

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 17 November 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Lifestyle of the Meek and Lowly

1 Peter 2:11-12

Back in the 80's and 90's, there was a television program in America called "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." This program gave viewers a peek into the opulent homes and lifestyles of the super-rich. Millions of viewers salivated over the fun, expensive toys of celebrities. Of course, this idolisation of rich people, and of people who have achieved cheap and quick fame, has grown increasingly over the years. People today can't wait to go home and watch "reality shows" in which they get to "peek" into the lives of others. Many people fantasise over what it would be like to be a "celebrity." They eagerly lap up exposes on movie stars and other celebrities, and snatch up every juicy detail about their lives, their dysfunctional relationships, their habits, their eccentricities...and their *sin*.

Let's face it: mankind has a fascination with spying on the lives of others! Whether you like it or not, people are watching you. In light of this, I would ask this question of *God's* people: **What do people see when they look at your life, Christian?** What they *should* see is the meek, lowly spirit of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "***Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart...***" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Those who come to Christ for salvation do not come in search of wealth, or health, or worldly success, or self-advancement: rather, they come to find *freedom* from the bondage of sin. As new Christians begin to learn from their Master, their Master helps them to put away sin from their lives. The hypocrisy and vain show that once characterised their lives is put aside. Now, lost people's "spirituality" may consist of going to church, dressing in their Sunday best, saying an occasional "amen," and letting others *think* that they are O.K. with God; but it is all a façade. In contrast, when a person repents and truly places his faith in Christ, he enters into an authentic, loving relationship with Jesus Christ, and begins to imitate His holiness. Boasting, pride, and show begin to be replaced with meekness and lowliness of heart.

The lifestyle that the world *sees* Christians living, and the lifestyle that Christians are *actually living*, should be identical. In public, in the privacy of one's home, or in the complete secrecy of one's mind; at the Sunday morning service, or at work on Monday; in sunshine or in trial, the character of Jesus Christ should shine forth in a Christian's life. In our passage from **1 Peter 2**, we will see what a Christian's lifestyle should be like. This message is entitled ***The Lifestyle of the Meek and Lowly***.

1 Peter 2:11-12

In these verses, Peter lists three things which characterise the Christian lifestyle.

I. The Christian's view of life (v. 14)

In **verse 11**, Paul begins by saying, "***Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.***" This phrase "***strangers and pilgrims***" speaks volumes about the way that a Christian should view his life! The worldview of every Christian should be that "This world is not my home." The house that you live in (though it may be bought and paid for, and though you may have lived in it for half a century), is a mere temporary shelter. Your body is

temporary, as well. Though we certainly should try to keep our bodies healthy, so that we may serve our Master effectively, the body is, nonetheless, a mere tent. One day it *will* fall down. (In his second epistle, Peter said that “*shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.*” He knew that the “tent” of his body would soon fall.) As believers in Jesus Christ, we are awaiting the Resurrection Day, when we will receive glorified, immortal bodies, without any sin nature. As Christians, we should live every day of our lives with the expectation that “I am on my way to the heavenly country.” This life is a vapour, brethren! It will soon be gone.

2 Timothy 2:1-4

Roman soldiers lived a “pilgrim-like” existence. More often than not, they were stationed in a foreign land; and they were constantly on the move. Furthermore, Roman soldiers needed to be ready to “*endure hardships*”—to face privations, and to endure pain. So it is with Christians. Paul urged Timothy to think of himself as a soldier—to be ready to endure pain, suffering, and privation for the Lord. He also urged him not to be entangled “*with the affairs of this life.*” In other words, “Don’t hold onto this world very tightly, Timothy!”

The Christian life is, truly, a “pilgrim life.” Abraham knew this truth very well. Though God had blessed him with abundant riches, Abraham never clutched onto his riches: instead, he gave freely to everyone around him. He never settled down in one place, either. He never even owned any land, except for the cave in which he buried his family!

Genesis 23:1-4

Hebrews 11:8-16

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were *literally* “*strangers and pilgrims*” in the earth. They did not live in permanent houses: they lived in tents. As keepers of sheep and cattle, they lived the life of Bedouins. However, whenever they pulled up stakes and moved to a new location, it was not because they, in their human wisdom, had decided that it was time to move on to better pasture land: rather, they followed the guidance of an unseen Hand. *God* called Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees, and to move hundreds of miles to a new land; and for the rest of his life, he had no permanent home. When Abraham made a move, it was in response to the explicit command of God. There was one time when Abraham, in desperation, made a move to Egypt, without seeking God’s will; but aside from this, Abraham’s sojournings were guided by the Lord. This should be the mindset of every believer—the determination that “I will follow the Lord, wherever He may lead me.”

When I read these words “*strangers and pilgrims,*” I often think of the old Baptist pastor, **John Bunyan**. If you don’t know much about him, allow me to introduce you to him. John Bunyan was an Englishman who lived in the 1600’s. Early in life, he was a tinker by trade; and he was a profane, hard-drinking, cursing, wicked man. However, the Lord got hold of his heart, and showed him his sinfulness. He went through a long period of intense conviction of sin; but by the year 1655, he had come to understand the true nature of the New Birth. He came to understand that salvation is a free gift, which Christ has already paid for. He repented of his sin, surrendered his life to Christ, and became a new creation.

Shortly after he had received Christ, Bunyan became a Baptist by conviction, by reading the Scriptures. He received baptism by immersion; he left the Church of England; and after the death of his pastor, he began to preach and pastor that little flock. However, in 1660, he was arrested by the authorities. He was arrested for the “crime” of not attending the Anglican Church services, but rather attending “non-conformist” services. He was arrested for the “crime” of not “baptising” his children (in other words, not allowing his infants to be *sprinkled*). He was also arrested for preaching without a licence. (Of course, in order to receive a state licence, he had to preach Anglican doctrine, and not biblical doctrine.) Now, what did he do after he was arrested? Did he cave in, and allow his children to be taught heresies? Did he shut his mouth, and stop preaching the true way of salvation, which is by God’s grace alone, and not by sprinkling, rituals, or human works? No, he did not! He chose, instead, to sit in the Bedford Prison for 12 years. He could have been released at any time, if he had simply promised not to preach; but he refused. His family suffered greatly during this time; and it tore him up inside. He especially agonised over his blind daughter, who, in his own words, “lay nearer my heart than all I had besides.” However, he had to obey his God.

Many modern Christians, if placed in Bunyan’s shoes, would have placed their children and family before God, without even giving it a second thought. (I know this to be so, because many Christians will skip church at the drop of a hat, simply because a relative is visiting!) However, Bunyan was of a different grain. He knew that the Lord was serious when He said, ***“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Luke 18:29-30).*** Bunyan believed he was just a pilgrim on this earth, and that God would reward him for his faithfulness.

As it turned out, God did give John Bunyan manifold more in this life, as well as great reward in heaven. He certainly didn’t receive much *material* wealth in this life; but he had a profound *spiritual* impact on his own generation, and on generations to come. While Bunyan was in prison, he wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, which was his own personal testimony of salvation. However, that certainly wasn’t all that he did. In 1772, a Declaration of Religious Indulgence was passed by parliament; and Bunyan was finally released from prison, and given the freedom to be a practicing Baptist. However, he didn’t kick up his feet and relax. He now sat down to finish a project which he had begun while he was in prison. He wrote a book called *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which is an allegory of the Christian life.

This story is all about a man named Pilgrim. At the beginning of the story, Pilgrim lived in the City of Destruction. As Pilgrim was reading one day in a certain “Book” (the Bible), he found out that his city, and his whole country, was bound to be destroyed with fire from heaven by the King of the Celestial City, on account of their sin. He desperately longed to know how he could avoid this judgment, and make it to the Celestial City. He also longed to find out how to get rid of a great burden that was upon his back, which would not come off, no matter what he did. Well, a man named Evangelist pointed him to the Wicket Gate (which represents Salvation through Christ alone). He guaranteed Pilgrim that if he would go to the Man at the gate, that Man would tell him how to get rid of his burden. After many doubts, fears, and near diversions into false paths, he finally came to the Wicket Gate. There a man named Mr. Goodwill (who represents Christ), pointed him to the house of Mr. Interpreter (who represents the Holy Spirit). At the house of Mr. Interpreter, Pilgrim was made to

understand salvation. He then went up a straight path, to a hill called Calvary; and there, at an old, rugged cross, his burden fell off, and rolled into an empty tomb! (In other words, the guilt and condemnation of his sin were now gone!) While he was at the cross, he was given a linen white robe (representing Christ's imputed righteousness), and a scroll (representing the Scriptures, which gave him the assurance of his salvation). Pilgrim's name was changed to "Christian"; and he continued on the straight and narrow path, through many dangers and temptations, until he finally crossed over the River of Death, into the Celestial City.

Pilgrim's Progress had an enormous impact on the nation of England. Toward the end of Bunyan's life, thousands of people flocked to hear him preach; and many were saved. However, Bunyan's popularity never made him forget that he was merely a Pilgrim on this earth. Bunyan made it clear that those who claim to be saved, yet who have never let go of the world, money, the good opinion of others, and *sin*, have not truly been saved. For example, in one of the chapters of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian crossed paths with a man named **Mr. By-Ends**, who claimed to be on his way to the Celestial City. However, Christian soon realised that Mr. By-Ends's testimony was phony. Mr. By-Ends described himself as being "most zealous when religion comes in his silver slippers." He said that he would gladly make profession of Christ—as long as "the sun shines, and people applaud him." He also made it clear that he was determined never to "strive against wind and tide." In other words, he would profess Christ only as long as it was popular to do so. In the end, Mr. By-Ends turned off the path in search of riches; and he perished while trying to find silver in a silver mine.

The Bible says that "*the wages of sin is death.*" Sadly, most people will receive these wages for eternity, because they loved their sin, and refused to go to the strait and narrow gate. My friend, have *you* gone to the Strait Gate of salvation? Have you truly placed your trust in Jesus Christ, and surrendered your life to him? By the way, I'm not asking whether you are "on a journey." Many people these days like to refer to their life experiences as a "journey." (They say things such as, "This is *my* journey.") However, the question is, "On *which path* are you journeying?" Jesus made it clear that there are only two paths on which you can travel.

Matthew 7:13-14

If you have no desire to let go of the sins and pleasures of this world, or to serve Christ, or to suffer for Him, then you are *not* a "pilgrim and stranger" on the path of eternal life. Instead, you are on the path that leads to eternal destruction! Striving and suffering for Christ are not good works by which we *earn* salvation: they are simply the *product* of the new nature, which Christ imparts to a person *after* he is saved. Has this conversion taken place in *your* life? Are you a "stranger and pilgrim" on your way to the heavenly country?

II. The Christian's view of sin (v. 11)

(Read verse 11 again.) In the second half of this verse, Peter gives another characteristic of the Christian lifestyle: namely, he gives us the Christian's view of sin. The Christian view of sin is that it is *not* something to be toyed with, flirted with, or secretly hidden away. It is not something that we may tuck away in our back pockets, so that we may take it out and enjoy a little of it now and then. Rather, it is something which we should hate, abhor, and war against!

You'd better be making war against sin in your life, Christian—because, whether you realise it or not, *sin is at war with you!* Peter says that our “*fleshly lusts*” are constantly making “*war against the soul.*” Before you were saved, sin was not your enemy: it was your *buddy*. You lived, moved, and breathed in sin; and you liked it. You had your own custom-made “designer sins,” which suited your lifestyle just fine. Perhaps it was telling small, “convenient” lies. Perhaps it was using God’s name in vain, or telling crude, off-colour jokes. Perhaps it was looking at pornography, and fantasising about someone who was not your wife or husband. Perhaps it was fornication (whether one-night stands, or the lifestyle of “living together”). Perhaps it was disobeying and being cheeky to your parents. Perhaps it was loving and pursuing money. Perhaps it was cheating “just a little bit” on your tests. Perhaps it was listening to the world’s rebellious music. Perhaps it was watching vain, sin-glorifying shows on T.V., or filthy movies at the cinema. Perhaps it was drinking “socially,” and partying. Perhaps it was gossiping, or harbouring a bitter, self-righteous, unforgiving spirit. At this point in your life, truly loving and serving God was incomprehensible to you.

But then you heard, from the Bible, that your sin had cut you off from God, and that you were under God’s wrath. You heard that God was offended by your sin, and that you were on your way to hell. This was a frightening time in your life; but it was necessary that you experience this conviction of sin. As the Holy Spirit revealed the Scriptures to you, you were now able to understand that you could not save yourself, and that you needed Christ’s imputed righteousness. You finally understood that salvation is a free gift, which Christ purchased with His blood—for *you*. You now understood that you had been *rejecting* that gift. By faith, you now *received* that gift; and Christ came into your heart. Then, something amazing happened. You now desired to *turn from the sin* that you had once loved.

Ephesians 2:1-10

If you truly be a child of God, then you received a completely new attitude about sin on the day you were saved. Now, your old sin nature has not yet been removed. For now, you are still in your mortal body; and your mortal body contains the old, sinful nature. **However**, you did receive a *new* nature, which is generated by the Holy Spirit of God; and this new nature immediately began to make war with the old nature. You now began to be really *bothered* by your sinful inclinations. Why? Because the new nature resists and abhors sin!

Romans 7:15 – 8:4

If you have been saved by God’s grace, then you know exactly what Paul is talking about in these verses. You have experienced this inward struggle between the two natures. You have also experienced at least some measure of true *victory* over sin. My question to those of you who are saved is: *How prepared* are you to make war against the sin that is in your members? Do you wake up every morning with the thought, “I must ask God to help me to put sin to death today”? Do you wake up every morning with a readiness to put on the Armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil?

Many Christians today are woefully unprepared to make war against sin. They are not taking every thought captive for Christ. They are allowing the world’s thinking to influence them; and they seldom yield fully to the Spirit. By the way, when Peter talks about “*fleshly lusts,*”

he isn't talking merely about grossly sinful things such as adultery, theft, or drunkenness. The word "*lust*" means "longing" or "desire." It refers to *any* desire that is contrary to God's will.

When it comes to the choice of whether to watch a favourite telly program or to go to church, many Christians choose the telly. When it comes to having family altar around God's Word or going to the rugby match, many Christians choose the rugby match. When it comes to having personal prayer and Bible reading or pursuing a recreation, many Christians choose the recreation. When it comes to having a Christ-like spirit, or letting their tongues pour out self-centred, fleshly anger, many Christians choose the latter. When it comes to listening to godly music or listening to the world's music, many Christians listen to the world's music. When it comes to exercising consistent discipline with their children, or simply letting their children do whatever they want, many parents choose the latter. When it comes to following God's call to the ministry, or pursuing a path of material success, many choose the latter. Even though these wrong choices produce spiritual havoc in Christians' lives and families, many Christians continue to make these decisions for one simple reason: it's the easy way! Christian, we are not called to follow the easy, natural, fleshly way; we are called to follow God!

I once knew a man whom I shall call "Joe," who was studying for the ministry at a Baptist seminary. However, after graduation, he did not pursue the pastorate, as he had been called to do. In fact, he stopped ministering within his local church. Little by little, he began to allow his family to skip church services. (Those little-league baseball games during church times were important, you know.) Before long, they were hardly in church at all. Eventually, he and his wife were removed from membership because of their virtual non-attendance. Next thing I knew, he was playing drums in a night club. There were two problems with this choice: first, playing in a rock band; and secondly, being in a place that is devoted to sin! He claimed that he didn't drink while he was there; but whether he drank or not, he was "standing in the way of sinners." Then, I heard that he and his wife were letting their kids read Harry Potter. Not surprisingly, his children began to evince mental and psychological problems. Tragically, they allowed their children to be put on the psychiatrists' mind-bending drugs, instead of addressing the underlying spiritual problems in their lives with God's Word.

Honestly, I never was confident that Joe's wife was truly saved; but I do believe that Joe is saved. He always seemed to have a tender heart, and seemed to be genuinely bothered about the choices that he was making. However, *he did nothing about it*. Christian, are you making war against the flesh, as you should? Do you hate and abhor it?

III. The Christian's relationship to those around them (v. 12)

(Read verse 12.) In this verse, we are reminded, once again, that Peter was writing this letter to Jewish believers. Peter says, "*having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.*" Obviously, this means that Peter was writing to Jews. Now, these Jewish believers probably fellowshiped with Gentile brethren in their local churches; however, the overwhelming majority of the Gentiles around them were idolatrous, heathen people. Thus, when Peter says "Gentiles," he is simply saying "unbelievers." He is talking about lost people.

So then, what kind of lifestyle did Peter say that these saved Jewish people should have before their lost Gentile neighbours? Let's read the verse again. **(Read verse 12 again.)** Peter says

that believers should have an **“honest”** conversation before the lost. We shouldn’t live lives that merely *appear* to be honest: our lives should *actually be* honest—both inside and outside.

2 Corinthians 13:7

What is Paul saying in this verse? He is saying, “Even if others around you mistakenly *think* that you are a ‘reprobate’ because you are doing the right thing, do the right thing, anyway! Don’t merely *appear* to be approved with God: actually *be* approved with Him, by living an honest life.” You see, God isn’t interested in appearances or reputation. God hasn’t called us to be “public relations” people; He has called us to be holy. A perfect example is Joseph. Remember the choice that Joseph was faced with? He was faced with the choice of being *perceived* as evil, or actually *doing* evil. You see, if Joseph had committed adultery with Potiphar’s wife, Potiphar’s wife would have kept their little affair a secret. Potiphar and all his servants would have continued to *perceive* Joseph as a godly man (even though he was secretly committing adultery). Potiphar’s wife wouldn’t have falsely accused Joseph of rape; and the name of Joseph, and of Joseph’s God, would not have been dragged through the mud. However, Joseph wasn’t concerned about maintaining the right appearance; he was concerned about actually *doing right*. He did the right thing, and *ran* from Mrs. Potiphar—even though it resulted in his being falsely accused and cast into prison. In God’s own time and way, He cleared Joseph’s name, and exalted him; and, most importantly, *God’s name* was glorified!

Christian, there is no place in your life for hypocrisy! Live a godly life every hour of every day, regardless of whether anyone is watching you or not. Whether or not it *seems* that your testimony is making any difference, do what is right, anyway. There may just come that **“day of visitation”**—that day when God’s Spirit finally gets hold of that lost person’s heart, and draws him to Christ, and that person gets saved! When that day comes, that lost person will **“glorify God”** with you. Because *you* were faithful to the Lord, even when that person called you a crazy “cult member,” God used your testimony to draw that person to Himself!

Years ago, the members of our church sent a card to our landlord, to thank him for covering the expense of an immersion tank repair. I asked our members to sign the card; and many of them did. And do you know what happened? When I saw him in his office a week later, he was impressed that we sent him a “thank-you.” He said that it is rare for *anyone* to say “thank you”; and for the first time, he began to ask me questions about what we believe. This is what the Bible calls “living honest in the sight of the Gentiles.” By the way, Christian, when a visitor comes into our church, do you go out of your way to welcome him? Your kindness to a lost visitor could make the difference as to whether he will respond to the Gospel or not! I once heard the testimony of an Iranian man named Daniel Shayesteh, who was training to be a jihadist. He knew how to operate machine guns, and how to cut off human heads; and he was prepared to do this to Christians and Jews. However, one day, when he visited an underground Christian church during a low point in his life, he was dumbfounded by the genuine love that these Christians showed him. It was their love that drew him to Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you would say, “Pastor, I can’t greet people like that. I’m an introvert.” If so, then ask God to break your heart, and *give* you a burden for lost people around you! God doesn’t call only people with certain “personalities” to reach the lost; He calls *every one* of His children to live honest lives before all men, whether in secret or in public. He calls us to live

virtuous lives—both in our words, our motives, our deeds, and our inward attitudes. This is the lifestyle of the meek and lowly.

Conclusion: The lost world out there has seen fake, phony “Christianity” all their lives; and for that reason, most of them assume that Christianity isn’t for real. They need to see *real* Christians showing the love of Christ. Christian, will you resolve to live honest before the Gentiles, so that they may be saved? Will you live the life of a pilgrim in this world? Will you ask God to give you a hatred and abhorrence of sin, and to give you the power to overcome it? Will you live your life honest before the Gentiles? I would also ask: “Have you been saved?” Don’t wait until after death to find out! Now is the day of salvation! Repent of your sin today, and place your complete trust in Christ’s sacrifice for you!