

# The War in the Soul and the Conduct that Wins Souls

1 Peter 2:11-12

Introduction: The problem in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church in the West:  
Persistent Decline in clarity and numbers.

Leaders' Frustrations and fears.

Congregants' distractions to devotion.

What remedy does Peter urge?

## 1. ABSTAIN, verse 11.

### A. There is a war within that you must fight.

Holding to holiness and staying clear of worldliness is a battle. Salvation does not immediately transform us into godly people who have no more sinful inclinations.

There is a war going on in the soul of every Christian between the corrupting desires of our sinful nature (literally called our flesh) and the righteous promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The specifics of this war: Galatians 5:16-21

Verse 19 [immoral conduct]

Verse 20 [false religious practices]

Verse 20—21 [social decadence]

Sinful motivations, attitudes, and conduct that war with your soul and will defeat you and destroy you if you do not fight back against them.

How to fight:

- ◆ Learn Scripture truth, build convictions, and resist sin.
- ◆ When truth exposes sinful motivations and conduct in your life, aggressively resist the sin.
- ◆ Keep resisting until you are more inclined to obey the truth than to succumb to the sin.
- ◆ Then keep resisting until a habit of truth is established.

### B. The Battleground we live on.

A world in which we are spiritual *strangers and temporary residents*.

We must be careful to maintain a certain detachment from the entitlements or benefits so abundant in this affluent earthly country.

Practically speaking, we have responsibilities as earthly citizens, but spiritually our purpose for being alive here on the earth is to share the gospel and seek to rescue and bring to heaven as many people as we can.

Because all Christians are citizens of God's holy nation, if we are open and true to what we believe, as witnesses must be, we are going to be treated as social aliens wherever we live.

## 2. MAINTAIN, verse 12.

The social conditions in many parts of the Roman Empire of the first century would have been troublesome for Christians.

Christians were commonly regarded as disturbers of the peace, because they renounced false religions of the day.

### A. Christian Conduct in a Declining Culture.

We do not withdraw, and we respect whatever decency the culture values.

Our manner of living among non-Christians must consistently display decency, respect, humility, and industry. We have a duty to show society the difference that Christ makes.

But when our values conflict with those of society, we will have to be ready to endure graciously the grief, ridicule, and alienation that will inevitably result.

God is always watching us, but so are unbelievers.

### B. Unbelievers will malign Christians.

They will misrepresent our actions, misconstrue our intentions, and seek to stigmatize us.

But even the most depraved person has moments of self-doubt when a seed of the gospel watered by a Christian's consistent witness may cause him to see the grace of God and fall on his knees in repentance.

### C. A Godly Witness Will Bring Glory to God one way or another.

Two classes of worshippers: voluntary or compulsory depending on their responses to the testimony of Jesus' witnesses.

## SUMMARY