

I'm a Christian-American

1Pe 2:11 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. 13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 1pet 2:11-15

Introduction:

1. There has been a trend in recent years for Americans to hyphenate their names, in order to distinguish who or what they are.
 - a. People are no longer just Americans; they are Jewish-Americans, Polish-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans.
 - b. The hyphens are not just limited to race either. There are disabled-Americans, Obese-Americans, and Vegetarian-Americans.
2. Some of the hyphenation in our nation is silly but, if any group would be justified in using a hyphen, it would be those Americans who are followers of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The Christian-American pledges allegiance to the American flag, while also holding up the blood-stained banner of Christ and His Church.
 - b. The Christian-American will fight for the freedom of his fellow-countrymen, while at the same time yielding himself to the rule of the King of Kings.

- c. The Christian-American will proudly sing The Star Spangled Banner, and he will also reverently Amazing Grace.
 - d. The Christian-American loves his country, and yet he looks for another country that is yet to come. As Christian-Americans, we have a unique place in our nation, unlike any of her other citizens.
3. Some 2000 yrs ago Peter wrote to Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire and he advised them on how they were to live out their dual roles as residents in an earthly country, and citizens of the heavenly kingdom.
 4. By studying Peter's advice to the believers in his day, we learn some important truths for our lives as American's today.
 5. The hope for America is not found in the politicians in Washington or the liberals in Hollywood. America's hope rests in her citizens that have been redeemed out of their sin by the power of the gospel.
 6. As we celebrate our nation's birthday, we do so mindful that as Christian-Americans we have the responsibility of influencing our earthly country for the sake of our heavenly country.
 7. As we look at this text, there are three truths we find regarding our role as Christian-Americans. Notice first of all that we see here:

I. OUR CONNECTION WITH THIS COUNTRY - VS 11A

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

- Peter referred to the believers scattered throughout Rome as “strangers and pilgrims.”
- Though the majority of them were citizens of the Roman Empire, their connection to their country was unique.
- Like you, I am proud to be an American. I am grateful to God that I was born in this great nation, and I gladly pledge my allegiance to her.

- Yet, America is not the only country and land to which I am connected.
- Look with me at the two titles Peter uses in verse 11, and let's draw from them a couple of truths about our connection to our earthly country. Notice first of all that:

A. We are Strangers

1. "Strangers and pilgrims" both indicate someone who resides in a foreign country.
 - a) *Jesus said, "I have chosen you out of this world" - Jn 15:19*
 - b) *1Jo 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
2. The truth Peter was trying to convey is that while a Christian may live among the native people of his country, he is not truly like them.
3. There is supposed to be something strange and foreign about the life of a Christian.
4. As Christian-Americans, we may live in the same communities as the lost people around us, but we are not supposed to love the same culture as those around us.
5. To a lost person, a Christian is strange
 - a) *We are not comfortable with the sinful amusements of our society.*
 - b) *We are not compliant with the social pressures of a godless age.*
 - c) *"You go to church 3x per week?"*
 - d) *"You mean that you give 10% of your income plus an offering on top of that regularly to church?"*
6. While we share a common land, we are not supposed to share a common life.
7. The believer is a stranger in this world, and the Christian-American is supposed to be different from the American that does not know

Christ.

8. We are strangers - separate from those that are attached and connected to the sinful culture of this age.
9. Not only are we strangers, but notice also further that:

B. We are Settlers

1. Notice that second title - pilgrims.
 - a) *This word speaks of a foreigner who has settled among the natives of a particular country.*
 - b) *The word literally means an resident alien*
2. Yes, Christ's people are strangers here and yet, we are citizens of it as well.
3. We may be foreigners, but we are living as residents in this great nation.
4. There is a sense in which Christian-Americans must live separately from the world around them. And yet, there is another sense in which as residents, we have a responsibility to participate in the life of our land.
5. I am on my way to heaven, but until I get there, I am a red-blooded, flag-waving, tax-paying, citizen of the great Republic of the United States of America.
6. I believe in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights. I support the troops, I won't burn a flag, and I vote when they open the polls.
7. As Christians-Americans, we separate ourselves from sin, but that does not mean that detach ourselves from society.
8. We have an obligation as residents of this country to engage in the process of being a good citizen as well as a good Christian
9. Don't complain about the decline of our country if you will not vote and participate.
10. Peter not only shows us our connection with this country, but he also

teaches us something about:

Our Connection to This Country....

II. OUR CONDUCT IN THIS COUNTRY - VS 11B-12

11b ... 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.

- After the apostle reminds us of our unique connection to our country, he goes on to instruct us on how we are to conduct and behave ourselves as God's people in this nation.
- From these verses we draw two truths about our conduct as Christian-Americans. Notice first of all:

A. *Our Conduct Should Involve Abstaining - vs 11b*

11b ... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

1. "Abstain" comes from a Greek word that literally means to hold back.
2. The Word of God says that as heavenly citizens of an earthly country, we should hold ourselves back from the lusts and desires of our sinful flesh.
 - a) *We live in a time when people will satisfy any desire, and fill any craving, regardless of the moral boundaries they cross in order to do so.*
 - b) *Things that were once culturally shameful are now widely accepted.*
 - c) *The line between right and wrong has been blurred, or erased all together.*
3. In the midst of a permissive, pagan, and promiscuous society, we as

God's people must hold back.

4. We cannot give in to the lusts that war against us day after day just because others are doing them

Ga 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

5. The Christian-American's conduct should not only be abstinent, but notice also further that:

B. Our Conduct Should Be Attractive - vs 12

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. In vs 12 Peter is still dealing with the Christian's conduct in the world.
 - a) "*Conversation*" = *behavior or conduct.*
 - b) "*Honest*" = *beautiful or noble or virtuous*
 - c) *The idea is that our lives should be beautiful and attractive to the world around us.*
 - d) *We should live in such a unique and Christ-like way that our lives are magnetic to those without Christ.*
2. The world has its own standards of beauty.
 - a) *Society says that beauty has to do with our bodies, our hair styles, and the clothes we wear.*
 - b) *The Bible says that what makes a person truly attractive is the kind of life he lives.*
 - c) *As Christian-Americans, we should be less concerned with looking like the models in the magazines and the celebrities on the shows, and more like the Christ in the Scriptures.*

3. How attractive is your Christian life? Do people want to know more about Christ when they are around you?
4. As Christian-Americans, we are to conduct ourselves with abstinence and attractiveness.
5. Peter teaches not only about our connection with this country, and our conduct in this country, but notice also thirdly that we see:

Our Conduct in This Country....

III. OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THIS COUNTRY - VS 13-15

- Jesus said that His followers were to be salt and light in their world.
- In other words, Christians are supposed to make a contribution and an impact upon the place where they live.
- In vs 13-15 Peter deals with the kind of role we are to play in our country, and the contribution we are supposed to make.
- As Christian-Americans, what are we to do for and in our nation? There are two things we find in these verses. First of all:

A. We Respect the Law - vs 13-14

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

1. Peter told his readers the importance of submitting to the laws under which they lived.
 - a) *Peter's readers were told to submit to the Roman Empire, which at times proved difficult to endure.*
 - (1) Ruthless, wicked Nero was emperor at the time
 - (2) His cruelty to Christians was well known

- (3) Christians dipped in oil and set on fire were used to light his garden at night while he was entertaining
 - b) *For us, the social rule in our lives happens to be the laws of the United States.*
 - c) *Where ever possible we are to be civilly obedient, praying for those in authority, paying our taxes, obeying the laws of the land and living honorably under the domain of earthly elected leaders.*
2. While we may not agree with all the laws of our land, but we have a Christian responsibility to obey them.
 - a) *The truth we draw from this text is that the greatest Americans ought to be Christian-Americans.*
 - b) *No one should be better citizens, better neighbors, or better people than those who claim the name of Christ.*
 - c) *Christians should not cheat on their taxes.*
 - d) *Christians should not lie for any reason.*
 - e) *Christians should not fight with their neighbors.*
3. Regardless of how lawless and rebellious the rest of our nation becomes, we have a Biblical responsibility to do the right thing.
4. As Christians, we contribute in our earthly home by submitting to its laws and obeying the powers that be.
5. Peter goes on to point out that our contribution to this country is not only that we respect the Law, but also that:

B. We Represent the Lord - vs 15

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

1. “Put to silence” - comes from a word that means to muzzle, or to close the mouth of someone.
2. Christianity was so different that everyone was suspicious of

Christians

- a) *Rumors were rampant about Christians*
- b) *They practice perversion in their secret meetings*
- c) *They eat their children*
3. By doing right and being model citizens they would muzzle the mouths of those passing around the wild rumors.
4. Right now, about the only segment of our population that it is safe to mock and ridicule is the conservative Christian.
 - a) *Men who are ignorant of the truth, and foolish in their attitude openly make fun of the faith we hold dear.*
 - b) *One the loudest spokesmen against Christianity has been media mogul, Ted Turner. He continually expresses his disdain for evangelicals, and once said that Christianity is a “religion for losers”, and that pro-life supporters were “bozos.”*
5. Peter says that we can actually shut the mouths of men like Ted Turner through “well doing”
6. By doing good and living for Christ, we can silence those that would attack us.
7. Since we are the representatives of Jesus Christ, and the greatest contribution we can make to our country is portraying Jesus in our lives.
8. What kind of Jesus do you portray to your world?
 - a) *Do people see a selfish, uncaring, carnal Christ in you?*
 - b) *Peter reminds us that we are His representatives in this world.*

Conclusion:

1. I still believe that America is the greatest nation on the face of the earth. I believe there is still hope for America.

2. However, I do not believe that America's hope lies in a better economy, a new president, or peace in the Middle East.
3. America's only hope is Jesus Christ.
4. The only way Jesus Christ can help America is through those citizens in America that know Him, and live for Him.
5. Because of sin, and spiritual apathy, America the beautiful is increasingly becoming America the pitiful.
6. It is time that we as God's people repent, and determine that we will live for Christ in the midst of dark and decayed culture.
7. One day we will transfer permanently our American citizenship for a place in the kingdom of heaven.
8. A wealthy man was taking a trip through a certain part of the country where a lot of poor folks lived. As he was driving through the area he came to a part that was known as "the hollow." Here he saw a house that was so badly in need of paint and repairs that he wondered how it could still be standing. Most of the windows had oiled paper to take the place of the glass that had been broken. Parts of the roof and shingles were missing. Playing out front was a little boy about eight or nine years old. The traveler stopped and began to chat with the boy. During their conversation, he mentioned how sorry he was for the little fellow that he had to live in such poor conditions. The little boy replied, "Oh, Mister, you don't understand. I won't have to live in this house forever, for you see, Mister, just over the hilltop up there, my dad has been building a new house for mother and us kids. I don't know when it will be done or when we'll move in, but Mister, I won't have to live in this old house forever—no siree!" Ira Stanphill's heard that story and sat at his desk and wrote a song.

*I've got a mansion, just over the hilltop,
In that bright land where we'll never grow old;*

And someday yonder we will never more wander,

But walk on streets that are purest gold.

9. Until that day, we must fulfill our roles as Christian-Americans.