

Making Christ Attractive in a Pagan World

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:412

Code: 81-16

We do think about our country on a day like today, and rightly we should. We have a generation of young people today who really don't understand how we got to where we are in terms of what we enjoy in this country and many countries like it. Teaching of American history has been systematically removed from schools for decades now so that they don't have any sense of the history of this country. But there were some devastating prices paid to bring this country to the place it is now, where so many people have so little appreciation for it. But it's not just what Americans suffered, it's what went on all over the world.

If you go back to the time that I was born, I was born the very year that Hitler ascended to power; and that launched World War II. Over the next five years about 80 million people were killed, 80 million. In a five-year period, that would be like the disappearance of the twenty-five or thirty largest cities in the United States combined – massive amount of humanity.

On the Pacific front in World War II, America engaged in war with Japan, as you remember. There were about half a million Americans that gave their lives there after being attacked at Pearl Harbor; and they took the live of 2 million Japanese. Around the world this massive, massive death was beyond comprehension. About 55 million of the people who died were civilians; about 25 million of them were military. Literally, close to five percent of the world's population was slaughtered.

In World War II there were about 5 million people who were taken prisoner and placed in POW camps – prisoner of war camps – or what we'll call concentration camps. The Japanese ran many concentration camps in the Pacific where they captured Americans and held them. Some of you who have read the story of Louie Zamperini, a good friend of mine and our family through the years, and his story of being in a Japanese concentration camp. Some of you may remember Herb and Ruth Clingen who were a part of our church and members of our staff who were trapped in a concentration camp during World War II. These were horrific experiences for many people.

During World War II there was one particular camp that was under the command of a Japanese officer by the name of Konishi. Konishi had a reputation of being ruthless, and brutal, and a torturer, and essentially a murderer. His objective was essentially to take the life of all who were under his command. He did a number of things to bring about the death of those in the camp. One of the things that he did was to starve people for days and weeks until they were so ravishing in their hunger that they would eat anything, and then serve them rice in the shell. The shells were razor-sharp, and when in their starving conditions with no tools to shell the rice, they went ahead and ate it. It was a death sentence as it, with its razor-sharp edges, sliced and diced their organs open.

Prisoners were killed by Konishi other ways, and he set a day in which he decided that he would kill all the rest of the remaining prisoners in the camp. That day was February 24, 1945, the very end of World War II. On that day, February 24, 1945, he had determined he would wipe out the remaining prisoners. What he didn't expect was the American troops to arrive on that very same day under the

command of General Douglas MacArthur. They liberated that camp on February 24th that day. All the lives of the remaining prisoners were spared, and Konishi escaped with his life, and disappeared into who knows where.

For years the search was made to find him, because he was to be tried and executed for the war crimes that he committed. Eventually he was found. He was found as a gardener in a golf club in Manila, in the Philippines. He was captured, he was arrested, he was tried, and he was hanged for war crimes. Before his execution, however, he made a statement. And here was his statement: "I believe in and I love the Lord Jesus Christ." And they said to him, "How did you come to know Christ?" He said he had been deeply affected by the testimony of the Christians he had persecuted. It was the testimony of those Christians in the direst, most horrific possible circumstances that the Lord used to bring him to himself. For him, his hanging was simply his doorway into heaven.

I don't know if you imagine that you could live like that in that condition, to make that kind of impact. You can understand the hatred that Konishi had, hatred for American in particular who basically were at war with his people, and killing so many of them. But that hatred was overpowered by the testimony of Christians, and it led him to Christ.

How can this happen? How is it that we could be so used, even in those kinds of circumstances, to bring someone who was an outright enemy and hater to Christ? And, by the way, this is why we're in the world is to bring people to Christ under any circumstance. That's what we're here for. But the question is, "How can that happen? How can we so live and so speak to make Christ so attractive, that even though we be deadly enemies, there's an openheartedness to the message we preach?"

The answer to that question comes, I think, in the text that I read earlier. Open your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter chapter 2. And I want to just begin in verse 4, and go down to verse 12.

In this text, Peter is writing to some Christians who are under persecution. They are aliens, as he says in verse 1, scattered throughout the Gentile world in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They are experiencing some serious persecution, animosity, hatred. Their lives are being threatened. And Peter gives them here a rich understanding of who they are in Christ that becomes the basis for their testimony to those who hate them.

What is it about believers that is unique? What is it that we have been given? Well, we know from Ephesians chapter 1 that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. But what are all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ?

We know that we have been given all things that pertained in life and godliness. We know that God has poured out, according to Ephesians 2, all the riches of His grace on us. But what exactly does that mean? Here Peter unpacks some of the blessings in the heavenlies for us. I want you to begin by looking at verse 4; give you something to think about.

Number one: We have union with Christ. We have union with Christ. This is the first privilege, first identifying mark of Christians, verse 4: "And coming to Him." Let me stop there and just say this: Being a Christian is not about joining a community of people who are attached to some religion. It's not about accepting some theology. It's not about endorsing some historical group. Being a Christian is about coming to Christ. It's about coming to Him.

Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, I'll give you rest. Come, take My yoke, learn of Me. My yoke is easy, My burden is light." To be a Christian is to come to Christ, and it is to come to Christ in such a way that you literally are joined to Him in an indivisible union. And coming to Him as to a living stone, which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house.

When we come to Christ, we take on His life and His character. He is a living stone, and we become living stones, because He grants us His life and His character. "We become" – says Peter – "partakers of the divine nature." We are joined to Christ, so that we live; and yet not us, but Christ lives in us. It is, "We are in Christ." It is, "Christ is in us." We don't really have the ability to mark out where we end and He begins.

To be a Christian is to be in a real union with Christ, a living union to possess the divine Christ in a real spiritual union with your own inner-person. It is to be one with Him. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." You are the temple of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ.

So the first thing that is to be understood about the privilege of being a believer – and this is only true, of course, of those in Christianity; no other religion offers this kind of union with the deity – we come to Him, and everything begins at that point when we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. That's why the book of Hebrews says at least three times, "Let us draw near. Let us draw near. Let us draw near." In other words, "We have this union with Christ; let's take full advantage of it by drawing near to Him."

This is the habitual approach of the Christian in worship, to come before his Lord. This is the constant direction of the inner-life of a Christian. It is toward Christ. It is to gaze at His glory and be increasingly transformed in His image. Now let's see how Peter lays this out.

"Coming to Him as to a living stone." That is an oxymoron. A stone by definition is dead. We talk about being stone dead. We use a stone as a symbol of the absence of life. But this is a living *lithos*. This is a stone that is alive.

This is a stone that is further defined in verse 4 as a "precious choice stone." Again repeated in verse 6, "a choice stone." And there it says "a precious corner stone." And then down in verse 7 again, "This stone became the very corner stone." We come to Christ, we come to a living stone, and the living stone is a corner stone.

The most precious, the most important stone in any building was the stone that was in the corner that set all the angles in every direction. That's the corner stone. Literally, the word in the original means "to set all the angles." We come to a stone that sets the angles in this edifice, going in every direction.

It is a choice stone. It is a precious stone in the temporal sense. It's chosen because it suits that, and then it's basically fitted and worked and designed into perfection to make all the angles correct, so that the symmetry of the building is guaranteed in its integrity and beauty. But this stone is a living stone. He is alive. And we, in connection to Him, are also living stones.

All our spiritual privileges are connected to Christ; and what He is, we become. We partake in Him. This is a stunning definition, foundational definition of what it means to be a Christian. It means to be in Christ, have Christ in us. And, “It is the very choice and precious stone in the sight of God,” – verse 4 says – “who was rejected by men, rejected by men.” So we come to a living stone, which has been rejected by men, by Israel, and by the world. But though rejected, this is the choice and precious stone that sets all the angles in this building; choice and precious in the sight of God. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The world hates the one that God loves. The world rejects the one God accepts. This precious, chosen stone is the Son of God, and we are in union with Him. That’s what it means to be a believer. He says that in verse 5, “And you also as living stones.” We derive our character, we derive our life from Him, “Christ” – Colossians 3:3 – “who is our life.” And as living stones, we are being built up as a spiritual house. This is a marvelous picture, very easy to understand.

This is a temple. This is a temple that is a place of worship. This is a temple where God is glorified in Christ. This is a spiritual house. The stones are not the dead stones of a building, they are the living stones of living people attached to the corner stone, who is also alive – the living Lord Jesus Christ who pours His life through all the precious stones that are used to build His temple.

This is the church. The church is a spiritual house made up of those who bear the image of the corner stone. We are Christians, because we are like Christ. We are like Christ. We bear the mark of His life, and His presence, and His character. This is the first of our privileges; and much more could be said about that since that is a dominant theme throughout all of the New Testament: to be in Christ, and to have Christ in us. To be a Christian then is to be understood foundationally as to be in a living union with the Son of God. And in that union, we become a temple, in which collectively as the church, He is glorified and worshiped.

Peter doesn’t stop there in defining the privileges of belonging to Christ. He says in verse 5, “For a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” We not only have union with Christ, but we have communion with Christ. We have access to Christ. We have fellowship with Christ.

In the Old Testament system God was unavailable. God says, “Don’t come near the mountain,” – Mount Sinai – “don’t come near. If you touch the mountain you’ll die.” God says, “Don’t come into the Holy of Holies. That is where I meet with the high priest,” – Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement – “between the wings of the cherubim at the top of the mercy seat, when the blood is sprinkled.”

Once a year, one man, the high priest, could go in there. He had bells on his clothes; and as long as the bells were jingling you knew he was still alive, and God hadn’t killed him for his unholy intrusion into the presence of Holy God. And it wasn’t until the cross that the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom, and the symbol of complete access to God was indicating that everybody who came to Him through Christ had full and complete access.

We are a holy priesthood. We have access to God through Christ. We have access all the time. We have constant access. We have access based on that union with Christ. Our access to God is immediate. God is in us, in Christ.

When you think about the old priesthood, the priesthood of the Old Testament, there were several things that characterized priests, sort of the marks of Old Testament priests. These were the things that were required of them. First of all, they had to be chosen of God. They belonged to a certain family, a chosen family. Secondly, they had to go through some ceremonies to indicate externally the willingness to abandon sin; and it was a sign of cleansing.

So they were chosen by God, cleansed of sin. They had to then be prepared for a lifetime of devoted duty to God. They had to be anointed for service. They had to be trained to function as priests. They had to be committed to obedience to their calling. They had to be devoted to the Word of God, the Scripture. They needed to manifest righteousness, and to have an impact on the people – that is, to bring the people to God. That's the priesthood.

All of those things are true of every believer. We are chosen by God; we are cleansed from sin; we are prepared for duty by the power of the Holy Spirit in us, and the gifting the Spirit gives us. We are anointed by Him for our service, trained through the Word of God, obedient to the Word of God, committed to Scripture. We walk with God, and thus, we impact sinners. We are a holy priesthood.

I think sometimes we underestimate how acceptable our humble service to God is. It says there in verse 5 that we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We tend to think of ourselves as so limited, so far less than what we ought to be, that we underestimate the fact that the sacrifices we offer to God are acceptable to Him.

And what are those sacrifices, by the way? Well, specifically in Scripture, the sacrifice of your body: "Offer your body as a living sacrifice," Romans 12:1 and 2. The sacrifice of prayer, Revelation 8:3. Prayer is seen as a sacrifice offered to God. Praise, Hebrews 13:15, "the fruit of your lips." Even praise to our God is a sacrifice. Righteous deeds, Hebrews 13:16, also a sacrifice to God. Love, Ephesians 5:2, is a sacrifice offered to God. And leading someone to the knowledge of Christ through the gospel is a sacrifice to God, Romans 15:16.

We then now, in this indivisible union with Christ, which is an everlasting union with Him, we have complete access to God through Christ, and we come to God boldly to the throne of grace to offer up our spiritual sacrifices. And I know we tend to think like Paul does in Romans 7, "I'm not what I ought to be; I am what I ought not to be. I do what I don't want to do; I don't do what I want to do. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

But on the other hand, do you understand that when you came this morning, and when you brought your physical form in here and sat yourself down, you literally offered your body, and with it your mind, as an act of sacrifice to God, to be renewed by the truth. And when you sang songs with us, and listened, and joined in your mind with what you were hearing, you were offering praise to God. And when we prayed, you were offering to God the response of your heart in that prayer. And when you commune and fellowship with one another, and express your love, that also is a sacrifice to God. And when you have influence on the people around you, that too is a sacrifice to God. Any righteous thing you do is a sacrifice to God.

And here is the thing that I think you ought to remember. Though it never is what we know God deserved, it becomes, even in its limited form, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. It's because Christ is in you that your sacrifices are acceptable. It's because, in a sense, it's Christ offering the

sacrifice. Your praise may not be everything you want it to be – surely it's not – neither your prayers or anything else in your life. But, however, they fall short of what they ought to be, and one day in heaven will be. They still are acceptable to God, because they are offered through Christ. In a sense, it is Christ offering acceptable sacrifices through us. "Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

What immense privileges. We have union with Christ. We have access to God through Christ in which we offer acceptable sacrifices to God. In and of ourselves they wouldn't be acceptable. But because Christ is in us, they become acceptable through Him.

A third reality that Peter marks for us to understand something of the privileges of being a believer is security in Christ, security in Christ. Verse 6: "This is contained in Scripture," – and, of course, I wish we had time to develop all of that. But Peter is quoting here from Isaiah 28:16 – 'Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone,' – and then this latter part of the verse – 'and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed. He who believes in Him will not be disappointed.'"

You put your faith in Christ, you're secure, you're absolutely secure. You put your trust in the corner stone, the choice stone, the precious stone, and you will never be disappointed. The word "disappointed" could be translated "deceived." Those who are disappointed are the deceived.

Think of it this way. Anybody in any religion, anybody in any religion outside of Jesus Christ is disappointed; and I don't mean in a minor way. I'm not talking about a disappointment in this life because it doesn't work out to be beneficial here, I'm talking about that ultimate and everlasting disappointment when they awake in hell and realize they've been deceived.

The Muslim terrorists who blow themselves up are going to find there are no green pillows, and there aren't seventy-two virgins. There's just weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and they've been deceived. And they will be everlastingly disappointed. Every person in every false religion will end up disappointed.

But you will never be disappointed if you believe in Him. He brings all His sons to glory. He knows all His sheep. He calls them all; He leads them all; He loses none of them. "There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus," Romans 8. God has a purpose for you, and He will unfold that purpose and bring it to pass; nothing can alter that.

Jesus Christ is the perfect, exact, precise one on whom God builds His church. All the lines coming from Him, who is perfect, are themselves perfect. They make up the perfect temple of God. And in that temple no one is lost. No one falls out. No stones get loose. No one's out of place. No one's removed. No one is ever disappointed. He will bring all His sons to glory. That's a picture of our security.

So we have union with Christ. We have access to God through Christ. We have security in Christ. And then I want you to notice verses 7 and 8. And just to draw out the fact that we have affection for Christ – let's just say it that way. We have affection for Christ. "This precious value," – precious – "this precious value of the stone" – the corner stone – "is for you who believe."

How do you know someone's a Christian? I get asked that question all the time. I was asked that

question again yesterday over in the camp region with the kids in New Mexico. How do you identify Christians? And the answer is really foundationally this: To a true believer, Christ is precious. To a true believer, Christ is precious. He is all in all. They can't get enough of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus says in John 8:42, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." Peter says in 1 Peter 1:8, "Though you've not seen Him, you love Him." With all our weaknesses and all our failures, we are marked by loving Christ.

The end of the gospel of John, Jesus says to Peter, "Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me? That's all I'm asking." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he's damned," 1 Corinthians 16:22. Our Lord speaks much about this in the Upper Room Discourse in John 13, 14, 15.

We have love for Christ. This is distinguishing a Christian from a religious person, and even a professing Christian with false faith. We can't get enough of Christ. We can't get enough of His beauty, His glory. That's why we read this Scripture, because we see Him revealed there, and we want to know Him more. That's why we commune with Him in prayer, that we might have those intimate times, knowing that He hears and answers our prayer. That's why Christ is the topic of our conversation. That's why the books we read are books about Him. We can't get enough of His beauty and His glory.

We study the Bible and we find Christ. We're in the Old Testament and we find the anticipation of Christ; and we search the Old Testament and look for Him everywhere that we can see Him revealed. The anticipation of Christ then leads to the incarnation of Christ in the gospels, the book of Acts, the proclamation of Christ, the Epistles, the explanation of Christ, the book of Revelation, the glorification of Christ. He is our greatest prize, that's why at some point in our lives, though we didn't see it as that, we do now, looking at the parables of our Lord.

We saw Him as the pearl of great price, and sold everything to buy the pearl. We saw Him as the treasure in the field; sold everything for the treasure, because the treasure was more valuable than everything else. That's prizing Christ. Everybody worships somebody. Everybody worships something. Everybody worships somewhere. Christians find themselves worshipping only one, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ; and through Him, God the Trinity.

I love my wife. I love my children. I love other people in my world. I don't worship anybody but Him. "This precious value is for you who believe." That's how you define a believer.

On the other hand, "For those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumbled because they are disobedient to the Word, and to this doom they were also appointed." There it is. You either love Christ, you either have affection for Him, you either mark Him out as the most precious one, or you're appointed to doom. And Christ becomes not a corner stone, but a crushing stone of judgment, a crushing stone of judgment.

So what is it that distinguishes Christians? What is it that marks us out? We have this living union with Christ so that we live in Him and He lives in us. We have this constant access to God through Him by which everything in our life is a kind of spiritual offering that is made acceptable, because it's offered by Christ in us and through us. We have in Him security, so that when this life is ended and

we step on the other shore, there will be no disappointment. And we live literally engulfed in affection and love for Christ as the one who is most precious.

There's more. Peter says more. That really kind of introduces us to the main thing I want to get to in verse 9. We have been chosen by Christ: "For you are a chosen race." Those of us who are Americans are grateful for what we have received from living in this country. We're grateful for the sacrifice of people who died to provide the freedom and the kind of society that we enjoy. Those of you who are from other countries, countries in Latin America, or Europe, or countries in eastern part of the world, or wherever it might be; you have certain experiences in your own countries, certain cherished memories, and there things about the country that you grew up in and were a part of that are important to you.

But all of that is transitory, and all of that is passing. We are a chosen race. That transcends all earthly ethnicity. There's only one Christian race, just one. We're all part of it. We are a chosen race; we're all part of it. We are a chosen race.

By the way, the Lord established that initially back in the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy. Listen to what He said in verse 6, to Israel: "You are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you."

Uninfluenced love from God was set on the people of Israel. Uninfluenced love from God was set on the church. "You are a chosen race." You are a chosen race, chosen before the foundation of the world. Your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the world began. Before there ever was anything in existence other than the triune God, God already knew you and already set His love on you to choose you for His everlasting family. That is the most worship-motivating of all doctrines, because all other doctrines come out of that one.

That is the beginning of everything, the choosing of God. "You're a chosen race." And then he goes from there to say, "You are a royal priesthood," and you go from being chosen by Christ to reigning with Christ. So if you're counting, that would be the sixth of these characteristics: to reign with Christ. You are not just a priesthood, you are a royal priesthood. You are a priesthood that reigns. As Revelation says, "You are kings and priests." The word is *basileia*, a royal priesthood.

So the building: Christ is the corner stone, and we're the living stones. It's not just a temple, it's also a palace. It's also a palace. We are not just priests, we are royal priests. The spiritual house is a royal palace for the Lord Jesus Christ; and that royal palace for the Lord Jesus Christ is made up of the priests and the living stones who possess His life, and share His reign. We have literally been granted to sit with Him on His throne. Second Timothy says, "We will reign with Him."

And then he says, "a holy nation, a holy nation," a holy nation who are a people for God's own possession. Whatever nation you belong to in this world is temporary, transitory, because "you really are an alien and a stranger," as verse 11 says, in this world, because you belong to another race than the race that you are part of physically. You belong to another kingdom. You are, in yourself, a royal priest in the kingdom of God. You belong to another nation, a holy nation. And no such nation exists on earth.

A holy nation – that's borrowed from Exodus 19:6 – set apart from sin. The word *ethnos*, nation, *ethnos*. Your ethnicity is heavenly. It's irrelevant what it is here. Certainly as believers, we know that in Christ, there's neither male or female, Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. God is no respecter of persons. Whatever your earthly ethnicity, it is an insignificant detail. Your real ethnicity is you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, part of the people possessed by God.

"What do you mean, a holy nation?" Literally a nation that has been declared holy by the righteousness of Christ being imputed to you, and a nation of people that is being made holy by the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, and a nation that one day will be glorified and be holy in heaven. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Old things have passed away, and all things are new.

This is separation. We are separated from all other nations, separated from all other races. This is not the separation of the legalists that's an external separation. He's separated only in the sense that he performs certain external acts. This is not the separation of the monk who separates esthetically, cuts himself off from the world, and goes and lives in a cave somewhere, stares into space in isolation; this is not that. This is not the separation of the stoic. The ultimate in stoicism is that you reach a point where you're indifferent to absolutely everything, and that's how you disconnect yourself from the world. That's kind of the nirvana of Buddhism, where you think yourself into nothingness; this is not that kind of separation. This is a real separation from sin to holiness.

The legalist can't separate himself from sin. Inside he's wretched, and vile, and sinful. The esthetic cannot separate himself from sin either. The truth be known; his mind and his heart are full of sinful, wretched musings. The stoic cannot escape from sin. His sin, consummating sin, is that he finds all satisfaction in indifference to everything except himself, which is the basest form of idolatry.

We're talking about a true kind of separation from sin that is genuine righteousness. That righteousness belongs to all who are a people for God's own possession. Again, that's Exodus 19:5. We belong to God. We are His sheep. He calls us by name. We follow Him.

There's one other thing to say about this, if you're counting up. We have mercy in Christ. Go down to verse 10. "You once were not a people, but now you are the people of God. You had not received mercy; now you have received mercy."

How did you come to be a part of the people of God? Was it through works? Was it through achievement? No. It was by mercy. "You are not a people; now you are the people of God. This is because you have received mercy, undeserved kindness."

What does it mean to be a believer in Christ? What does it mean to be a Christian? It means all of these things: that you were not a people, now you are a people, purely by mercy.

Paul gives his testimony to Timothy. He said, "I was a blasphemer, and I was injurious, and I was a murderer, and God showed me mercy, mercy." Compassion from the Lord.

So what are we seeing here? These are all characteristics. These are all realities of believers. We're one race, one family, one priesthood, one kingdom, one ethnicity. We belong to God, wherever we

are. That's what matters.

Why has God poured all this into us? This seems so lavish; and it is. It's the lavish riches of His grace poured out on us, which He will do everlastingly. But why such lavish blessing? And here's where we want you to understand the point of this message.

There are two "so that's." One is in verse 9, and the other is in verse 12. Let me go to verse 9. Why all of this? "So that," – middle of the verse – "so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Why has the Lord granted us all of this? Why has He so lavishly blessed us? Why has He given us union with Him, access, security, love, election, dominion, separation from sin, mercy and compassion? Why has He given all of this to us in such magnificent fullness and abundance? "So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

First, so that you can tell the world what Christ has done. That's explicit: "So that you may proclaim the excellencies." What are the excellencies? Things I just recited. All the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. The excellencies are everything we've just looked at and more. They're all given to you, "so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who's called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light," so that you might give a testimony, an effective testimony, an impactful testimony; a testimony that maybe even though you're a concentration camp prisoner, and you're talking to somebody who hates you and wants you dead, the testimony can be powerful enough to overturn that hatred, and bring him to Christ.

But it's not just what you say. It's not just what you say. Go down to verse 11. "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles," – among the nations. Here's the second "so that" – "so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." It's a combination. It's what you proclaim, and it's how you act.

"I urge you to abstain from fleshly lusts." That's so very basic. That's dealing with the inner desire, the inner person. "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Deal with sin on the inside, and then deal with it on the outside. "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles."

So proclaim the excellencies of Christ with your mouth, and then live out the excellencies of Christ in your daily testimony, "so that in the very thing in which they slander you as evildoers," – and they were doing that to those early believers, by the way. They accused them of rebellion against the Roman government.

They were accused of being rebels. They were accused of being terrorists. They were basically accused of burning Rome. They were accused of being Atheists, because they had no idols. They were accused of being cannibals, because they were eating and drinking at the Lord's Table, and they twisted that into some kind of cannibalism. They were accused of being immoral because of love feasts and the way they loved one another. They were accused of doing social damage, because they made slaves and masters equal. Persecution comes against Christians in all kinds of

forms, in all kinds of cultures. It's coming fast and furious today.

What do we do in response to it? We proclaim, on the one hand, the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ; and on the other hand, we live out those excellencies because we have a pure heart. We live out those things in the face of the Pagans, in the face of the nations, so that in the very thing in which they slander us as evildoers, they may, because of those good deeds, one day glorify God in the day of visitation. What is the day of visitation? The day God visits. That's an Old Testament phrase for God showing up in judgment. Someday everybody's going to face God.

Konishi, dead now, when he faced God, glorified God in the day of visitation, because those that he deemed be evildoers, by the power of their testimony of the excellencies of Christ, and the character of their behavior in front of him, had overturned his hatred, and brought him to the Christ who alone could save him.

That's where we're going with all of this. We're in this world. The object that God has for us in this world is to be useful to bringing others to Him. We do it when we proclaim His excellencies, when we proclaim them far and wide, the excellencies of Christ: talk about Christ, talk about Christ, talk about Him with nonbelievers. And we do it when we live excellent lives, because we're dealing with sin on the inside, and we're walking in obedience on the outside. We literally silence our critics. Peter has more to say about that later in this same letter.

Our Lord sort of summed this up, Matthew 5:16, when He said this: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and" – do what? – "glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Father, we thank You that You have called us together today. Another wonderful Lord's Day; another blessed time to fellowship with one another, to feed on Your glorious truth, to be blessed and encouraged in worship. But also, and most importantly perhaps, to be reminded of the calling with which you have called us in this world. You have called us to proclaim the excellencies of Christ, all the things that He has done for us, all the glories of our salvation, all the blessings in heavenly places in Christ. May we be faithful to proclaim Him in all His glory, in all His fullness.

And You've then asked us to live excellent lives that put Him on display as He lives through us, as we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to You. Use us, Lord, through what we say and how we live; though overturn the animosity, and the rejection, and the hatred of unbelievers, so that they may escape from the crushing stone, the rock of offense, and come to the corner stone, and receive from Him life, and everlasting blessing. Use us, Lord, to that end, we pray in the Savior's name. Amen. Amen.

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