belonging to this world and primarily involved and active within this world that we see around us, then you will fundamentally misunderstand who you are in Christ and how he wants you to interact with the world around you.

[9 : 45] You are now a part of spiritual Israel. You are now a part of a heavenly people and in this world so long as you are alive on this earth, you are in exile. You are a sojourner.

You are a pilgrim. And all of that is because you are, first of all, as Peter says in verse 11, you are, first of all, beloved. Beloved.

Which I think is Peter's shorthand way of summing up our relationship to God the Father.

Remember what he had said earlier about our relationship to God the Father?

He says in verse 1 and 2, that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. That the God the Father in eternity past set his love upon us.

That's what foreknowledge means in that particular context. He set his love upon us and because of that he has chosen us out of the world. Verse 3, according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again so that now God is our true spiritual father.

[10 : 49] He set his love upon us. He gave us spiritual life. He made us his children. Which is why verse 14 says, addresses us as obedient children.

This is who we are and we are children of God. We are exiles and sojourners in this world because we've been loved by God and set apart by God and made to come alive by God.

That's who we are. And if you live in accordance with that sort of self-understanding and that identity it will transform the ways in which you relate to the world.

Notice the overall logic of these two verses before we begin to get into the details. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Abstain from those passions. And then verse 12 tells us keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable. That's probably not the best way to translate this verse because there's really only one command and it's one long sentence.

[11 : 58] It's abstain from the passions of the flesh having your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that the result of abstaining from the passions of the flesh is that your conduct among unbelievers becomes good honorable conduct noticeably different from everyone else around you.

So the logic of this particular passage is if you recognize who you are in Christ and then you begin to live that is abstaining from the passions of the flesh you begin to live as those who belong to Christ ought to live it will result in your conduct being different among the lost and the lost in turn recognizing it so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

So follow the logic recognize who you are live like who you are abstain from the passions of the flesh live like who you are so that your conduct in the world is good and honorable and then even those who oppose your way of living and do not like you will see your good deeds and God will be greatly honored in that.

That is the logic of this passage so that if we can see who we are in Christ and if we can live in accordance with our identity in Him it will fundamentally rearrange and transform the ways in which we interact with people in the world around us.

Now the question becomes how exactly does that work and that's what Peter is going to explain to us in these two verses. So let's look at it in a little bit more detail. He says Beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your souls.

[13 : 52] First thing that we need to realize is that we are not primarily engaged in an external battle with the culture around us. We are primarily engaged in an internal struggle against our own sinful desires and passions.

Let me say that again. We are not primarily engaged in an external battle with the culture around us. We are first and foremost engaged in an internal battle against sinful desires and passions that live within us.

That's a timely message that we need to hear because we see on the news evidence that the cultural battles are being lost by those who believe the things that the scriptures teach on many fronts.

Cultural battles are lost all the time. Look throughout history. History is the story of mankind's corruption, of its waxing and waning throughout history.

And yes, there are times when the church has a profound impact upon the world around us and we change cultures. Yes, that does happen throughout history. But it's never lasting and it's never permanent because there's always another generation coming into this world born as sinners.

[15:09] There's always another line, person waiting in line who does not yet know Christ. So that the impacts that we do have upon culture, and those are good things and we should pursue those things, they're not lasting, they're not permanent.

And in the big picture of history, if you step back and look at it, the history of the church is a history of influence over the culture, a waxing of influence of the culture, and persecution by the culture.

So that persecution will come. And losses in cultural battles, in the culture wars will happen. And if we think that our primary battle ground is the culture wars, that our primary goal is to set right the things that are wrong amongst our neighbors and our politicians, then we've missed it altogether.

That's not our primary battle ground. Our battle ground is first and foremost within our own hearts. Abstain from fleshly desires, that's a literal translation, fleshly desires, that wage war against your soul.

It is tempting, I think, to read that kind of a statement and think that what Peter is indicating is that there's some sort of battle going on between our bodies and our spirits.

[16:34] Because you see the word flesh, and you see the word soul, and we tend to think that those are on opposite ends of the spectrum, and they're warring against each other. I don't think that's quite what Peter has in mind at all.

for two reasons. Number one, the word flesh here does not signal our physical bodies. The word flesh indicates our sinful desires.

It indicates our sinful nature. So the desires that flow forth from your fallen sinful natures is what Peter has in mind, not merely desires that flow from your physical body.

So that if we interpret this passage to have reference primarily to sexual desires, we would be off base and wrong, those would be included in sinful desires, fallen behavior, but it wouldn't be exclusive.

So the desires of the flesh, or fleshly desires, are any desires, any passions that arise from a fallen sinful nature. And then on the other hand, the word soul in the New Testament, although occasionally it refers to our immaterial spirit, the part of us that's not bound by flesh, most of the time the word soul in the Bible refers not to the immaterial part of us, but to all of who we are, body and spirit.

[17:54] Most of the time that's what the word soul refers to. It is who we really and truly are, and who we really and truly are is embodied soul, embodied spirits.

That's who we really and truly are. We won't exist forever as bodiless spirits floating in the clouds. We will exist forever in resurrected bodies because that's how God has designed human beings to live.

It is a temporary time that we will exist without a body between death and resurrection. But our destiny is to exist forever as spirits within bodies.

That's who we are. The word soul connotes all of that in its totality. So you might say that the passions of the flesh wage war against yourself, against who you are as a human being.

So that what Peter is saying here is that we are in a war and there are old sinful desires that cling on and that hide and that rise up within our hearts and the goal of those desires is to destroy us in our totality.

[19:07] to destroy who you are, to ruin your life. That's what they will do if not fought against.

And make no mistake about it, it is all out spiritual warfare in your heart. It is. If you view it as less than that, you will step onto a battlefield unprepared for what's coming toward you.

You always want to arm yourself with the weapons to face the enemy that stands before you. And the enemy that stands before you here is your own latent sinful desires.

They are there. They are real. And if in attempting to become more Christ-like people, we merely focus on the externals around us, in other words, we focus merely on our actions and what we do

and what we say aloud, rather than what's taking place in our hearts, then we've targeted the wrong enemy.

We haven't understood the nature of the warfare in which we are engaged. It would be like encouraging an alcoholic that they will be okay so long as never go to another bar again and never hang out with people who drink a lot because you're an alcoholic and so don't go to those things anymore.

[20 : 31] That's not terrible advice, but it doesn't really get to the heart of the problem for them because what you don't realize is that there's something within them that's going to drive them to seek out alcohol and they don't have to go to a bar to have that desire arise.

They don't have to be around people who drink in excess for that desire to rise. If they are an alcoholic by their nature, they're going to seek it out. And so you've got to encourage them and equip them to battle the desire within.

That's true for any kind of addiction that we might have. And believe it or not, you and I are sin addicts. We are addicted to sin.

This is why we saw a few weeks ago that Christ came not merely to set us free from the guilt of sin. He came to set us free from the indwelling power of sin. We are told in chapter 1, we have been redeemed from the futile ways inherited by our forefathers, by the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus redeemed, ransomed from the futile ways of our forefathers. Not merely the guilt, but the power of sin at work in our lives Christ has died to redeem us from.

[21 : 42] And if we're going to wage this battle against sin in our lives, and we're going to aid others in that fight, then we have to target the desires, not behavior alone.

So understand, there's a real war, there's a real battle taking place, and the battleground is your heart, not your behavior. Your behavior will flow out of what's happening inside of you, which is exactly what Peter indicates.

If you wage this war well, and if you abstain from those desires, that is, if you feel those desires rising, you run from those desires.

You run from anything that provokes those desires. You get away from those desires as quickly as you can. You begin to cultivate other desires to fight against those desires in your heart and in your life.

You don't just leave them there and hope that they never attack. They're going to attack whenever you're most vulnerable. It's going to happen. So you need to be on the offensive, cultivating desires to take their place, cultivating counter-desires, which is what we've seen throughout this letter.

[22 : 48] Over and over, Peter tells us that we need to fix our thoughts, fix our minds upon Christ, what he's going to do for us in the future at our ultimate final redemption, what he has done for us on the cross.

And if you recall this, verse 13 of chapter 1, he commanded us to prepare your minds for action, be sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ so that one of the thoughts and one of the desires that we are to cultivate within ourselves is a longing and a craving for our ultimate redemption, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We should long for that day. We should look for that. We should set our hope upon that, as Peter tells us. So many times we have an attitude about the return of Christ to say, yes, I want Christ's return, but I'd like to do A, B, and C first.

I mean, I want him to come back during my lifetime because I really don't want to die. That's not fun, I hear. So I'd really like Christ to come back before I die, but I'd like him to come back after whatever it might be.

So I remember when I was young, I would say, yeah, I don't know if things are going to be post-tribulational or pre-tribulational and all. Now I feel like I know because, you know, but back then, I don't know.

[24 : 14] But here's what I'm hoping, I'm hoping that Christ returns post-marriage and pre-death. That was my eschatology at about 19 years of age. Post-marriage, pre-death.

Because I'm thinking, I'd like to get married and have a family and all this, but I don't really want to die so Christ could just come back sort of wedged in between those kinds of things to get some good things here and then he comes back. We've got to have a stronger desire than that to see Christ come on the day of his revelation.

We've got to cultivate strong, strong, strong desires to see him return and set our hope fully on that. Those are counter-desires to the desires that will arise up in your hearts and tempt you to distance yourself from Christ.

And we saw another counter-thought or counter-desire that Peter encourages us to have when he tells us that we are to, in verse 18, you know or knowing that you were ransomed from the feudal ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ.

In other words, what Peter is saying is you should know and you should think upon the cost of your redemption. And when you begin to value the death of Christ and see his blood as precious, that creates within you counter-desires that will oppose your desire for sin.

[25 : 37] So you have two weapons that we have seen in chapter 1 of 1 Peter. On the one hand, the weapon of future hope. On the other hand, the weapon of past victory won by Christ.

And if you meditate upon those and you grow desires in accordance with those thoughts, those desires and those thoughts will enter into battle in the moment against the sinful desire that arises and they will conquer that desire.

But those things don't come out of nowhere. They don't come out of nowhere. They come out of meditation on the word and thought and prayer over what Christ has done for you and what he promises you.

It creates desires. It creates weapons in your heart to fight against sinful desires so that you're able to abstain from them. And then if you abstain from them, he says it will result in you having, my translation says keep, but it's having your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

It will transform your behavior. So you're not primarily focused on behavior. You're focused on creating counter desires to fight sinful desires. But if you create those counter desires, if the word creates those within your heart, then it will affect your behavior.

[26 : 53] It will change your conduct. This word here for conduct is the same word that was used in verse 18 to describe the futile ways, the conduct, the way of life inherited from your forefathers.

So there are two ways of life. There's the sinful way of life that is yours by birth. It's those sinful desires. And there's a new way of life worked within you through the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the word.

And he says here, abstain from fleshly desires and that will result in your way of life, your conduct among the Gentiles being literally, it says, good.

Good. Good conduct among a lost and within the midst of a lost world. That's not going to fix everything in your life. Okay?

Don't begin to think that if you cultivate these desires and it affects your conduct and you begin to live a more godly life that it's going to fix everything in your life. That's not the goal here. It's not the goal that Peter states.

[28 : 02] Peter's goal is never to make your problems disappear. It's never to remove persecution from your life. He's writing this letter to a people enduring persecution. And he does not say, believe more, work harder, obey more, and the persecution will disappear.

That's not what he says. It's not what he says in these verses. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, good. So that when they speak against you, so that when they slander you as evildoers, he assumes that the persecution is going to continue.

He assumes that the slander will go on and on. Keep your conduct honorable, keep it good, so that something can result when they slander you.

What will result, he says, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. I think this requires a pause and a little bit of thought here.

Because Peter's indicating that though the lost world will slander us precisely because of our faith in Christ, it will happen, though they'll slander us because of that.

[29 : 25] Yet they are capable of seeing some of the good that we do. They will see your good works. I think this is true because, as Paul tells us in Romans chapter 2, the law of God is written upon the hearts of all those created in his image.

So everybody, the law of God, the basic moral principles that God has set up in this world are written upon the hearts of all people everywhere. Now we ignore those things and we try to push them aside, but they are there.

There's no other way to explain common moral grounds that are cross cultural and cultures that have had very little contact historically. Why is it that murder is considered wrong in every culture upon the face of the earth?

Now I'm aware that there are a lot of cultures, every culture, has found ways to excuse various forms of murder that the Bible condemns. I'm aware of that. But the general principle still exists in the culture, though they may try to redefine what constitutes murder.

The general principle is that murder is wrong and that's found everywhere. Why would that be found in every culture? Why? Because the law of God is written upon the human heart.

[30 : 52] And there are basic patterns of good and decent and moral behavior that will be produced if we fight against sinful desires that the world is capable of seeing and recognizing.

There are fundamental moral disagreements, differences between a biblical Christian worldview and the worldview of the world in which, of the culture in which we live.

There are fundamental differences. They are there. They are real. But there are also real points of contact because of the Word of God etched upon the human heart.

So that when they see some of our moral pronouncements that they vehemently disagree with, they will slander us and say that we are intolerant and unloving.

It will happen. And yet in the midst of that, they will not be able to ignore that the basic conduct of our lives is honorable and good.

[31 : 55] We are decent, kind people. We serve others around us. We love people around us. I think that's what Peter is getting at here.

Peter is saying, yes, indeed, you will be slandered and called an evildoer. Because there are some things they will insist that you will not be able to participate in or that you will refuse to do.

So that in Peter's context, these believers refuse to worship all the false gods of the Greeks and Romans. So early Christians, maybe not as early as this letter is written, but pretty early on, Christians were called by the Greco-Roman culture, they were called atheists.

It seems a strange thing for Christians to be called atheists. But they were called atheists because they refused to bow down to anyone but Christ. Christ is Lord, they would say.

Not Caesar, not any of the pantheon of the gods. Christ alone is Lord. I mean, the Romans were perfectly fine with the people that they conquered continuing to worship their own gods.

[33 : 06] So long as they would add the Roman gods or the emperor to their pattern of worship. And most people had no problem with that. Most cultures had no issue adding some gods onto their own list of gods.

But it was impossible for the early Christians. There's one God. Christ alone is Lord. And so they were called atheists. There are even, in some early church tradition, it indicates that some non-Christians accused Christians of being cannibals.

This is a strange one. But it was because when they took the Lord's Supper, which they did regularly every Sunday, when they took the Lord's Supper, that was restricted to believers.

And so restricted was it that they would usually ask any non-believers who were present there in worship to leave. And then they would take the Lord's Supper. So all these non-believers who were asked to leave, all they knew was what they could hear going on in there.

And they heard things about drinking blood and eating flesh. And so they thought that the early Christians were cannibals. I mean, there were all sorts of things that they were accused of being and doing.

[34 : 18] Some of those things were silly. Some of them were based upon their steadfast Christian beliefs. And that's no different for us today. There are some things that we must hold to in the midst of a culture that disagrees.

So we hold to a particular biblical definition of marriage that has clearly been swept away by our culture. Okay. Okay. We hold to the value and the sanctity of life from the earliest stages, which our culture, many in our culture reject.

Okay. And they look at us often because of those moral judgments that we make. And they say that we are intolerant. Or they say that we are unloving.

So we are, as Peter says, slandered as evildoers because they look at those, the things that we say as evil. Okay. We may not be able to change some of that.

Maybe we can. Maybe we can't. But what we can be sure of is that if we keep our conduct good and honorable, even in the midst of those criticisms, they cannot miss, they cannot ignore the general

good moral conduct present among us.

[35 : 31] And so often, those who claim the name of Christ fail to impact the culture in any sort of way because they've done no internal battle.

And their lives look no better than the lives of those that they differ with on other issues. Why would your neighbor want to hear anything about the gospel that you've come to share if all they see and hear is you and your wife screaming and yelling at each other in the driveway?

Why would they care to hear what you have to say when you can't be kind to your wife? They don't care what you have to say if you're not kind to your wife. Or if you're a mean, overbearing boss at work to your employees, and then as you walk out of the office in the afternoon, you try to invite them to church, why would they want to have anything to do with that?

You're a mean person to them. Why? Why? But if you do battle with the desires of your heart, and your conduct is good, then even though in certain areas they might slander you as wrong and intolerant and unloving and an evildoer, they will see that you are a good, loving husband.

You are a kind, thoughtful boss. Or you are a diligent, hard-working employee, not a slacker. They will see the things in your life that they hold in common with you in terms of ethics and morals.

[37 : 06] And it will change their view of you. It will, in fact, here's what Peter says. Here's the result. So that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

There are two possibilities here in terms of understanding what that means, to glorify God on the day of visitation. The day of visitation refers either, it depends on what Old Testament passage you're looking at, but the visitation of God, when He visits, it can refer to either God coming in to rescue, redeem, and save His people, which it does at times in the Old Testament, or it can refer to God coming to visit judgment upon either wayward Israel or the nations that have come and decimated Israel.

So, it can refer to salvation, or it can refer to judgment. So, if we're going to interpret this rightly, we've got to ask the question, is Peter saying that they'll see your good works, and because they see your good works, some of them will come to faith in Christ, and therefore, when Christ returns to rescue His people, they will be among those rescued, and they'll glorify God, because even though formerly they slandered you, they've seen your good works, and through your good works, been convinced of the gospel and converted, now they glorify God.

Is he saying that? Or, is Peter saying that they will see your good deeds, they will know that you are a good person, yet they continue hard-heartedly to accuse you of being an evildoer, and when God comes in judgment, they will be among those judged, and God will be vindicated, and His people vindicated, and glorified through their judgment.

Which is it? If you look through the rest of Peter, the rest of this letter, you can see evidence for both possibilities. Because beginning in verse 13, on down through the middle of chapter 4, really verse 11 of chapter 4, Peter is applying this command to keep yourselves honorable, keep your conduct pure, he's applying it to different areas of your life.

[39 : 21] So, chapter 3, verses 13 through 17, relates primarily to government, human institutions. Chapters, verses 18 through 25, have primarily to do with your conduct at work.

It's addressed to servants, but the best correspondence to that today would be an employee, so it's addressed, so for us, it would be applicable at work. In chapter 3, the first seven verses are addressed to our conduct within our marriage, and so forth and so on.

So he begins to apply in different areas of our lives, different spheres in which we live, he begins to apply this principle that he's laid out in verses 11 and 12. We begin to look through those.

So, chapter 3, where it talks about, addresses women who are married to unbelievers. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, that's they don't believe, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

So, here, obviously, Peter has in mind wives who, though mistreated at times by their husbands, their husbands don't obey the word, they continue to live in a respectful, submissive, godly manner.

[40 : 39] We'll talk about what that means when we get to it. But because of their obedience to God's word, the wives can win their husbands over to Christ without a word.

So here, obviously, the good conduct results in salvation for one who was once a non-believer. A little further down in chapter 3, verse 13.

Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? Obviously, same concept in mind. Same word, good, it's honorable earlier. He says, but even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, there's the slandering as an evildoer.

Even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, those who are persecuting you. But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect. So that's still that good conduct. Having a good conscience so that when you are slandered, that's the exact same word we saw there earlier.

[41 : 45] They speak of you as an evildoer. When you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. So here it's judgment on them.

They're put to shame by your good conduct. It's not final, ultimate judgment. It's temporal judgment in this life. But nevertheless, it's a kind of judgment. Down to chapter 4. Verse 4.

With respect to this, the very sins that he's listed in verse 3. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery.

And they malign you. Speak evil against you. But, verse 5, they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

That's ultimate final judgment for them. So, which is it? My take is that Peter has in mind either possibility. In verse 12.

[42 : 49] They will see your good works, and for some of them, it will result in their opening their hearts to hear the gospel, and they will believe, and they will be saved, and on the day when Christ returns, God will be glorified because he has saved them by means of your good conduct, gaining a hearing for the gospel.

And on the other hand, it can also mean that those who continue to resist and continue to oppose God's people throughout their lives, there is coming judgment.

There is judgment now in this life because they are shamed, they accuse you of being an evildoer, but everyone around can see all the good that you do, and then ultimately they come into judgment on the day of judgment when Christ returns.

Either way, Peter is saying, whether people respond to your behavior in repentance and faith in Christ, or they continue to slander you and dog you every day to the end.

Either way, if you wage spiritual warfare, and you live your life because of the warfare you wage in your heart, your outward conduct begins to reflect that, God will be glorified.

[44 : 15] And the goal in all of it is the glory of God in Christ displayed through your life. that will not and cannot happen if you remain fixed on externals.

But if you turn your gaze inward and you begin to use the tools that Peter has given us, rejoicing in our future hope, banking upon all that Christ has done for us on the cross, bearing our sin for us, redeeming us from its guilt and power, thinking upon those things, meditating upon those things, if you will do that and pursue that and wage war with those weapons, in the end, God will be glorified. Let's pray. So difficult for us sometimes, Father, to take what we hear and see in your word and put it to work in our lives.

But I see this is so crucial for us, so essential for us in victory over sin, in success as we share the gospel with those around us, in enduring trials.

This is so essential for all of those things that I pray, Father, that you would take this word, especially now, this morning and this week, especially this word, and shape and mold us to be a people who are not obsessed with culture wars, but are obsessed with the glory of God on display in our hearts, bleeding out into everything that we do as the world watches.

[46 : 18] I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.