

I Peter 2:11-12

Intro: Beloved, I urge you...

This type of formula is often used to introduce a new thought or section of thought in the New Testament, e.g. Rom 12:1,15:30, 16:17, I Cor 1:10, Eph 4:1, 1 Thes 4:1, 5:12,14, esp. I Pet 4:12 “The same function can be assigned here to [Dear friends, I urge you]...The brief appeal thus introduced is best understood as a heading to 2:11-4:11 in its entirety.” WBC. 115.

“In the broadest sense, the structure of I Peter is marked out by two occurrences of the direct address, “Dear friends” in 2:11 and 4:12. These divide the epistle into three parts, 1:1-2:10, 2:11-4:11, and 4:12-5:14.

1. The theme of the first part is the identity of the people of God established on the basis of the great salvation Christ has accomplished on their behalf. Their identity as a “chosen” people is affirmed programmatically in the address (1:1-2) and confirmed in the concluding pronouncements of 2:9-10...This identity as God’s people rests on the experience of salvation (1:5,9-10; 2:3) or rebirth (1:3, 22-23; 2:2-3).

2. The address, “Dear friends, I appeal to you,” in 2:11 marks a shift from the identity of God’s people to their consequent responsibility in a hostile world. If 1:3-2:10 expanded on their identity as “chosen people” (cf. 1:2), the reference to them as “aliens and strangers” in 2:11 serves as a reminder that they are at the same time “living as strangers (again cf. 1:2) in contemporary society. Their mission to the world is summarized generally in 2:11-12 and specifically in 2:13-3:12.” WBC. p.xxxiv-xxxv.

I. Overcome the enemies within. (11)

A. Abstain from fleshly desires. -cf. Is 55:7, Acts 15:29, Eph 4:22, I Thes 5:22, Heb 12:1

1. As aliens and strangers. (11a)

- cf. Heb 11:9-10, 13-16, 13:14

“The basis of [Peter’s] appeal is not his own identity or status (as in 5:1), but that of his readers. Their identity as “aliens and strangers” in Roman society is what necessitates the moral demands that will follow.” WBC. p. 116.

“These two words [aliens and strangers] give us two great truths about the Christian. (a) There is a real sense in which he is a stranger in the world; and because of that he cannot accept the world’s laws and ways and standards. Others may accept them; but the Christian is a citizen of the Kingdom of God and it is by the laws of that Kingdom that he must direct his life...(b) The Christian is not a permanent resident upon earth; he is on the way to the country which is beyond. He must therefore, do nothing which would keep him from reaching his ultimate goal.” Barclay p. 201.

-cf. Shepherd of Hermas 50

2. Abstain from fleshly desires. (11b)

-cf. Mt 5:29-30, Rom 13:14, Gal 5:16-17, Col 3:5, Rom 6:6, I Pet 4:2

“Fleshly desires and sins of the flesh include not only the grosser sins but all that is characteristic of fallen human nature. Barclay p. 200.

“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. 1:14;4:2)...Peter characterizes these impulses as merely physical in motivation and intent, centered on self-preservation and material well-being....In light of the emphasis on suffering in the remainder of his epistle, it appears that the

principal factors that Peter sees undermining a person's life are the natural impulses toward comfort, self-protection, and self-gratification....Such natural impulses, although not intrinsically evil for Peter, must yield to other, more vital considerations, centered on what he calls the soul." WBC. p. 116-7.

B. Reason- because they wage war against your soul. (11c)

-cf. Rom 7:23, 8:13, Jms 4:1

We must never settle for second best if it will keep us from God's best. We must sometimes sacrifice our present for our future, never sacrifice your future for your past.

We must lose our life in order to gain it. cf. Mk 8:35-37.

II. Overcome the enemies without. (12)- cf. Rom 12:21

Overcoming the enemies within and overcoming the enemies without are not two separate things but are interrelated as two sides of the same coin.

"Peter starts with the assumption that the first and most immediate conflict is within the Christian believer. That is, between the "natural impulses" toward survival and acceptance in Roman society, and the "soul" or new life focused on God and the approaching "day of visitation." The resolution of this individual conflict is the key to the resolution of the social conflict between Christians and their detractors." WBC. p. 120.

This verse is the primary theme of the whole middle section of this epistle. It is a general command to have excellent conduct. This is worked out throughout the rest of the section specifically in the following real life situations: citizens and rulers (2:13- 17), slaves and masters [employers and employees] (2:18-25), wives and husbands (3:1-7), persecutors and persecuted (3:8-4:6), a concluding summary outlining excellent conduct for the whole church (4:7-11).

A. Have excellent conduct among the Gentiles.[unbelievers] (12a)

-cf. 2 Pet 3:10-13, Phil 1:21, I Tim 4:12, Jms 3:13, Phil 2:15-16

"conduct" here is the same word used in 1:15-18 and means habitual way of life, not just being on your best behavior when someone is watching

"The emphasis here is on conduct that can be seen and appreciated as "good" even by fellow citizens who are not believers in Christ." WBC. p. 117.

B. The purpose of doing so. (12b-e)

1. You may show the beauty of the Christian life. (12b-d)

a. Even though they speak of you as evildoers. (12b-c)

-cf. Mt 10:25, Jn 15:18-21

"The closest English equivalent is "in case" or "in a case (or situation) where" [they speak of you as evildoers]" WBC. p. 117

Christians have been misunderstood, slandered, and maligned behind their back and to their face throughout history. Peter knew or assumed that this type of persecution was happening to his readers.

b. They may see and take notice of your good works. (12d)

-cf. 1 Thes 4:11-12

"The context, both here and in 3:2 suggests an act of observing that leads to a change of mind or outlook, like having one's eyes opened to something not seen before...Peter's interest is not in the act or moment of conversion

itself, but in conversion's cause ("from observing your good works") and final result (to "glorify God on the day of visitation")." WBC. p. 118.
"Slanderous charges were continually being made against the Christians; and the only effective way to refute them was to live lives so lovely that they would be seen to be obviously untrue." Barclay p. 201
"The only way to refute accusations of wrongdoing is to 'do good'."
WBC. p. 118

2. The result- They may be among those who glorify God in the day of His visitation (they may be converted). (12e)

-cf. Mt 5:16

a. glorify God- cf. Jn 15:8, I Pet 4:11

"The use of the term here evidently signals repentance or religious conversion at or before the last day." WBC. p 118.

b. the day of His visitation- cf. Lk 19:44, Is 10:3

This could mean the day when God visits them with initial salvation, but more likely in I Peter it means the last day of either praise or judgment, that those who used to slander Christians would have been brought around by observing the lives of Christians to join their number and be a part of those who will glorify God in that day.

"Peter's hope for those who now despised and slandered the Christian community was that they would change their minds and join in the chorus of praise to God that distinguished Christians from the rest of the world. The scenario was...that simply by observing the "good conduct" or "good works" of those who believed in Christ, the accusers would see that their charges were false. Acknowledging the faith of the Christians as true and the God of the Christians as worthy of their worship, they would "glorify God on the day of visitation" (cf. the scenario played out between a believing wife and an unbelieving husband according to 3:1-2)." WBC. p. 118- cf. I Cor 7:16

"Whether we like it or not, every Christian is an advertisement for Christianity; by his life he either commends it to others or makes them thing less of it. The strongest missionary force in the world is a Christian life." Barclay. p. 202.