

The Great Spiritual War

Engage in this war or lose your soul

First Peter 2.11, 12

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • May 27, AD 2012

Prelude:

I. Peter begins to touch lightly upon his main theme,

- A. that of the suffering of the saints,
- B. namely persecution.

Persuasion:

I. First Peter 2.11 – The War Against the Soul

11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... (1Pe 2.11).

A. Listen to how Peter begins this section.

1. He called them, us, “Beloved.”
 - a) While Peter certainly spoke of the saints in beautiful ways,
 - b) he has not used a direct term of endearment, but
 - (1) here he does
 - (2) as he begins to speak to them, us,
 - (a) on something that is very important,
 - (b) something that if we fail at it,
 - i) we will lose everything,
 - ii) all the blessings he spoke of from 1.2–2.10.
2. He wrote of magnificent blessings, but
 - a) we do not live a life of ease,
 - b) the forces of evil do not retreat because of we have these blessings, but

- (1) we have joined God's side and
 - (2) Satan and the world consider us as traitors.
 - (a) Even our own fleshly lusts
 - (b) want us back in the world.
 3. Therefore, Peter begs us to abstain from fleshly lusts.
 - a) Fleshly lusts do not help us gain our incorruptible inheritance, but
 - b) can keep us from gaining it.
- B. We are sojourners and pilgrims,
1. we are on a journey, and
 2. we want to be true to our journey and reach the destination.
 - a) We are foreigners living in a land that is not our own.
 - b) We have no permanent home here.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... (Phi 3.20).

- c) We are like Abraham and the patriarchs,

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11.9, 10).

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Heb 11.13).

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Heb 11.16).

C. Abstain from fleshly lusts.

1. Since we are sojourners and pilgrims,
2. we have to be careful what we do in this foreign land.
 - a) We do not want to sin (Jam 4.4; 1Jo 2.15).
 - b) We do not want to offend unnecessarily.
 - c) We want to look out for the welfare of those around us.

D. Fleshly lusts war against the soul.

1. It is not a little tiff we are in, but we engage in warfare.
2. In Galatians 5, Paul touched upon this,

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Gal 5.16, 17).

3. Then Paul told us some of the lusts or works of the flesh,

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5.19–21).

4. Later, Paul again reminded us of the war we face in the soul,

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal 5.24).

E. Going back to First Peter, hear what the apostle said,

1. fleshly lusts war against the soul.

2. Who do you think is waging that war against us?

II. First Peter 2.12 – The War Against the Saints

12 ...having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation (1Pe 2.11, 12).

- A. Peter does not tell Christians to escape society, but
 1. we are sojourners and pilgrims in someone else's land,
 2. the land of the Gentiles.
- B. We have to have honorable conduct among the Gentiles.
- C. Peter's use of the word "Gentile" fits perfectly with the previous verses.
 1. What is a Gentile?
 - a) Fifty-two times the New King James Version uses "Gentile" in the Old Testament.
 - b) Fifteen times it appears in the Gospels.
 - c) Fifty-three times it appears in Romans through Revelation.
 - (1) Much of the initial use of "Gentile" refers to non-Israelites, but
 - (2) starting at First Corinthians 5.1,
 - (a) Paul began to use the term to mean people outside the church.
 - (b) That is because now the church, Christians,
 - i) are the people of God, and
 - ii) so everyone else is a Gentile.
 - (1) [Also 1Co 10.20; 2Co 11.26; 1Pe 4.3; 3Jo 7]
 2. We must conduct ourselves honorably among the Gentiles,
 - a) always being aware that they are watching us and judging us.

b) They judge our religion and they judge our God.

(1) What then shall they conclude about God because of us?

(2) In Romans 2, Paul brought this up to the natural Jews,

23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written (Rom 2.23, 24).

(3) [See also Eze 36.20–23]

3. Have behavior that is honorable, or seemly some translations say.

a) We can do good things, but

(1) not with the right spirit or

(2) in the right way.

b) Therefore, let our lives show beauty.

D. The Gentiles will speak against us as evildoers.

1. Just think of what the Bible shows of the persecution of the early church.

a) They were accused of cultural evil,

21 “...and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe” (Acts 16.21).

b) They were accused of political evil,

6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus” (Acts 17.6, 7).

- c) They were accused of religious evil,

“Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands” (Acts 19.26).

- d) They were accused of economic evil,

27 “So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship” (Acts 19.27).

2. The Gentiles make the same accusations against us now.

- a) For example, if you, in the kindest spirit possible,
b) explain why you believe homosexuality, including homosexual marriage,
(1) is unnatural,
(2) just watch the response you get.
(a) Years ago, we put an ad in the local paper, and
(b) people persecuted us for it, including our young people.
i) They will hatefully charge you
ii) with hatred!

E. Yet, Peter argues that we must continue in honorable behavior,

1. which includes doing good works,
a) (And by the way, I am creating a list for 365 good works to be done each day of the year, and I will pass it out after I have completed it, but I would like your suggestions please, because I just started and have only listed 16 or 17),
2. Peter says they will be watching us as we do the good works,

- a) some will change now, but
 - b) Peter spoke primarily of the Second Coming of Christ,
 - (1) which Peter called the day of visitation and
 - (2) at that time, our enemies will glorify God.
 - (a) This happens in the same way
 - (b) that we commend parents of children who have honorable behavior.
3. Peter argues the same thing in chapter 3, and remember what Jesus said,

16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5.16).

Exhortation:

I. We are under attack, but

- A. God shows us how to deal with it in this passage.

II. Remember

- A. that we are sojourners and pilgrims,
- B. that we must abstain from fleshly lusts,
- C. that we must have honorable conduct among the Gentiles,
- D. that we engage in good works.

III. Do not lose the war for your soul.

- A. If you lose that war,
- B. you will be lost.

IV. Do not be on the wrong side in the war against the saints.

- A. If you join the side of the enemy,
- B. you will have to give an account to God for it.

V. Yet, we have all given in at some time to fleshly lusts.

A. This created a battle wound.

1. If you do not take care of that wound,
 - a) you could die.
 - b) Spiritual infection will enter your soul and ruin you.
2. The way to fix that wound
 - a) is the same thing as when you became a Christian,
 - b) which is getting the forgiveness of God.

B. John revealed what the Christian must do,

**9 If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just
to forgive us our sins and
to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1Jo 1.9).**

1. Do that for your private sins.
2. However, if you have sinned publicly, bringing reproach on the church,
 - a) do as James said,

**16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another,
that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man
avails much (Jam 5.16).**

C. If you have never become a Christian, there is something you must do,

**38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in
the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the
gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2.38).**