

Session 5

February 18, 2018

I AM JUST PASSING THROUGH

1 Peter 2:11-17

Peter's epistle is addressed to temporary residents (1 Pet. 1:1). Various translations render the phrase as *sojourners*, *strangers*, *foreigners*, *pilgrims*, *exiles*, and *aliens*. In every case, the idea is clear: believers are temporary residents in this world; we are just passing through.

Temporary residents are different than permanent residents. We live with the knowledge that we aren't staying very long. We pack light. We don't put down roots. We keep an eye out "down the road." While Christ-followers might be tempted to bide our time and drift along the way to our "sweet by and by," the Bible reminds us that our time on earth is precious, meant to be abundant, filled with opportunities, and driven by obligations. In our text, Peter reminds us of two important reasons we need to make good use of our time here on earth.

Good works point people to God (vv. 11-12). These verses argue against a destructive behavior while urging a positive behavior. The pitfalls of "fleshly desires" are two-fold. First, such lusts "war against you." Simply put, carnal lust and worldly passions are the believer's adversary. They are damaging distractions. No believer has the luxury of entangling himself in the deadly affairs of this world (see 2 Tim 2:4). In fact, Paul argues in Romans 8:13 that living according to fleshly desires brings spiritual death. Only by putting to death those desires does one find spiritual life. Secondly, those worldly behaviors give ammunition to unbelievers to use against us. That's what Peter means when he talks about Gentiles speaking evil against believers. Early church members were accused of everything from secret-society carousing to cannibalism. Such skepticism was only made worse by the hypocritical behavior of so-called Christ-followers. Instead, Peter urged believers to live "honorably" among the lost. The Greek word is often translated "honestly," which connotes sincerity and transparency. The bottom line is that replacing worldly lust with genuine Christian conduct will ultimately disarm the naysayers and point them instead to the God who wrought the change in us. *Because time here is short, live a clean life. Good works point people to God.*

Good works silences the critics (vv. 13-17). The key verse in this section is verse 15: "For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good." Peter gives five ways to silence the accusations of skeptics; those he characterizes as both ignorant and foolish. (1) By submitting to human authority. While the world indeed stands against us, God's word makes it clear that earthly authorities are appointed by Him and for our good (see Rom. 13:1-7). For this reason, Christians should be the very best examples of the very best citizens. (2) By living disciplined lives. Christian liberty is freedom to do *as we ought*, not freedom to do whatever we want! (3) By honoring all people. As God's ultimate creation, humans are deserving of dignity and respect. We need not agree with everyone...but we must respect everyone (see 1 Cor. 10:33). (4) By loving other believers. According to Jesus, the greatest commandment of all is to love God and to love others (Matt. 22:37-40). But there is extra emphasis given to loving other believers especially. In fact, Jesus said it is the supreme mark of Christ-followers for all to see (John 13:35). (5) By showing reverence to God. In this context, to "fear God" means to respect Him with the full measure of honor that He deserves. The ultimate form of hypocrisy is to flippantly disrespect the very God we claim to worship. The very best way to disarm critics of Christianity is to live a genuine Christian life that is free of hypocrisy. *Because time here is short, live a life that honors God and others. Good works silences the critics.*