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When Doing Good Gets Hard

1 Peter 2:11-25

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Introduction:

- Let me read for you, 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 9:
 - **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”**
- This verse is telling us, we’ve been chosen by God to serve his kingdom.
 - That’s what it means to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.
 - We’re called to serve the King.
- And the mission God has given to us is to proclaim his excellencies.
 - That is, to share the good news of Jesus Christ.
 - We’re called to make known God’s grace, so more people can come out of darkness, and see his marvelous light.
- And so, this morning, we’re going to look at how we can shine the light of Christ.
 - We’re going to see how more people can come to Christ.
 - Not only through what we say.
 - But also through how we live.



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- Now, I want to acknowledge when Christians hear a sermon on sharing their faith.
 - Many feel discouraged.
 - Others may feel guilty.
 - Some feel inadequate.
 - It may be you feel all the above.
- But I want you to know, my goal isn't to make you feel guilty.
 - My goal isn't to make you feel like a failure.
 - Rather, my goal is to encourage your heart.
 - I want you to see, if you belong to Christ, God can shine his light through your life.
- And beginning in verse 11, Peter shows 4 truths we need to remember so we can effectively shine the light of Christ.
 - And I want you to notice:
 - He doesn't begin by telling us what we're doing wrong.
 - Or with a 4-step program.
 - Rather, he begins by helping us see who we are in Christ.
 - Because it's when we remember who we are, we can find strength to live for Christ.
 - And these 4 truths will show how every Christian can become a faithful witness for Jesus Christ.

Point 1:

- First, to become a faithful witness for Jesus Christ, you need to remember that you're loved by God.
- Listen to what Peter writes.
 - **“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh...” 1 Peter 2:11**



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- The first word in this verse is the word beloved.
 - Peter is speaking about his love for his readers.
 - At the same time, he's also speaking about God's love for us.
 - Before describing what we need to do.
 - Peter reminds us about God's love for us.
- And we know Peter is speaking about God's love, because in the previous verse, he speaks about God's mercy to his people.
 - Once you had not received mercy, but now you've received mercy.
 - Once you were not God's people, but now you are God's people.
 - And so, he says, beloved.
- And the reason God's love is so important, is because in this world, we're going to face rejection.
 - There are going to be people who don't approve of our beliefs.
 - And if we don't have a strong sense of God's love, we're going to give in to peer pressure.
 - We're going to compromise our values to find approval from others.
 - And it'll keep us from boldly sharing God's truth.
- Furthermore, we also need to remember God's love because we're going to face discouragement in life.
 - Others may not appreciate the hard work you're doing.
 - Or there will be times when you struggle to bear fruit, and ministry is slow.



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- There will be times when the car breaks down, or the basement floods during a busy season of life.
- And in these times, it's by remembering God's love, that we can continue to serve the Lord, even through discouragement.
- We also need to remember God's love for us, because we're going to sin.
 - Even though we confess our sin.
 - Even though we know we're forgiven.
 - When we sin, we may feel we're not useful to Christ.
 - We may feel like a secondhand Christian.
 - But remembering God's love can give us strength to serve the Lord.
- Isn't this what happened to the Apostle Peter?
 - He denied Jesus three times.
 - He said to Jesus:
 - **"Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."** Matthew 26:33
 - But when people accused Peter of following Jesus, the Bible says that Peter invoked a curse on himself and swore, he didn't know who Jesus was.
 - We don't have the exact words that Peter spoke.
 - But can you imagine him denying Jesus Christ?
 - "I swear to you."
 - "I have no idea who Jesus is."
 - Can you imagine the shame Peter felt?
- But do you remember what happened next?
 - After Jesus rose from the dead, he went to Peter and spoke to him.
 - And he didn't tell him he was finished.



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- He didn't say:
- "I'm sorry Peter, but you had your chance."
- He said to him:
- "Feed my lambs."
- "Tend my sheep."
- Jesus was restoring Peter.
- Jesus showed mercy and love.

- When Satan tempts you to despair.
 - And tells you of the guilt within.
 - Look up and see him there.
 - Who made an end to all your sin.
 - Because the sinless Savior died, your sinful soul is counted free.
 - Do you see God's love for you on the cross?
 - No matter how many times you've failed, Christ can forgive you, and restore you, and use you again for his Kingdom.

- Even more, when you see how much God loves you, that will give you strength to show his love to others.
 - To proclaim the excellences of God's mercy, you need to first experience that mercy.
 - And the deeper you know God's love, the greater you'll be able to share his love to others.

- If your life is grounded in God's love for you, you'll see that you can be a faithful witness for Jesus Christ.
 - It will help you overcome rejection.
 - It will give you strength when ministry is discouraging.
 - It will restore you, so you can serve, even after failure in sin.



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- And it will motivate you to share God's love, because you know his love.
- Now you might be thinking:
 - Pastor, I want to grow in love.
 - My understanding of God's love isn't very deep.
 - So, how can I grow in love?
- One way, you can grow in knowing God's love is by asking God to show you his love.
 - It's through prayer that we can grow in love.
- Yes, we need to pray for healing.
 - Pray for our children.
 - Pray for strength.
 - But when's the last time you prayed for a deeper understanding of God's love?
 - We need to pray for love.
- That's why in Ephesians chapter 3, verses 17 to 19, Paul prays for the believers to be:
 - **"Rooted and grounded in love..."**
 - So that they:
 - **"May have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge..."**
- Paul was praying for Christians who already knew the love of God.
 - But he wanted them to be grounded in love.



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- He wanted them to comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of the love of Christ.
- He wanted them to grow in love.
- The people God used most powerfully in the Bible were people who experienced the depth of his mercy.
 - Peter failed and received God's love and led the church.
 - Paul persecuted Christians and received God's love and preached to the Gentiles.
 - The Samaritan woman experienced God's mercy, and this woman who avoided people, was able to tell everyone about Jesus Christ.
- And so, let's pray that we would be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.
- Before you can faithfully witness for Jesus Christ, you need to first know you're deeply loved by Jesus Christ.

Point 2:

- Second, if you want to be a faithful witness for Christ, you need to remember that you're a citizen of heaven.
 - In other words, you need to remember that your final citizenship isn't on earth, but rather in heaven.
- Again, take a look at verse 11:
 - **“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” 1 Peter 2:11**



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- By sojourner and exile Peter is using language that appears throughout the Bible.
 - He's taking us back to the Israelites in the wilderness.
 - He's bringing us back to God's people who were exiled in Babylon.
 - He's taking us back to Abraham who was wandering around, looking forward to the promised land.
- And Peter is using the same language from the Old Testament to describe Christians today.
 - He's telling us to think about our lives as exiles and sojourners.
 - To remind us that belong to another kingdom.
 - He's saying we're just like the people in the wilderness wandering around looking forward to the promised land.
- This is important for us to remember, because if this world is our final home, we'll invest everything we have in this world.
 - But if our home is with Christ, it'll lead us to invest in the kingdom of heaven.
- When you travel to a foreign country, you'll most likely stay at a hotel.
 - Now of course, you'll want the room to be comfortable.
 - But you wouldn't remodel the bathroom, or buy new furniture, or replace the countertops.
 - You wouldn't spend money remodeling the hotel.
 - Why?
 - Because it's not your permanent home.
- In the same way, as Christians, we need to care for the world.
 - We need to work hard.



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- We should care for our homes.
- We can even enjoy this world.
- We can find comfort in a 5-star hotel.

- But we also need to remember, this world isn't our final destination.
 - We're not called to invest our whole lives on this planet.

- And if we're not careful, without noticing, we may begin to store up treasures on earth.

- We can store up treasures on earth, when success at work, or even ministry success becomes more important than faithfulness to Christ.

- We can store up treasures on earth, when financial security becomes more important than trusting in God.

- We can build earthly treasure, when we're overthinking our children's success.
 - When it's all about grades, and college, and career, more than building character, faith, and love.

- We can build earthly treasure when our comfort becomes more important than obeying God.

- By remembering we're exiles, it reminds us that we're called to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth.
 - If reminds us, we need to use our time on earth to invest in work that has eternal value.



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- Even more, remembering that we're citizens of heaven also reminds us that we're all missionaries in the United States.
 - Many Christians think only a certain group of people are called to be missionaries.
 - But that's not correct.
 - Every Christian believer is called to be a missionary.
 - Some go overseas.
 - But most are called to share Christ at home.
- When you go to a foreign nation as a missionary.
 - You need to learn the language.
 - You need to learn the culture.
 - And you need to build relationships with the local people.
- Well, you know what?
 - God has placed in you a place where you're an expert in all these things.
 - You know the language.
 - You know the culture.
 - And your friends with the local people.
- The United States isn't our final home.
 - We're exiles in this land.
 - We're citizens of the world to come.
 - And so, let's remember that we're put here, to be missionaries in this land.
- And one way we can do this is by building genuine friendships with those who don't know Christ.
 - Not by treating people like a project to work on.
 - But rather, by truly sharing our lives.



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- Of course, you can share the gospel with your Uber driver.
- You can share Christ with a stranger.
- But when you build trust.
- When you build friendships.
- It can become more meaningful and even more natural, when you share the gospel.
- And so, I want to ask you.
 - Is there a person in your life God has put on your heart.
 - It doesn't have to be a long list.
 - It can literally be one person.
 - Who's that one person you need to pray for, and invite into your life?
- If we want to be a faithful witness, we need to remember that we're exiles in the land.
 - It keeps us from storing up treasures on earth, so we can live for heaven.
 - It reminds us, we're all missionaries for Christ.

Point 3:

- Third, if we want to be a faithful witness, we need to remember that we're soldiers fighting against sin.
 - Our battle isn't against other people.
 - Rather, there's a battle inside our hearts.
 - And it's a battle we need to fight.
- **“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” 1 Peter 2:11**



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- By passions of the flesh, Peter is speaking about our desire to sin.
 - The desire to lust.
 - The desire for approval from others.
 - The desire to have more.
 - The desire to put ourselves first.
 - The desire to control.
- And notice the language Peter uses.
 - He says that sinful desires wage war against our souls.
 - That means sin doesn't show any mercy.
 - It doesn't rest.
 - It comes after us everyday:
 - To weaken us.
 - To draw us away from God.
- Lately, we've had mosquitoes in the house.
 - And when it's time to sleep, I'll hear it buzzing around.
 - I'll turn on the light but won't be able to find it.
 - And thinking it's gone, I'll fall asleep.
 - But in the morning, I'll see the bite marks it left on my leg.
 - The only way to stop the mosquitoes is to kill the mosquitoes.
- It's the same with sin.
 - It doesn't just go away by ignoring it.
 - We need to kill it before it takes control of us.
- The more we fight against sin, the more clearly we can shine the love of Christ.



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- In fact, if we let sin control us, it can even hurt our witness.
 - It can even hinder people from coming to Christ.
- For example, if you struggle with pride, you may become more concerned about being recognized than considering the needs of others.
- Or if you struggle with pleasing people.
 - You may become afraid to speak the truth.
 - You may care more about someone's approval than helping that person know Christ.
- If you struggle with impatience.
 - You may become irritated when people are slow to learn.
 - You'll interrupt others instead of listening to others.
 - You may even give up praying for others, when change is slow.
- If you struggle with lust.
 - It can cause you to see people as objects, and not as people who needs God's grace.
- Let's remember that we're not soldiers against the people around us.
 - The people of this world aren't the enemy.
 - They're the people we're called to love and reach with the gospel.
 - In fact, God so loved the world he sent his one and only Son to this world.
 - The real enemy is the sin in our own hearts that keeps us from loving like Christ.



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- And so, let me ask you:
 - Is there a sin in your life that might be hindering your witness?
- When we confess our sin, God is faithful to forgive us.
 - And so, don't ignore your sin.
 - Confess it.
 - Turn from it.
 - And by the power of the Spirit, put it to death.
- And remember this:
 - Though there are always consequences for sin.
 - When we repent of our sin, God can even use our failures to shine the light of his mercy and grace.
 - That's what he did for Peter.
 - That's what he did for Paul.
 - And that's what he can do for you.
- To be a faithful witness, we need to remember, we're soldiers fighting against sin.

Point 4:

- Fourth, we need to remember, we represent Jesus Christ.
- Listen to 1 Peter 2 verse 12:
 - **“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”**



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- The Bible says that we need to keep our conduct honorable before the Gentiles.
 - Other Bible versions use the word pagans instead of Gentiles.
 - Basically, Gentiles refers to those who don't know Jesus Christ.
- And Peter reminds us that our conduct should be honorable.
 - That means living in a way that's good, and upright, and worthy of Christ.
 - It means treating people with respect.
- And Peter reminds us how we need to act in a way that honors Christ, especially to those who don't believe in Jesus Christ.
- Furthermore, we're told to be honorable, even though others speak evil against us.
 - Everyone will be criticized at some point in their lives.
 - People will speak evil against us.
 - They'll accuse us of doing wrong, even if it's not our fault.
 - But Peter reminds us, we represent Jesus Christ.
 - And so, he says, even when they speak evil against you, be respectful.
 - Treat others with honor.
 - Because when others look at you, that's how they can see the love of Christ.
- And so, when the server at the restaurant messes up your order.
 - Remember, you represent Christ.
- When you have to email your child's teacher.



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- Remember, you represent Christ.
- There was someone in our church who told me.
 - On her way to church, she was stuck behind a person who was driving very slow.
 - And she was tempted to honk the horn and get angry.
 - By God's grace, she was able to control her impatience.
 - And she told me, she was so relieved that she did.
 - Because the person happened to pull into our church parking lot.
- When you're on the road and driving.
 - Remember, you represent Christ.
- When someone has hurt you, and you have the opportunity to forgive.
 - Remember, you represent Christ.
- When there's tension with your spouse, and you can reconcile by apologizing first.
 - Remember, you represent Christ.
- And here's the wonderful hope we see in this verse.
 - The Bible says:
 - **"They may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."**
 - Our good deeds can't save others.
 - But God can use our good deeds to open someone's heart to the gospel.
 - And hearing the gospel, they can come to know Christ and glorify God when Jesus returns.



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- Recently, I was speaking to a faithful member at our church.
 - And I found out she came to know Christ later in life.
 - She said in her 40's.
 - And I asked her how she became a Christian.
 - She told me, it was because of Christians in her office.
 - She noticed the joy, the peace, the love, these Christians had.
 - And she said to me.
 - "Tom, I wanted that."
 - And it was because of the good deeds of these believers.
 - She went to church.
 - And heard the gospel.
 - And believed in Jesus Christ.
 - And now she glorifies God.

- Family members, children, neighbors, schoolteachers, even people on the road see the way you live.
 - The way you speak.
 - The way you forgive.
 - The way you serve.
 - And God can use your good deeds to lead others to say:
 - "I want that."
 - And so, remember, wherever you go you represent Christ.
 - And it may be, through your good deeds someone will be led to hear the gospel, and believe in Jesus, and glorify God.

- How can we proclaim the excellencies of Christ, so that more people can come to know him?

- Ask the Lord to give you a deeper sense of his love, so that his love will overflow to others.



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- Think of one person you can pray for, to be a friend, to lead them to Christ.
- Put to the death your pride and selfishness, so you can focus more on others.
- And remember you represent Christ, because through your good deeds, someone who's resistant to Jesus may become open to the gospel, and one day glorify God.