

Christian Responsibility Before the Cosmos (2:11–4:11)

Preliminary Requirement (v.11)

VERSE 11 Beloved (Ἀγαπητοί [*adj.voc.m.p.*, ἀγαπητός *agapetos*, beloved]), **I urge you as aliens and strangers** (παρακαλῶ [*pres.act.ind.1.p.s.*, *parakaleo*, encourage, exhort; “urge”] ὡς [*adv./compar.*] παροίκους [*adj.acc.m.p.*, πάροικος, *paroikos*, alien; 4X: Acts.7:6,29; Eph.2:19; 1Pet.2:11] καὶ παρεπιδήμους [*conj.* + *adj.acc.m.p.*, παρεπίδημος, *parepidemos*, temporary resident; 3X: Heb.11:13; 1Pet.1:1; 2:11; “stranger”]) **to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul** (ἀπέχεσθαι [*pres.midd.infin.*, ἀπέχω, *apecho*, hold back; “abstain”] τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν [*def.art.w/adj.abl.f.p.*, σαρκικός, *sarkikos*, fleshly, carnal; 7X: Rom.15:27; 1Cor.3:3; 9:11; 2Cor.1:12; 10:4; 1Pet.2:11] αἵτινες [*rel.pro.f.p.*, ὅστις *hostis*, which] στρατεύονται [*pres.mid.ind.3.p.*, στρατεύω, *strateuo*, wage war] κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς [*prep.w/def.art.w/gen.f.s.*, *psuche*, soul]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 11

1. Peter concludes the first major section of his letter (1:3–2:10) by drawing the lines of confrontation.
2. Two groups are differentiated – “unbelievers” and “you who believe – on the basis of their opposite responses to Who and What “the Chosen and Esteemed Stone” is.
3. The former (unbelievers) “stumble, being disobedient to the word” (i.e., the gospel); the latter (believers) attain to “honor” and “vindication”.
4. The contrast between the two groups, with its consequent social tensions, will absorb Peter’s interest through the remainder of the correspondence.
5. Of the two groups, believers are the more clearly defined.
6. To Peter they are simply the new “Israel” scattered as “aliens and strangers” in a suspicious and, at times, hostile world.
7. They are a priesthood responsible to witness by word and deed the “excellencies” of the God who “called them out of darkness into His marvelous light”.
8. Peter’s focus to this point primarily has been on who Christians are before God.
9. Now he proceeds to define how they must conduct themselves in Roman society.
10. His earlier instruction to “be holy in all your conduct” is a harbinger of this long section of the letter.
11. Obviously he is concerned with how believers relate to one another, but his primary interest here is how they are supposed to relate to negative volition.
12. He addresses them as “Beloved”, a term of endearment.

13. This descriptive term is used of God's love for His people (Rom.1:7; 9:25; Col.3:12; 1Thess.1:4; 2Thess.2:13; Jude.1); of God's love for His Son (Eph.1:6; Col.1:13; 2Pet.1:17); and of the love believers have for one another (Acts.15:25; Rom.16:5,8,9,12; 1Cor.4:14,17; 10:14; 15:58; 2Cor.7:1; 12:19; Eph.5:1; 6:21; Phil.2:12; 4:1; Col.1:7; 4:7,9,14; 1Tim.6:2; 2Tim.1:2; Philm.1,16; Heb.6:9; Jam.1:16,19; 2:5; 1Pet.2:11; 4:12; 2Pet.3:1,8,14,15,17; 1Jn.2:7; 3:2,21; 4:1,7,11; 3Jn.1,2,5,11; Jude.3,17,20).
14. At the end of the letter, Peter will characterize all he has written as an "exhortation" and "testimony" (5:12).
15. The verb is *parakaleo* (to exhort, encourage, urge).
16. Here it is a pres.act.ind.1.pers.sing.
17. He does this in his capacity as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (cf. 1:1).
18. The basis of this appeal, however, is *not* his identity or status (as in 5:1), but that of his readers.
19. Their new spiritual identity as "aliens and strangers" in the cosmos is what should motivate the moral demands that will follow.
20. Peter characterizes them metaphorically "as (ὥς, comparative part.) aliens and strangers" (cf. his use of *hos* in 1:14; 2:2,16; 3:7).
21. The expression recalls Abraham's words to the sons of Heth (Gen.23:4), "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you".
22. The association of "aliens" (παροίκους) and "strangers" (παρεπιδήμους) was taken from the LXX of Ps.39:12.
23. The noun "aliens" occurs 4X in the N.T.: Acts.7:6,29; Eph.2:19; 1Pet.2:11.
24. The noun "strangers" occurs 3X: Heb.11:13; 1Pet.1:1 and 2:11.
25. "Resident alien" seems to best fit the first word and "foreigner" the second.
26. Taken strictly, the two terms are mutually exclusive.
27. "Alien" connotes a person who is a permanent resident in a foreign land, as in the case of the Jews in Egypt.
28. "Stranger" suggests a visitor making a brief stay in a foreign land.
29. Both have metaphorical applications to believers.
30. Our transfer from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light has made us "aliens and strangers" in the cosmos.
31. This took place when we first believed in Jesus Christ for salvation.
32. Our birthright granted us citizenship in heaven (Phil.3:20).
33. So while we are domiciled in a foreign land (cosmos diabolicus), our stay is but a brief one compared to our lasting homeland (Ph3).
34. Old Testament saints were occupied with this doctrine (Heb.13:14; cp. 11:10; 12:22).
35. Whatever legitimate allegiance we have to the land of our temporary residency, we should remember that all the kingdoms of the world are passing away and that we have a homeland which lasts beyond the vicissitudes of time.
36. We should not derive from this some "escapist" philosophy of living, as Scripture is against it.
37. Rather, we should make our *modus vivendi* that of our heavenly country/city.
38. This is the background to the exhortation "to abstain from fleshly lusts" that immediately follows.

39. So, since our lasting and true homeland is elsewhere, we are “to abstain” (pres.infin. used as an imperative) from STA “lusts”.
40. Otherwise, we betray our birthright and undermine our future glory.
41. The phrase “abstain from passions” (ἀπέχεσθε ἐπιθυμι) was long familiar in Greek ethical instruction (e.g., Plato, *Phaedo*, 82C, 83:b; *Laws* 8.835E).
42. Because they are “aliens and strangers” in Graeco-Roman society by virtue of their election, Peter urges them to forego STA lusts belonging to the “darkness” out of which they have been called (cf. 2:9).
43. Enslavement to these “lusts” was a part of their past (cf. *epithumia* in 1:14; 4:2).
44. With the adjective “fleshly” (σαρκικός), attention is drawn to the genetic flaw that indwells all mankind (cf. 4:2).
45. Peter is telling them to overrule the lust pattern of the IOSN.
46. This is the only way that they can attain to Ph2 sanctification and the blessings associated therewith.
47. Loss and shame await those believers who do not overrule the STA with its lusts.
48. Peter goes on to state that there exists within man an inner conflict in which the STA seeks to impose its agenda upon the soul, or the “Real You”.
49. The imagery of an inner struggle between the “Old You” and the living soul is paralleled in Rom.7:23.
50. There is a plurality of impulses which lay siege against the soul of each individual.
51. The closest parallel to this observation is Gal.5:17.
52. It is clear from Rom.7 and Gal.5 that positive believers do not win every battle, but that they should make it their goal to win the war.
53. The tension between man’s spiritual or rational nature and his appetites is reflected in Greek and Jewish literature (Philo, Plato, and Aristotle).
54. Continued exposure to sound teaching and the resultant building up of the “New You” supplies the wherewithal to effectively fight back and prevail over the pre-salvation function of the ISTA.
55. The WOG is replete with documentation of the functional existence of the STA (called “flesh”) after salvation (see the Doctrine of the STA).
56. So Peter’s teaching is in complete agreement with Paul’s.

Countering Gentile Slander (v.12)

VERSE 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles (ἔχοντες [pres.act.pt.{imper.}2.m.p., echo, have, hold; “keep”] ὑμῶν [pro.gen.p.] τὴν ἀναστροφὴν [def.art.w/acc.f.s., ἀναστροφή, *anastrophe*, behavior, manner of life; cf. 1Pet.1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1,2,16; 2Pet.2:7; 3:11] καλήν [adj.acc.f.s., *kalos*, good, proper; “excellent”] ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν [prep.w/def.art.w/loc.nt.p., *ethnos*, nation; Gentiles]), **so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers** (ἵνα [conj./result] ἐν ᾧ [prep.w/rel.pro.loc.nt.s., *hos*; “in the thing”] καταλαλοῦσιν [pres.act.ind.3.p., *katalaleo*, slander] ὑμῶν [gen.p.] ὡς κακοποιῶν [conj./compar. + adj.gen.m.p., *kakopoios*, *evil doer*]), **they may because of your good deeds** (ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων [prep.w/def.art.w/adj.abl.nt.p., *kalos*, good, + *abl.nt.p.*, *ergon*, deed), **as they observe them** (ἐποπτεύοντες [pres.act.pt.n.m.p., ἐποπτεύω, *epopteuo*, observe, scrutinize; 2X: 1Pet.3:2), **glorify God in the day of visitation** (δοξάσωσιν [aor.act.subj.3.p., *doxazo*, glorify; “they may...glorify”] τὸν θεὸν [acc.m.s., *theos*, God] ἐν ἡμέρᾳ [prep.w/loc.f.s., *hemera*, day] ἐπισκοπῆς [gen.f.s., ἐπισκοπή, *episkope*, visitation; from the vb. *episkopeo*, inspect; 4X: Lk.19:44; Acts.1:20; 1Tim.3:1; 1Pet.2:12]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 12

1. Peter follows a negative exhortation with a positive exhortation.
2. Peter’s appeal is directed toward the social life of the Asian Christians.
3. He had already mentioned daily “conduct” in 1:15,17, in which they were to imitate God in holiness and fear.
4. The emphasis here is on conduct that can be seen and appreciated as “excellent” (*kale*, good) even by those who are unbelievers.
5. The verb “Keep” is a pres.pt.n.p. of *echo*, meaning “have”, and is used as an imperative.
6. The noun “behavior” (ἀναστροφή) means “conduct”, or “manner of life”.
7. Of the 13X it occurs in the N.T., it occurs 8X in Peter’s epistles (1Pet.1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1,2,16; 2Pet.2:7; 3:11).
8. With the adjective “good”, it occurs in Jam.3:13.
9. It is used of Ph2 in Heb.13:7.
10. It is used of the pre-salvation life (Gal.1:13; Eph.4:22).
11. And it is used of the example to be set by the P-T (1Tim.4:12).
12. Peter refers to the Gentile Christian readers as though they were Jews by designation and to those outside their fellowship as “the Gentiles”.
13. The term traditionally applied by Jews and Christians alike to non-Jews is transferred to non-Christians, so as to be equivalent of such English words as “heathen” or “pagan” (cf. Mt.5:47; 6:7).
14. The group so designated is a very broad one, as broad as “people generally”.

15. The “good conduct” Peter calls them to is spelled out in detail in 1Pet.2:13–4:6.
16. The conjunction “that” (*hina*) introduces the potential result when Christians apply BD before their antagonists.
17. The phrase “in the thing” (ἐν ᾧ) is equivalent to the English “in a case (or situation) where”.
18. Peter introduces a hypothetical situation (as in 3:16) in which Christians are accused by unbelievers of wrongdoing.
19. Their accusations are not formal legal indictments, but simply malicious gossip and slander, labeling Christians as “evildoers”.
20. The new and very different sect, which advocated total separation from pagan practices, engendered suspicion and malicious hatred.
21. Malicious slander was spread among the Gentiles, labeling the Christians as all sorts of things.
22. They were called anti-patriotic, anti-family, and anti-social.
23. This came as a result of their doctrine of separation from evil.
24. As a result, Christians came under undeserved suffering.
25. Peter gives the antidote to the social persecution, which is the production of divine good.
26. The “good deeds” correspond to the “excellent behavior” (adj. *kalos* or *kale*).
27. The most effective way to refute accusations of wrongdoing is to engage in “good deeds”.
28. This is a notion characteristically expressed in First Peter by the synonymous expression ἀγαθοποιέω (2:15,20; 3:6,17; cp. 3:11,13).
29. The verb “observe” (pres.act.pt., ἐποπτεύω, *epopteuo*, observe) is used only in the N.T. here and in a similar context in 3:2.
30. The verb suggests an act of observing that has the potential of producing a change of mind.
31. This was only a potential, as seen in the verb “they may...glorify” (aor.act.subj.3.p.pl., *doxazo*).
32. The scenario was that some of their enemies would be converted as they observed the witness of the life.
33. The witness of the life gives credibility to the witness of the lips.
34. By observing the “good behavior”, or “good works”, of the Christians, their accusers would come to acknowledge the faith of the Christians as true and the God of the Christians as worthy of worship (a scenario played out between a believing wife and an unbelieving husband, according to 3:1,2).
35. They would “glorify God in the day of visitation”.
36. Were such lofty hopes reasonable or realistic?
37. What makes them so is that they do not represent for Peter the only possible scenario.
38. In the unfolding discussion of this matter, he entertains a quite different outcome (cf. 3:16).
39. He begins, however, with the more positive possibility, because he has in mind Mt.5:16: “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”.
40. The words “Let your light shine before men” are equivalent to “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles”.
41. The phrase “they may see your good works” is parallel to “because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*”.
42. Finally, “and glorify your Father which is in heaven” supports “they may glorify God in the day of visitation”.

43. The prepositional phrase “in the day of visitation” refers to a decisive intervention of God in human affairs, whether for judgment (Isa.10:3; Jer.6:15; 8:12; 10:15) or for blessing (Lk.19:44).
44. The reference here is to the coming of Christ to receive the Church to Himself.
45. The motivation or final result for the “good deeds” is that it will bring about the conversion of enemies (at least some), who will “glorify God” at the Rapture.
46. The conversion of persecutors (some, at least) is consistent with Scripture (Saul/Paul) and history.
47. These two verses (vv.11,12) sketch Peter’s “battle plan” for the on-going confrontation between Christians and Roman society.
48. As battle plans go, it is gentle, in the tradition of Paul’s advice to the Romans not to “be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good” (Rom.12:21).
49. Peter starts with the assumption that the first and most immediate conflict is within the believer.
50. Unless the believer is willing to override the ISTA with its lusts, he will not be able to overcome the external enemies of his faith.
51. The external conflict is not won by aggressive behavior, but by “good deeds” yet to be defined in the letter.
52. Peter’s vision is that the exemplary behavior of Christians has the potential of convincing some of the error of their accusations and bring them to a change of mind.
53. How, or under what circumstances, this will happen is left up to God and the positive volition of people.