



Sunday School Lesson for October 12, 2003.  
Released on October 11, 2003.

Study 1 Peter 2:11, 12; 3:13-17; 4:7-11; 5:6-10. Be a Good Example  
Questions and answers below.

TIME: A.D. 63

PLACE: from Babylon (possibly Rome)

### **1 Peter 2:11, 12**

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

### **1 Peter 3:13-17**

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evildoing.

### **1 Peter 4:7-11**

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

### **1 Peter 5:6-10**

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

## **Lesson Background**

Paul was a wise old Christian made wiser still by the Holy Spirit, who inspired him. He wanted his trainee to be an example to the Christians whom he taught. So Paul told Timothy to be an example "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12 ). What a list! These are the kinds of examples each Christian should set, and that is the background against which we look at the thoughts about example in our text.

## **THE EXAMPLE OF GOOD CONDUCT- 1Pet. 2:11-12**

1. In what ways are Christians foreigners and pilgrims in this world (I Pet. 2:11)?

Peter addressed his readers affectionately by calling them "dearly beloved." "Beloved," which comes from the Greek word *agape*, reminds us that we are the objects of God's special love (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

Because his readers had responded to God's love, Peter exhorted them as foreigners and pilgrims in the world. As God's people, we are only passing through this world; it is not our permanent home. Like Abraham, we are looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10; v.13). We should not become so attached to this world that we cannot leave on a moment's notice-for one day we will (Luke 12:20; Jas. 4:14).

As Christians, we must "abstain from fleshly lusts" (I Pet. 2:11). Such evil desires will ultimately find expression in overt acts of immorality. Lust leads to sin, which leads to spiritual death (Jas. 1:14-15).

As followers of Christ living in the modern world, there are many images with which we are bombarded on a daily basis that are designed to incite fleshly lusts. That means we must be on guard against the not-so-subtle temptations to compromise our moral convictions and fall into sin.

As Peter pointed out, these evil desires wage war against our souls. While the word "soul" is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament, here it designates the inner person, or the mind of the individual. The war in which we are engaged is an inner, spiritual struggle.

## **2. Why is it important to perform good works (v. 12)?**

Pursuing good works (I Pet. 2:12). Again, the word translated "conversation" (Jas. 3:13; I Pet. 1:15) means "conduct" or "behavior." Honest, or good, conduct must be seen by those outside the body of Christ if they are to be impacted by the gospel.

Unsaved people are to be given no justification for slandering Christians as evildoers. The good works of God's people will reveal any such charges as baseless.

While good works do not secure our salvation, they are evidence of its reality (Eph. 2:8-10). Good works are a powerful witness to the validity of faith.

"The day of visitation' Peter mentions here is probably the time when God visits lost sinners and saves them by His grace" (Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, Victor).

Another view is that the "day of visitation relates to the time when Christians would be brought to trial on the charge of resisting or disobeying state law. If they had maintained good conduct, the evidence will prove that they are not wrongdoers but that they are upright people" (Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary, Broadman).

## **THE EXAMPLE OF DEFENDING THE FAITH- I Pet. 3:13-17**

### **3. How can suffering for "righteousness sake" (Christ) be an occasion for joy (vs. 13, 14)?**

It is clear from the context of this letter that Peter's readers were being persecuted for their faith in Christ. For the most part, being "followers of that which is good" will not bring punishment or imprisonment. Sometimes, however, even doing the right thing results in misunderstanding or some form of persecution or abuse.

Even if a person ends up suffering for righteousness' sake, Peter saw this as an occasion for joy-an evidence of being blessed (Matt. 5:10-12). Of course, no one enjoys suffering, but suffering for Christ can become a means of witnessing to lost sinners. If Paul and Silas had bemoaned their fate while imprisoned instead of singing and praying, it surely would not have resulted in the conversion of the jailer (Acts 16:25-34).

Our young Christians particularly need to be encouraged to take a stand. They must be taught that opposition is to be expected. They need sound instruction in what they believe and in how to present that. They need good models of how to turn an attack into an opportunity to share Christ as well.

Peter's advice was simple: "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (I Pet. 3:14; Isa. 8:12,13). If we believe the truth of Romans 8:28, even suffering for righteousness can result in various blessings and God's glory.

### **4. Why should we be able to give an answer for the hope we have? What attitude should we have in doing this (v. 15)?**

To "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" means that the Lord must be first in our hearts. We must determine ahead of time that Jesus Christ is at the very center of our existence. Otherwise, our faith will certainly waver when tested by troubles and trials.

Since Peter envisioned formal charges being brought against his readers in a Roman court, they had to be prepared to give an answer to their accusers. As modern-day disciples of Christ, we also must be ready and willing to defend our Christian faith against its various detractors and opponents.

While good works are one way we show that Christ is living in our hearts, there are other times when we must be outspoken witnesses, revealing the reason for "the hope" that is ours.

When defending our Christian faith, we must not do so with an attitude of pride but instead display meekness and fear. "Meekness is set in opposition to pride . . . To this [Peter] justly adds fear. Not that we are afraid of our opponents (v. 14), but we

answer the questioner with reverence before God, who is far above all of us on earth.

Every Christian ought to always be prepared to answer the question of this "hope that is in you." We can begin by explaining what Christ has done in our lives. This can open a door to sharing what He can do for the persecutor. Ask volunteers in your class to suggest what they might say in their own testimonies. Others in the class can learn from their examples.

### **5. What does having a good conscience mean in the context of this passage (v. 16)?**

It is very important that believers have "a good conscience." It should be noted, however, that we can let our conscience be our guide only when it has been trained by the teachings of the Bible. Otherwise, we end up surrendering to our own desires rather than obeying God's Word.

In the context, Peter was saying that we are to live in such a manner that it is clear we are living righteously. If others call us evildoers, our actions should prove them wrong. Eventually, they will be ashamed because they have leveled against us charges that are unjustified and totally unfounded.

### **6. Is it ever God's will for us to suffer (v. 17)? Why?**

Most would agree that suffering for evildoing is a good thing; perhaps the one suffering will learn to stop doing evil! But suffering for doing good is more difficult to accept. The constant question in such cases is "why?" The suffering of Job is one example. (See also Judges 6:13.) Peter deals with this issue in more depth in 4:12-19 (not in today's text). Christ suffered and so shall we (but not in all the same ways). "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Pet. 4:16).

## **THE EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE- I Pet. 4:7-11**

### **7. How could the end of all things be at hand for Peter's readers (I Peter 4:7)?**

The end of all things speaks of the end of the present creation as associated with the Lord's return (2 Peter 3:10). We sometimes think that if something is at hand, then we can expect it right away. But at hand can easily indicate that the event can happen at any time. Thus, the Lord's return has been at hand ever since Peter's day- and still it can happen at any time. Peter encouraged his readers to "watch unto prayer."

Considering both the brevity of life and the fact that Christ could return soon for His church, Christians should live in a heightened state of alert. Such things as being sober minded, as well as devoting ourselves to prayer, are important ways of staying prepared for His imminent return (Mark 13:35-37).

## **8. How does charity (love) cover a multitude of sins (vs. 8, 9)?**

Most important, however, is that we have "fervent charity" (I Pet. 4:8) toward one another. The word "charity" is the Greek agape and is usually rendered "love" in the New Testament. It denotes an attitude that seeks the welfare of all people and is well described by Paul in I Corinthians 13.

Such love will cover a multitude of sins. This means that our love for others causes us to accept others and overlook their sin (Prov. 10:12).

One way charity can be shown to others is through hospitality. To a large degree, this is a neglected ministry among most believers. Should we render hospitality to a visiting pastor or missionary, a fellow church member, or even a total stranger, it should be done without grumbling or resentment.

## **9. How should we use the spiritual gifts God has given us (vs. 10, 11)?**

Peter is saying that each Christian has received some "gift" from God. The Greek word for "gift" is charisma and indicates a spiritual gift of some kind.

While Peter did not here detail the various spiritual gifts, other passages indicate that there are a number of them (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph. 4:11,12).

Recognizing that our gifts are from God should cause us to be faithful stewards of His grace in its various forms. God's gifts should not be used for self-glorification but to serve one another in love (I Cor. 13:1-3).

Peter mentioned two general areas of Christian work: speaking and serving. There are, of course, many settings in which believers can minister through speaking and serving. Those who speak should do so as one giving the very words of God, remembering that God is speaking through them as they sing, teach, exhort, counsel, or preach.

Those who minister should serve with the strength and ability God gives. The word rendered "minister" in I Peter 4:11 indicates a general kind of service and could be applied to various ministries and different forms of Christian service.

The purpose of all speaking and serving is to bring glory to God in all things through Jesus Christ. Christian service should not focus on the one serving but point people to God (1 Cor. 9:16).

## **THE EXAMPLE OF RESISTING EVIL- I Pet. 5:8-10**

### **10. How is Satan described by Peter? What is Satan's goal (I Pet. 5:8)?**

The word here translated "sober" is the same word that is translated "watch" in 4:7. It refers to self-control and is often associated with watchfulness. The reason we need to be vigilant is that Christians have a great adversary

in the person of Satan. This calls for vigilance, alertness. Trust God, yes; but don't expect Him to keep you safe when you recklessly deliver yourself right into the enemy's camp. Satan wants to destroy those who desire to serve God (Eph. 6:11).

### **11. How can we resist the devil (v. 9)?**

There are a number of ways we can resist Satan, including staying out of places he controls and away from people he dominates. Here, however, the apostle

suggested that we can resist the devil by being steadfast in the faith. Having a strong personal faith in God, as well as maintaining solid doctrinal convictions, will aid us in warding off the onslaughts of the evil one.

Peter's readers needed to be reminded that whatever trials they were facing were not unique. Their fellow believers in other places also were facing Satan's evil schemes. That we are not alone in what we face as Christians is a source of encouragement to us.

## **12. What might be God's purpose for the struggles we sometimes face(v. 10)?**

As Peter prepared to conclude the letter, he broke forth in praise to the "God of all grace." We are saved by God's grace (Eph. 2:8,9), sustained by His grace (II Cor. 12:9), and serve through His grace (Rom. 12:3).

Not only has God called us to live for Him here in this world, but He has also called us to eternal glory, to receive the inheritance awaiting us in heaven (I Pet. 1:4).

Though some may suffer for Christ now, these struggles may actually serve the larger purpose of strengthening believers for other trials still to come.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Washing Our Feet**

We do set a good example most of the time, don't we? But did you, today or yesterday or last week, stumble into some small wrong? Even Jesus' dearest disciples did that. On the eve of the day of His death they lapsed into selfish wrangling (Luke 22:24). Jesus rebuked them with an object lesson for the ages. He, the Lord and Master, took a basin of water and took the place of a lowly slave as He washed their dirty feet (John 13:1-17).

When we came to the Lord, God washed away our sins and made us clean (Acts 22:16). Yet we walk in an unclean world and dirty ourselves with small wrongs. Even so, God is still ready to wash us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). As God set an example of service to us, let us set an example as well.

## **PRAYER**

Forgive us, Father. How we do dirty ourselves! How we thank You for Your cleansing day by day. And for today and tomorrow we pray for faith, wisdom, and courage to walk without fouling ourselves again. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

Be a "pattern to them . . . to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:16).

## **ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON**

Next week we will see how we are to grow in our faith with the resources that God has provided. Study 2 Peter 1:3-15.

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