

Beloved Honorable Stranger

1 Peter 2:11-12

Intro: Picking Chris up with Christian Radio on.

TS:

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11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

1. We are the object of God's love.

Beloved has become an archaic term, yet "dear friends" does not carry the same weight that Peter is bringing to bear on the isolated and persecuted church of Ephesus. Beloved or Agapetoi conveys a powerful reminder they are the recipients of Peter's love, and more importantly, the unconditional love of God.

Peter, James, John, Jude, and Paul all use the term beloved to refer to individuals and the church as a whole. It was used for the Nation of Israel in **Psalm 60:4-5 You have set up a banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow. Selah That your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by your right hand and answer us!** It is used by God referring to Christ after his baptism, "This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased." Paul looks back in Romans 11:28-32 at the nation of Israel recalling their status with God and tying the Gentiles into their prize, **28 Regarding the gospel, they are enemies for your advantage, but regarding election, they are loved because of the patriarchs, 29 since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable. 30 As you once disobeyed God but now have received mercy through their disobedience, 31 so they too have now disobeyed, resulting in mercy to you, so that they also may now receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may have mercy on all.** Israel is God's beloved, and that calling has been irrevocable. The history of Israel as a nation has not been a success story, but a tragedy highlighted by compelling accounts of God's graciousness and faithfulness to his people. Now the Gentile world is invited into their salvation and prestige as the beloved of God.

We are the beloved of God, the objects of this his love, and we need reminding of this as we grow in our faith. **The apostle John grabbed hold of this identity better than most.** He doesn't mention himself by name in his gospel, instead using the phrase, "the beloved disciple." If I didn't know better, I'd say to John, are you sure you should use this title, it seems I don't know, pretentious. What do the other apostles think of this? John might say, "Well, most of them are dead, so they think little of it, but it is a declaration of who God is more than who I am." Before he was the "beloved disciple," he and his brother James were the "sons' of Thunder." The brothers who sought a greater position in Jesus' kingdom (Mark 10:35-34) proudly thinking they could handle anything. The same brothers, of **Luke 9:52-55, "52 He sent messengers ahead of himself, and on the way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for him. 53 But they did not welcome him, because he determined to journey to Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" 55 But he turned and rebuked them, 56 and they went to another village.**

This is the same John, who would put at the begging of his Gospel in John 4, the powerful interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. She not only believed in Jesus but led her entire village to come to see and receive him. He's saying, I'm the beloved disciples, and I have been transformed because of it.

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TS: We are beloved, and that brings about changes in our life. What is the change we ought to endure? Peter lets us know. We are the objects of God's love and exiles because of it.

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2. We are objects of God's love and exiles because of it.

1 Peter 2:11 I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul.

Peter is bringing back echoes of Israel's past to us; only this time, the position as strangers and exiles in this world is not because of rebellion against God but because of God's love toward us. Why? We cannot be loved by God and loved by the world. Surrendering our lives to Christ initiates new and better values and ethics in which we live. Values and ethics that rub against the worlds and results in our strangeness.

What makes us strange to the world?

We live by a cruciform ethic while the world holds a self-centered ethic. Cruciformity patterns our life after the cross, after Jesus' life.

Philippians 2:5-8 "Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross." As Christ lived, we imitate. Therefore, we are servants first and foremost. **What we are given is from the Father to be used to glorify the Father. We depend on his provision, protection, and providence to live, work, raise a family, and serve one another.** That makes us strangers in a world operating with a self-centered ethic.

Self-centered ethics is a macro description of relying on oneself to perceive with the world correctly, provide for oneself indefinitely, and produce for oneself satisfaction. We are strangers in the world because God has called us by his love out of our self-centeredness. Out of captivity to sin that wage war against our soul—a war we may or may not be taking seriously. **Our soul is the dimension of our being that relates to God, and he wants all of it.** Our soul is entrenched a civil war fighting over these two ethics of cruciformity and self-centeredness. Peter urges, pleads with us, that we abstain, or always refrain from sin that wages war against the soul to destroy it.

This is not the first or last time Peter is imploring us to move one from our former ignorance, 1 Peter 2:1, "rid yourself of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander." For Peter, this is a level 10 on the importance scale, and our attitude has everything to do with this struggle.

When the civil war began in 1861, the first battle of Bull Run had spectators go out to watch. Many believed it would be a short spat between the states with little loss of life. Boy, were they wrong. – Don't be the same naive people thinking this battle for your soul is over quickly and at little cost. Peter is preparing us for a life a surrender of self and reception of Grace.

Taking our walk with the lord seriously and removing sin from our lives will be strange to the world. Look in **chapter 4:4, "They are surprised that you don't join them in the same flood of wild living—and they slander you."** We are out of step with any and every society. We are not trying to be odd; we are odd because we are trying to be godly. Our striving for holiness will be noticed, and it will be judged. So, let's not give the world any grounds for accusing us of wrongdoing.

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3. Live holy lives amid secular chaos and let God take care of the final results.

1 Peter 2:12 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

What is honorable conduct, or what determines what is honorable? On the surface we might think Peter is considering what is honorable to the world, but that is so far from Peter's mind. He is concerned with the holiness of God and our commitment to reflect it in the world. If honor were bound to cultural guidelines, we'd be doomed to chase an ever-changing ideal. Instead, honor is tied to the goodness of God's character and commands.

Peter is calling the church to a lifestyle that begins and ends with holiness. **When I say begins and holiness, what comes to mind first?** I assume your mind is drawn to reading scripture, praying, going to church, serving your neighbor, giving your offering, or practicing any number of Christians virtues. Yes, those are the essence of Christian living, but holiness is first and foremost a thirst, a drive to know God in his fullness. Possessing in our heart an unashamed commitment to obey God whatever the cost and wherever we are.

Will the honor of a holy life be noticeable in our world. Yes, it will stick out, and it will offend. Peter urges us not to give our persecutors reason to persecute us based on anything other than the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a world that is continually redefining its virtues, ours remain unchanged, and when they are offended by them, God is glorified. Do you realize we live in a society that values the shaming of others? It is now a human virtue to shame and dismantle a person for the betterment of one's self. **Growing up with family living across the street** we would tease and ridicule each other, and my Grandma, who also lived across the street, would continuously say, "no put-downs, no put-downs" when we'd tease or joke about another. It was annoying as a kid, because making fun of each other didn't hurt anyone; that's what we thought. Our president needs a grandma telling him, no put-down. That probably goes for a lot of us. In doing so, God will take care of the outcome of our holy living.

When they slander, and they will when we refuse to join in with self-centered logic and practice, our good works will speak on our behalf. For some the testimony of our good works, flowing out of a thirst for godliness, might lead to their salvation. **Matthew 5:14-16 "14 "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."** We are not the author of the good works; otherwise, we would receive praise. No, we are the ambassadors of God, and through our good works, he is revealed and praised.

Story of Herb and Ruth Clingen and their young son in a Japanese Prison Camp. Commandant Konishi was brutal. As the Gen. McArthur's forces were landing in Manila, he increased the food rations to the prisoners only this time it was unhusked rice. Which, if eaten would lacerate the digestive system leading internal bleeding and death. If you spent time unhusking each rice kernel, it would use more calories than you'd gain from eating the rice. It was a death sentence, but only one of the many atrocities sanctioned under his command. **The Clingens and other missionaries obey, served, and suffered honorably for years. They were never failing to hold church services. With little to spare, they sacrificed for others' needs in the camp and volunteered for punishment when the weaker brother could not endure it. They lived the cruciform life of holy**

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living before Konishi day after day. Their liberation came when U.S. paratroopers were deployed behind enemy lines to protect the lives of the imprisoned. It happened on the same day the battle of Iwo Jima began. Captured years later, Konishi was convicted and sentenced to death but confessed to believing in Jesus. Testifying that he had been deeply affected by the actions and words of the Christian missionaries he had persecuted. Konoishi is a beloved brother in Christ, forgiven of his sins, and praising our creator's name.

Do you know who else would have had a similar experience? Peter, they very one who wrote these words would have known dear brothers and sisters in the Lord who were put to death by a man named Saul. THE persecutor of the church, but for three days he met with a man who's name was Paul but he looked a lot like Saul. After meeting with him, Peter vouge for his new beloved bother in Christ. Forgiven, beloved and transformed.

You might be sitting here today or watching online and are not one of God's beloved. The central operating system is self-centered and failing to result in the life you desire.