Daily Devotion #214

**Live What You Say You Believe** - 1 Peter 2:12 (NASB) *“ Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, 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.”*

I have many recollections of being in grocery stores or other retail businesses when children of other parents decided they had had enough. Their screams and crocodile tears clearly said they were ready for a nap or some other form of adjustment, if you understand my meaning. And I can remember many other occastions when my own children needed some parental adjustment while other members of society purused the aisles for their daily needs. Accordingly my wife and I took action, making sure the children knew that it was not ok to be little tyrants just because they didn’t like the way things were going for them.

But sadly, far too many parents don’t make the necessary adjustments to their children. They think it is too unloving to correct the little sinners with physical discipline or discipline at all. I have personally witnessed children slapping, kicking, hitting, and even biting their parent because they wanted the red toy instead of the blue one. And as a result of that lack of discipline, over time, their little sinful hearts turn into much bigger sinful hearts and their lives become a train wreck.

Now mind you, no parent is perfect, and try as you may, children will still live out their rebellious natures. That is exactly why God holds individuals accountable in the end, not anyone else. And that is why Peter says what he does in our verse for today. His emphasis is on the individual believer. Notice he says to keep your behavior excellent. It is up to the individual to make sure they are paying attention to their life. The reason Peter says this is because others watch us and make judgements, often without knowing the truth. Kind of like I was doing while I saw parents not disciplining their children. I didn’t know exactly what was going on with that parent at the time. I didn’t know what kind of day they were having. I didn’t know if something tragic had recently happened in their lives that was distracting them and allowing their child to act out. My mind made the determination that the parent needed to do more. And maybe that was true. But the point is, we make judgments about people based on what we see, instead of what we know.

So because Peter knew the believers in Rome and the surrounding regions were struggling from their persecution, and the Gentiles or unsaved people around them would make judgements about them based on their behavior, he says, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, to be careful how you behave in front of others, especially the unsaved world. One of the major reasons the world makes its determination about God’s people the way they do is because of how God’s people act. Unfortunately, our actions are often not godly. They are no different from the world. In Peter’s context, there is no question that emotions were running high. Suffering was being felt everywhere. So the natural response was to fight back - to take matters into their own hands. And many people did just that. They were the insurrectionists. They were those who covertly raised up fighting people to physically war against Rome in retaliation for all Rome was doing. They were the anarchists.

But Peter reminds the believers that is not God’s way. We are to be examples of peace and love and kindness. We are not the retaliators. We are not the ones who picket or stage rallies or break in to places and destroy to make our voices heard. No - our weapon is godliness. Our weapons are spiritual. Paul said it this way, **2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NASB)** *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses*.”

Our goal, beloved, is to encourage the unsaved to turn to Jesus. But they will never do so if our actions are no different than what theirs are. We are to live our days showing the world we are different. So that when Christ returns, they will give praise to Him because they know He is the God of a different people - people who live their lives based on His truth, not on emotions or circumstances. Decide today to live your life based on God’s Word and nothing else. People’s lives and eternities depend upon us doing so.