

# Series: 1 Peter

## Sermon #5: Royal Priest on Mission

1 Peter 2:11-12, 15

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- May 9, 2021

Good morning, Grace. Wow, it was great to hear worship this morning. We have so many people singing now, and we can hear each other. That was beautiful.

### Introduction

We're in our study on 1 Peter. We're in chapter 2 and we're finally getting to the place where it tells us how to live as priests. It reminded me of a time ... I don't talk about ... there was a time in my life when I was involved in law enforcement and it didn't end well, so I don't talk about it much. But I'll tell you about it today.

I was in the safety patrol in fifth grade. And I had a badge and everything. And I was very good at what I did. As an enlisted man, as a sergeant, we would stand out on the streets on the crosswalks, and we would hold up signs. And then when the captain would say, "Signs out," we would step out into the traffic, into the street, and hold that sign out with the stop sign on it, and make sure our fellow students could travel across that street with peace and safety. They were protected by us. I was a good soldier. I was.

And then in the spring of my fifth-grade year, I was promoted to captain. And I felt the power enter my soul. Now I was the person that could say the words, "Signs out," "Signs in." If I just decided to say, "Signs out," people moved and they put those signs out. We stopped traffic! And it was up to me. I could stop as many cars as I wanted for as long as I wanted to. Thousands of pounds of machinery—just because I was thinking, *You know what? I'll tell you when you can carry on with the rest of your day... Now you can. Signs in.*

Anyway, you could kind of tell that it got to me. And there was this one car that I would stop at every single morning, every time. And it didn't matter if we even had kids at the crossing. I'd say, "Signs out," and people would say, "But captain ...", and I'd say, "Obey your orders!"

And they'd put the sign out and they'd stop this car every day. And you're probably thinking, *That kid--in fifth grade he was already a jerk.*

I'm saying that this is the car that I stopped every day.



Yeah. That's a 1969 Dodge Charger Daytona. How do you like me now? That's the first Charger that Dodge made that could break 200 miles per hour. And its Hemi engine had 425 horsepower. That design was used in NASCAR. They made it illegal. They banned the car, it was so much better and so much faster. You could buy one of those right now, a small black version of that. It costs more than my house. There are only a few left, but the ones with the Hemi engines go for a million dollars. Yeah, uh-huh.

So, other captains had just let this Dodge Daytona drive by, but not on my watch, kids. No sir. We're going to stop that car. And every time that it would come down at 7:42, Monday through Friday, "Signs out." *We don't need kids—we're going to stop that car.* People wanted to be on my team because we would stop the Daytona. And we would just sit there and stare and gawk. I'm sorry—I'm not sorry. I would do it again as a grownup. It wasn't even my fault. That was too much awesome in the presence of a young boy, so it was his fault for being such a Dodge Daytona.

Actually, the owner didn't mind so much. He liked us staring at his car. He probably eventually changed his calendar, knowing he was going to get stopped, so that he could get to work on time.

### **Application: Rank Has Responsibility**

Okay, this has something to do with 1 Peter ... hold on, wait, right ... yes, there's an application here. Rank has responsibility. That's what I'm trying to say. I was given a position of honor, so I should live honorably. If you have a badge or a crown or a robe, you should live your life with dignity, with diligence. That's what I'm saying. Who you are should affect and determine what you do. I was given a little bit of rank—captain of the safety patrol—and I used it for my own gain, for my own pleasure, for my own little adrenaline bump.

Peter's writing the people then and there, and he's writing you and me, here and now. And he's saying this: you have to understand who you are. Because when you understand who you are and what your rank is, that will show you what you're supposed to do. And you need to live honorably while on duty. And our job is to make Christ famous. What does it say? "...that you may declare the praises of Him."

So, we've been talking about this for two previous weeks, and now we're here. Now we're at the place where we learn how we are to live as royal priests, as a holy nation, as precious possessions of Yahweh God. We're supposed to live as people of consequence in the midst of a hostile world. Peter's going to keep the theme that he's been going with so far. He's almost going to repeat himself for the third time. Who you are—identity—will determine what you do. And he's going to use the same outline that we've seen two other times: Don't do bad; do good.

In this particular section where he tells us how we're supposed to live, he's going to say, *Listen, you're fighting a war on two fronts. It's not going to be easy. You're going to fight a war on two fronts. One of the fronts is going to be inside, and one of the fronts is going to be outside. You have two different enemies and you're going to have two different tactics to defeat them.* Think about that while we read this passage... two fronts...a war on two fronts.

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

**Dearest friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.**

**<sup>12</sup> Live such excellent lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.**

“Dearest friends”—or in some translations, “Beloved.” “Dear friends, beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such excellent lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day that He visits.”

## **A War on Two Fronts**

This is loaded with meaning. A war on two fronts—two fronts, two different strategies. And the strategies are strange and a little counterintuitive. Because he’s going to say that with the war that’s going on inside yourself, be really mean. The war that’s going on outside? Be really nice. Be nice to the mean people and be mean to the nice person.

## **A War Within**

## **1 Peter 2:11**

**Dearest friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.**

Here’s the war within—the first verse. He says, “My dearest friends, beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which will wage war against your soul.” Again, look at all ... you’ve got to read it slowly, because you want to see that there are a lot of identity words here. Before he moves on, he’s going to make sure we know who we are, what

our rank is, what great honor we have. He's saying that in the context of all of these trials that are going on, "Beloved, you're foreigners, you're exiles."

And he's going to use the identity words for different purposes. So, with "beloved," he's going to motivate us. This is the motive for why you're going to fight this war on two fronts. He says, "Beloved, my dear friends." "Beloved" is a word that is wrapped in *agape*. Some of you know that Greek word that means "unconditional, unrelenting love" that we sang about. We are God's beloved. We are chosen by Him. And he's saying, *Look, you have this honored title, so live an honored life.*

Here's what he's NOT saying: *Live a holy life so that God will love you.* He's NOT saying, *You should live a righteous life so that you could have salvation.* He's NOT saying that.

He's saying, *Because you are already deeply loved and should be satisfied in that—you should be amazed in wonder and joy because of what Jesus Christ has done for you—and now you are His beloved. You are His dearest children.* And then he goes on. That's the motive.

And then he says, "...as foreigners and exiles ..." Again, two identity words, and this is not so much motivation as it is managing expectations. *Hey, you're not from here.* The word "foreigner" literally translates "alongside the house." In other words, you don't live in the house; you live alongside the house. There's a house—that's life; you're in the side yard over there. That's where you live---in a tent. This isn't your home.

And he's doing that to manage expectations. He doesn't want to get our hopes up, because then when we're surprised, we say, "Oh, no!" And so, he's saying, *Look, you don't belong here. Don't be disappointed when true justice does not prevail. It won't—not here, not now.*

When lying liars are able to gain power, how does that happen? Only here, but for a very short time. He's saying, *I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Dorothy.* He's saying this: *If life is a game, we're constantly playing on away fields.* If you've ever been on the visitors' side--this is classic Texas football—sometimes the visitors' dugout or the visitors' changing room are rancid. They don't fix anything in there. The toilets don't work, they have the heater going in the summertime. Yeah. That's what it means to be a visitor. That's what it means to play away games.

And you're thinking, Well, when do we play home field advantage? Peter says, *Right, good thinking. That's what you're supposed to ask. When it's home field advantage, everything*

*will be different. But until then, here's what you're supposed to be thinking: identity, motivation, you are loved, beloved by God. You're a foreigner, you're an exile, you're on assignment to make Yahweh famous for His love and justice. So, head out there and win. That's what he's saying.*

In the war within, he's telling you to fight. Now he's going to start talking about how to live this way, to be violent towards your own ego and passions. He says, "I urge you, I beg you, my brother, I beg you to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul." There's a war going on for your soul. Fight to win. Be violent towards your own passions.

**Being ruled by the desires of your body will murder your soul.**

**--- J. C. Ryle**

Here's how it looks in the negative sense. I love this quote from Ryle. He says, "Being ruled by the desires of your body will murder your soul." I love the violent vocabulary—it "will murder your soul." Peter is saying that the greatest enemy for your holy living is your own passions, your own ego.

**I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any other man I know.**

**---D. L. Moody**

I like what one writer says. He says there's this one guy that used to bug him all the time. "I have more trouble with this D. L. Moody than with any other man that I know" ... said D. L. Moody. Anybody relate to that? Yeah. Hey, you're your own worst enemy. Peter says, *Exactly*.

So, what Peter is saying here in the first part about the battle within, the war on one front that's inside is this: *Look, your lifestyle is supposed to honor your rank. You're a royal priest, so you should act like a royal priest. You are beloved; that should motivate you to exalt the name of Jesus, not exalt your name.*

Now all of that is in the context of being persecuted and enduring very difficult hardships. We're supposed to tame the beast within us. That's the first front.

## A War Without

### 1 Peter 2:12

**Live such excellent lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.**

The second front, the war without—he says this in verse 12: “Live such excellent lives among that pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits.”

Look at this battle plan. The battle plan is not to take the high ground and destroy the enemy. That’s what you’d think, but that’s not what he says. No, while you’re winning the inside battle that’s going on violently inside of you, when you live such excellent lives on the outside, then other people are forced to glorify God by telling stories about it. All the while—look what it says—they are “accusing you of doing wrong.” They are accusing you of doing wrong.

In the context of Peter’s life, the people to whom he wrote, the Romans made up lies about the Church. They said that they were atheists and superstitious, incestuous, and cannibals. Atheists, because they didn’t believe in all the other Gods that the Romans worshiped. They were superstitious because they believed in miracles. We get made fun of for that, right? They said they were incestuous because brothers were marrying sisters. And they were cannibals because they practiced some ritual where they ate the body and then drank the blood of their leader.

They were lies, and many people knew that. They were scapegoats for every political failure so that people could stay in politics—the lying liars.

### Response: Love, Care, Serve

And how do you respond to all those accusations and lies? He says, “Live excellent lives because they’re watching.” Live excellent lives because they’re watching, and they’re going to glorify God by telling stories about you, here and now, and then and there.

Here and now—they come home and say, *Hey, Dad, someone mowed the lawn while we were on vacation. I think it's that kind of crazy guy down the street that's always going to church.*

*Yeah, okay, he probably did. I thought they were cannibals.*

*Well, maybe, but he sure knows how to work the weed eater better than you, Dad.*

*Go to your room.*

*Didn't they bring us a really great lasagna when Mom got sick? What is the deal with those people? They seem like—I don't know—they sure are loving for cannibals. It's not making sense, really.*

I don't know, but they're praising God every time they talk about the good deed. "Excellent lives," it says. "Live excellent lives." The word has synonyms. I just wrote them down. It means "beautiful, winsome, gracious, polite, fine, and noble." All the while they're lying about you. All the while, they're hostile towards you.

I saw just a little bit of this, just a picture of it. I was at a rally last year and there were some people that were very antagonistic towards our police department. And it was amazing to see the men and women of our police department being yelled at—pretty profane words—while they were protecting the people yelling at them. There was a car coming down the street and the police officers stopped the cars from hitting the people yelling at them, and then had them continue marching. And it just didn't even fluster them. People were in their face screaming at them, and they were living excellent lives, beautiful, winsome, gracious, and polite. They were an expression of this. They weren't going to be buckled by other people's conduct. They had a badge and they lived up to the badge they wore. They're going to glorify God here and now, and then and there.

Peter says—and he constantly refers to the return of Christ—he says that they will "glorify God on the day He visits." On the final judgment day, everyone has to tell the truth. They can't do anything else in the presence of God. And God's just going to say, "So, tell me about the people that lived around you that were followers of mine."

And they're going to say, "Yes, your majesty. They did live this way. Yes, your majesty, they did live most excellent lives."

And every one of those stories will glorify God.



## Interview with Daniel Geraci of Austin Disaster Relief Network

I want to bring to you some stories of people who live most excellent lives, even in a time when sometimes the Church isn't exalted. I want to bring up Daniel from ADRN. ADRN is Austin Disaster Relief Network. Let's greet Daniel here.

*[Applause]*

**Daniel:** Thank you.

**Matt:** When I was looking at this passage three weeks ago, I thought, Wow, there's a living example of this right before us. Daniel has been working with ADRN since 2009. He was one of the founders. They lived in our place across the street for about four years. The office there was the first formal office that they had. They've combined 200 churches, they have served 43,000 survivors—thousands of people-- they have given out \$16 million of resources in the years that they've been serving in Austin Disaster Relief. And I wanted to bring him up here, because there are so many fun stories that you have.

Tell us a little about the history of ADRN and maybe even how we've been a part of that. And then I want to talk about that freeze we had.

**Daniel:** Sure. I just to first and foremost say that we cannot praise God enough for this amazing church. You all have been such a huge support all these years, from the very beginning, giving us a place to stay. We go back a long way, when we were not a lot of anything yet. Grace put their arms around us and gave us a place here at your headquarters. And if it wasn't for that, I don't know where we would be today. So, along with all the support and love, it means a lot to us.

**Matt:** Well, it has been a joy to watch the ministry thrive, and so many churches across denominational lines are just trying to live excellent lives and glorify God by their great works. But in particular, because it was so magnified by the blizzard that hit, tell us about what was going on at ADRN. We know a few of the stories from behind the scenes from maybe the fire

department and first responders, but what was happening ... you guys got a little sucker punch ...

**Daniel:** Yeah, I thought ... I was ready to play with my girls. They were excited. Steven here, our associate director ... stand up, Steven... he's been with us ten years ... I called Steven and asked him, "Hey, I think we need to be at the emergency operations center. You never know. Why don't you bring a book ... it might be slow ... something to read ... it's going to be boring." The next thing you know, I get thirty minutes of playing with my girls and he says, "We need you. I need you as quick as possible." The next thing you know, the mayor is on the phone with him along with others, and they're saying, "We need rescue. There are a lot of people out there that need rescue, way beyond what the fire department can handle."

I had a call from a woman whose mother was just soaked. She was eighty years old and her pipes had burst and she was walking outside and it's six degrees. This woman needs to be picked up in thirty minutes. So, I called our CIO—Bill, stand up. He did an amazing job. We had never dispatched prior to this, ever. Next thing you know, we have two hundred four-wheel-drive vehicle volunteers roaming around picking up nearly six hundred people, dropping off food, supplies, taking people to warming shelters. I mean, this is the body of Christ at its best, right, mobilizing and doing whatever it takes? And like you said, Jesus makes us look really good so that we can make Him look good.

And it went from there to going into a place of cleanup and mucking out. We raised up an eight hundred number where we had over 860 families say, "We need the Church to come and help us muck out or clean up debris in our homes." So, forty-one churches rallied together, and the next thing you know, we have over 1,300 work orders that the churches are starting to take down and clean up. And again, a beautiful picture of the body of Christ working together. Psalm 133 says that when the brothers dwell together, it commands a blessing. Well, this is the kind of blessing that all the people get to see and witness.

The next thing you know, we have people tweeting all about this on Facebook and social media, where even Hollywood actors from Anne Hathaway to Michael Dell to Elon Musk—you name it, they're all promoting. We have over a billion views all over social media. This is how wide and broad it began to get. And money began to pour in from all around the nation so we could begin walking with these families and assisting them.

Ultimately, that led us to opening up intake centers, to coming around hundreds of families, providing financial (money), hotels (putting up quite a few people in hotels). We're asking the church to sponsor over two hundred families that are saying, "We want a church to walk with us through this crisis." And then, ultimately, we're beginning the repair and rebuild of homes that suffered through the pipes bursting.

So, that's kind of a snapshot. One other thing I wanted to share with you is a most remarkable story. During the midst of all of this, right in the beginning, one of our employees is a fireman also. He works in the dispatch. And his big testimony is this. He says, "We were there and it was great chaos. The city of Austin has never seen anything like these power and water shortages, the freeze, people being stuck." And the fire department was so overwhelmed they could not handle the calls. And he's in dispatch, and there are about twelve dispatchers taking the calls, and there are thousands coming in. And he told the fire chief, "Why don't we hand out these flyers and ask people to be pointed to the Austin Disaster Relief Network? We're going to need their help."

The fire chief said, "Get many of those flyers made, hand them out to the dispatch."

And so, the next thing he knows, he's just hearing dispatch person after dispatch person saying, "Call the Austin Disaster Relief Network." And as he heard that, he remembered, *This is the Church*. And he just began to weep. It just overwhelmed him to know that the Church was so valuable in such a great time of need.

And so, this is kudos to all of us here, to especially you, Matt, and Pastor Ray. This is why we do what we do, to glorify Him. And boy, Jesus was glorified in this disaster.

**Matt:** Telling the stories...

**Daniel:** Multitudes of people have come to Christ, also, through this.

**Matt:** Right, you guys aren't shy about your faith ...

**Daniel:** No.

**Matt:** ... praying for people, just seeing it in their eyes. *You need prayer. Yes, I do. Let's go.*

**Daniel:** Even our own call center received over 3,000 calls of people asking for help. And all of them were prayed for.

**Matt:** Wow. So, what does the future look like for ADRN (Austin Disaster Relief Network) in the next few years?

**Daniel:** Well, back when I spoke here in 2014, you flashed the American Disaster Relief Network, and we were joking around about it. Well, it's real, though. We're launching the National Disaster Relief Network, and that's where we're heading. The Lord's putting that on our hearts. We've already assisted several cities around the nation over the last several years and helped launch many networks. Now we can't say we're the only church network out there. Houston has well over 300 churches in their network. They've outgrown us! It's amazing.

But also, the Lord has us decentralize everything we do to prepare for larger disasters in the future, ultimately. So, we're actually hiring eleven sector leaders--some of you might be here today thinking, *Maybe that's me*—to handle each of the areas over the greater Austin area.

We're also decentralizing the way that we handle disasters by putting pods, what we call point of distribution centers, all throughout the greater Austin area, thirty-six of them. We want to be able to handle these disasters in such a way that we mobilize the Church like it's never been mobilized before. So, our city by 2024 will be the readiest city, I believe, in the United States.

And, you know, the Lord does these things for a reason. My prayer is that nothing happens, but we will be ready for anything.

The other part is that we're having to look for a new location, because the location we're at—our current headquarters—the owner is saying it's time to move. They love us—it's not because of us—it's just the deal we had worked out. We knew had a time period. So, we are looking for a site. That's our big focus right now.

**Matt:** So, you're going to move the main headquarters and you're going to have these branch banks, almost, so that everyone can have quicker access to resources if a disaster were to take place?

**Daniel:** Yes, thirty-six of them, all across the city.

**Matt:** Wow, that's a great plan. And then you're continuing to train other cities?

**Daniel:** We're continuing to train other cities, and we're also raising up---you know the food distribution for the greater Austin area gets pretty hairy. You see the long lines with the Food Bank ...

**Matt:** Because there's only one place to go.

**Daniel:** There's only one place to go. So, our hope is by 2024 to have twelve different sites where the Church could be the distributor of food along with Central Texas Food Bank, working alongside of them.

**Matt:** That's a good plan. Well, stuff costs stuff.

**Daniel:** It does.

**Matt:** So, what's your move and how much is that going to cost?

**Daniel:** Well, right now we believe we have found our potential headquarters. We may be signing a contract here very soon. It looks like it's going to cost about \$250,000 to convert a place that used to be a school, a university, into our headquarters for National and for ADRN, along with another thrift store. So, we're opening up thrift store number two.

**Matt:** Okay. Well, how much have you raised?

**Daniel:** We've raised \$125,000 so far.

**Matt:** Halfway there.

**Daniel:** Yeah, halfway there.

**Matt:** Great. We'll see what we can do towards that. But, you know what? First of all, I want to—like anyone else, I have this amazing feeling of glorifying God by excellent works. Oh, my. You are a godsend, my friend. Yeah.

So, our church is a regular contributor to Austin Disaster Relief Network. We've funneled about \$80,000 their way in 2021, not including some individuals that give directly towards them. And we're going to continue to be generous in the future.

I want to pray for you, and then I want to talk to the family here about some stuff, okay?

**Daniel:** Okay, thank you.

**Matt:** This is making me cry, man!

**Daniel:** Thank you, Jesus. You are so good.

**Matt:** *Lord, we are so grateful for the way You caused things to happen twelve years ago, or whenever, that You allowed bad things to happen so that good things can come from that. And that's the case here. So, Lord, I'd ask that You continue to bless the ministry of Austin Disaster Relief, their leaders. I'd ask that You would continue to give them insight into what's next. Give them prophetic words about how to plan for the future. You know the future. So, just tell them in the present.*

*I'd ask that You would provide for them generously, graciously—volunteers, the right people. I'd ask that you protect them; protect them from the evil one and from evil people that might want to come in and break a good thing. So, I'd ask that You have a hedge of authority around the leadership there. I'd ask that You continue to use this as a lighthouse to other cities, so that churches could work together and show the world what excellent works, how they glorify You now and at the day of Your return. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Daniel:** Amen.

**Matt:** Thank you, Daniel. You're always welcome here.

**Daniel:** Thank you. Amen.

**Matt:** We'll see you, brother.

### **Application: Summer and Fall Campaigns**

So, I've been excited to tell you guys about this for some time. It's like this—let's do this. 1 Peter, chapters 1 and 2 that we've been looking at, and we're looking at identity and building up to this rank that we have where we get to live these most excellent lives that glorify God here and now and then and there—here's what we're going to do.

### **Summer of Giving**

We're going to have a campaign starting May 1. It will be called the summer of giving. And then we'll have a fall of serving. A summer of giving, a fall of serving.

Here's what a summer of giving is. Our accounting department is working on our budget. That happens at this time of the year anyway. We're trying to figure out what our expenses are and what our budget is anyway, whatever that is. They don't let me look at the numbers.

So, after that's established, everything that we collect from May 1 through the end of September is going to be given generously to strategic organizations in Austin and around the world.

Here's what we're saying. Everything above budget—we want you to just give to the general fund—almost like it's a capital campaign—but this is like an eternal investment portfolio. And some of you guys have people take care of your money for you, and the reason is that you want to pay someone else to do all the homework for you so that you don't have to find out ... And here's what you're looking for—strategic investments, effective investments, ones that give the best return. I mean, just because you went to college with someone doesn't mean that's a great investment for their ministry. Maybe the first couple of years, but we're looking for

ROI on this. We're looking at eternal rewards and eternal consequences based on ministry. So, we're having people look into those investments. But as a church, what we want to do is just give generously. Everything above our normal giving budget is going to go to Austin Disaster Relief Network. What if we paid that other \$125,000? Huh? That'd be cool.

The Source Austin, formerly Austin LifeCare—they're going to visit us on July 11 and tell us what they're up to—we'll be giving to them.

About this homeless crazy thing that we have going on here, right? The Austin mayor's and the city council's little experiment is over, and now we have, what, five times the trouble that we had before? That's a whole different kind of problem. And unfortunately, it's very difficult to solve that, especially in light of the way Austin became a magnet for homeless people. So, we're going to find ministries that deal with people, men and women, who do not want to be homeless, that are true victims of some sort of situations that have caused that to happen. And we want to really help those people. We're going to find the ministries that do that.

But every one of these people are image bearers. They're somebody's mother, somebody's brother or sister, they're somebody's friend. And they can't help them. So, we're going to find a different set of ministries that really are strategic in how to help people that don't want help, in some respects. Homelessness is a lifestyle choice for them. So, it's a different way of loving and a different way of caring for people than for the people who don't want to be homeless and get out of that. So, again, we're going to find ministries to do that—people who are victims of homelessness, people who choose homelessness. We're going to do that.

We're looking at water projects in Africa.

We're looking at going back to Belize. We want to raise money for school supplies—that's one of our mission points in Central America—we're going to go back there now that airlines are opening up and we're going to, hopefully, fund that school with their school supplies and upcoming things.

These are just examples of living such excellent lives in giving.

### **Fall of Serving**

The second part is the fall of serving. While we're looking at these organizations, we want to make sure that—one of your most valuable assets is your time. And we're going to look for organizations in the Central Texas area, but also around the world, where you can volunteer,



like Austin Disaster Relief Network, reading to elementary school children, helping them to learn to read. On our own campus—we've got to get this campus working again, and it runs on volunteers. So, in the fall we're going to look for places to serve.

## **Outreach**

A summer of giving, a fall of serving. And then, also part of this fall that I'll tell you more about in the June 6<sup>th</sup> sermon is a huge outreach that we'll be working on all summer long. And most of the fall will be a beautiful time to be bringing friends and family that aren't typically attending a church. It will be easy. It's discipleship for you, having strategic, heartfelt, spiritual conversations. It will be ripe for that in this whole series that we're doing the first eight weeks.

## **Conclusion**

So, let's do this. Let's make this right. Let's get this going. I'm so excited about the future of Grace! Excellent lives ... Those who accuse us of things that aren't even true have to testify to the excellent works that we do.

There's another verse a few sentences down, verse 15 of chapter 2, that's interesting. It happened to me once. When we were building this building, the superstructure was going up and it was just the iron works. It was magnificent. And I was on the sidewalk out front on Jollyville Road and this woman comes walking her dog—she lived in one of the apartments. And she didn't know who I was.

And she said, "Look at this place. This church is just building a big building. They need to be giving to the poor. Why aren't they giving to the poor instead of building big buildings?"

I said, "Well, I happen to know something about this church, and they give out hundreds of thousands of dollars every year ... over the life of the church, millions of dollars."

She said, "Yeah, but they need to be giving to the poor."

I said, "Well, you know what? Where do you give generously? I'm sure the church would be able to help you where you give generously."

It got really quiet. "Well, they just should be giving to the poor."

## **1 Peter 2:15**

**For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.**

Here's what the verse says: "For it is God's will that you, by doing good, should silence the ignorant talk of the foolish people."

That's what happened that day.

*They ought to be giving generously.*

*--Oh, they are. Famously.*

*Okay, I'm just going to go back to walking my dog, if you don't mind.*

*--Go ahead, fine.*

Here's my last ask—I'm urging you. You are loved by God. Fight the war that's in your own soul. Tell those passions where they belong—fast—not just food—fast in whatever gives your passions power. We're running out of time. You're a royal priest. You have a badge. You have rank. Fight that, be violent towards your ego. That war needs to be fought, no holds barred. Are you doing that?

How about you commit to that today? The team needs you to be holy.

Secondly, as strangers and exiles, will you be called to live a most excellent life where even people who don't like your beliefs in a supreme being with supreme standards would have to tell stories about your generosity, about your service, about your love for your fellow man? Would you commit to that? Maybe get involved this summer with generous giving, generous serving, loving one another.

See, as strangers and exiles, we're going to have a whole different set of values where we want to give our time and our resources to something that has eternal rewards to it, eternal investments. Would you consider that?

A summer of giving ... there's no building in this for us. It is just for the kingdom of God outside of our acreage. How about that? We're going to give it away. Could you do that?

Last little ask here is, maybe you're not even part of the team. Maybe you don't even understand that you don't do good so that God will love you; you do good because of what Jesus Christ has done. I want you to ask yourself if you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose to give you the power of the Spirit in your life, and it's all by faith. It's faith in the gift of the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If you're on any kind of religious treadmill, you do not understand what Christianity is. And if that's where you are, today is the day when you say I need to learn what Christianity is.

So, fight the war within you. Fight the war with love outside of you. Or, maybe, make a decision for Jesus Christ today. That's what today is all about. That's why Peter wrote that book, and that's why we're talking about it today. Could you make some choices with me?

Let's pray.

*Lord Jesus, we lift up this very divine moment right here and right now. Lord, there are men and women that are brothers and sisters, and they don't fight the passions and the ego. They submit to it. Lord, I'd ask that You would call them to duty, and in that, they would fight—fight for their lives. And I'd ask them to live holy and blameless lives because they are beloved by You.*

*Lord, there are men and women here that don't live like exiles, like they're outside the house. I'd ask that You would invade their thinking so that they would see themselves as just passing through and they would live most excellent lives in what they do with their assets of time and talent and even treasures; that they might live famously and people would talk about their gifts in the day of Your return.*

*And for those men and women here who don't know You yet, Lord, I'd ask that they would take that first step and contact our church, have a conversation, ask questions so that they might understand that You've been loving them before they even thought of You. You've been hunting them, hounding them. And now they've grown tired and they want to hear Your voice. Lord, I'd ask that You take that step.*

*Finally, Lord, I'd ask that You bless Grace Covenant Church. Bless her indeed. Allow us to continue to influence our city for good. Invade people's lives for love, that we would glorify You in our actions and in our songs. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.*

Whoosh ... this was a wonderful day to be at church. Thank you for attending. We'll see you next week. Happy Mother's Day! There are some photo booths outside. Enjoy your day!