

# Behaving For God

by J. Mike Minnix

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| <b>TITLE:</b>      | Behaving For God   |
| <b>BIBLE BOOK:</b> | 1 Peter 2 : 11-25  |
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| <b>SUBJECT:</b>    | Christian Behavior; People of God  |
| <b>SERIES:</b>     | The People of God  |
| <b>OBJECTIVE:</b>  | In a world marked with gross sin against God and hostility against believers, how should the people of God behave? |

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## Introduction

This is the third message in a three part series entitled, "The People of God." The great question with which this series of sermons is concerned is this, "How does God see us and who are we in Him?" We have looked at the fact that we are, "Born Of God"; and we are also a people "Belonging To God." Now we come to the third in this series and we shall consider, "Behaving For God."

Like the people in Peter's day, we are living in a sinful and rebellious world. The standards and morals of today's society are much different from those of just a few years ago. One man pointed out the fact that 50 years ago women wore their bathing suits down to their ankles, next they wore them down to their knees, and then a few years ago they started wearing them down to their hips. One man just back from the French Riviera said, Now they don't even wear them down to the water! Times have changed.

What was accepted a few years ago as proper is rejected now; and, what was rejected then, is accepted now. You can get several years in prison for killing certain kinds of animals in America these days, but aborting an unborn child is not only legal, it is encouraged by many. We used to have Scripture reading and pray at school when I was a boy growing up in North Carolina, that is a federal offense in today's society. You can't talk about the Bible in school these days. God's name is taken in vain in almost every movie made in this country. Maplethorpe suspended a crucifix in a bottle of urine and called it art, and tax money from citizens went to pay for the exhibit. Dear God, what has happened to us in our society? We have lost our moral mind!!! Peter was writing to Christian people

living in a time just like this.

God would have us, as His people, to understand that there is a level of behavior, which we must make paramount in our lives. We must not succumb to the behavior of our world. When we do fail in any way, we must confess, repent and get back on the path that is right.

As believers face a hostile environment in our world, the pressure to go along in order to get along will increase. The sense that things we once thought were terrible are not so bad will escalate, unless we stay in touch with the Lord and follow the teaching found in His word. Peter knew the same was true of the people in the generation in which he lived. He wrote about in 1 Peter 2:11-25. Here we see him calling for them, and for us, to behave in a manner that pleases God. Note with me four things about our behavior as God's children in this world.

## I. The Divine War In Good Behavior

In verse 11 we note that good behavior in the life of a believer is put in the context of a war against sinful desires. If you think that temptation is a battle, you are right! God agrees with you. In fact, God said it would be like this!

### A. The Temptation In This War

The war we are in is one which goes on between the flesh and the Spirit. See Galatians 5:16f. Paul stated that we must walk in step with the Spirit. We must live consistent with our new nature. Paul was talking as much about anger and jealousy as he was about sexual license. The church of Christ has a challenge to keep a spirit of love and peace in our midst. That was one of Paul's major concerns. It is the same with Peter as he writes. The temptation is for us to become like the world in which we live.

### B. The Target In This War

The target in this war is the soul. The soul of man represents the mind, will and emotions. We come under attack in our thinking, our feelings and then in our will. If Satan can get our thinking and feeling to come in line with the world, he can get our will to follow. Our challenge is to submit our soul (mind, emotions and will) to the Spirit rather than the flesh. We are going to see why this is so important!

## II. The Divine Witness In Good Behavior

Our behavior also involves being a good witness to the world. We are to set an example by our love and life so that the world can see that we truly belong to Jesus!

### A. The Object Of This Witness

The world considers us a sub-culture. On a talk radio program I heard the host refer to evangelical Christians as religious nuts over and over again. If he used derogatory terms like that to discuss Jews, blacks, homosexuals, etc., he would be off the air in a skinny minute. His show would be boycotted and he would no doubt face a large lawsuit if he were talking about anyone or any group other than evangelical Christians. But it is popular now to make fun of Bible-believing Christians. What should we do? We must go on with our program of service, missions and evangelism. We must be loving toward a lost world. Our duty is to continue faithfully to be a witness, even when we are misunderstood and even when we are ridiculed! We must not give in to the taunts, nor should we react with anger and hostility. We must be what Jesus has saved us to be and called us to be - light in the darkness!

### B. The Objective Of This Witness

God will visit us!!! Peter was sure of it. Peter looked out beyond the days of Nero and in faith believed that God would come with power to change things. God did just that! It was after the days of Peter and after much suffering by many believers, but God did visit His people. Oh friend, you and I must understand that there is a God in heaven who is yet able to move on the scene in a moments notice. Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, was converted to Christ around 250 years after Peter wrote these words. The nation that once vowed to stamp out Christianity became a Christian State. That was not all good, but it did open the door for the Gospel to spread around the world with great liberty. God did visit His people, and the descendants of those who persecuted the Christians became Christians and glorified God. It can and will happen again! If the Lord tarries, the children and grandchildren of some who mock God's name and law today will bow at His feet in loving submission. They will become preachers, missionaries, Christian leaders of every kind in the days ahead! Christian, do not lose heart! God will visit us and His name will be glorified!

### III. The Divine Will In Good Behavior

#### A. The Reason For Obeying His Will

For God's sake we are to obey His will. Look at verse 13. We do not submit to evil leaders because it is convenient or easy. We do it for the Lord's sake. Jesus had power to call down thousands of angels and be removed from the cross, but He died in my place and your place willingly. He prayed, Father forgive them for they know not what they do. We submit because it is a part of God's plan. Remember, when Peter wrote these words, Nero was Emperor. He was doubtless one of the most nefarious, heinous, monstrous, cruel leaders to ever occupy a human throne. Yet, Peter said that Christians should obey the laws of the land.

Now there is a limit to this. We find in Acts 5 that the New Testament believers defied the law saying, We must obey God rather than man. Here they were speaking of their right to assemble and speak the name of Jesus. In other words, we are never to worship another or allow any government to come between us and our right to speak Jesus' name and to worship Him!

#### B. The Reward For Obeying His Will

See vs. 20. We are commended now before God and we will be commended on that great day that is coming! One day the suffering we go through here will pale into insignificance compared to the glory we will share with our Lord. That will be the day when we bow in the presence of our King. He is going to commend those who stood in the time of trial and tribulation. He is going to commend those who refrained from sinful desires, those who submitted themselves to authority even when that authority was not righteous and those who kept the faith till the end.

R.G. Lee, the late, great preacher who preached the sermon, "Payday Someday," right in this church some 20 years ago, used to tell a story from his childhood. He told of a time when he was a boy lying on the porch watching his mother sew. With his face in his hands, lying on his stomach, he looked up at his mother's aging hands. He asked her, "Mother, what was the greatest event in your life?" He thought she might tell about the time she met his father, her wedding, or maybe even the day he was born. But she began to tell a story R.G. Lee never forgot.

She told of the time her father went off to fight in the Civil War. It was a terrible time of deprivation and hardship. Her mother used to tell her to just wait; one day daddy would come home. Then one day the most awful thing that could ever happen to a family with someone away at war took place at their home. A man came and told them that their husband and father had been killed. Little R.G. Lee listened with rapt attention.

The man told R.G. Lee's mother that her husband had been badly wounded in a battle at Shiloh and was dead. R.G. Lee's mother went on to tell how they cried and cried and prayed to God to help them. R.G. Lee's mother went on to tell how her mother had kept the farm going. They had plowed a mule by themselves and planted the crops. The beans came in and they went out to pick them. They were sitting on the porch breaking beans when they looked up the road and saw a man coming their way. Lee's mother said, "My mother, your grandmother, looked at me and said, 'Lookey yonder, coming up the road, there is a man walking who holds his shoulders just the way your daddy used

to. And look, he moves his feet kinda like your daddy used to move his feet. And look how he, ... it don't just look like your daddy, honey, it is your daddy'."

R.G. Lee's mother told how her mother threw that pot of beans into the air and starting running up the road. She told how she followed her mother. He was alive. There had been some mistake. He had been badly wounded. He had lost an arm and for weeks had been unable to remember much of anything. R.G. Lee's mother said, "That was the most exciting event in my life. My mother just cried and held on to daddy for a long time and then we went into the house together. I cannot tell you how good it felt!"

The world believes Jesus is dead. They see us plowing down here in weakness and think we are finished. But one day sweet child of God you are going to look up and say, That sounds like Jesus, that looks like Jesus coming there! Praise God, that is Jesus. We are going to go up to meet Him and we are going to hold on to Him for a long time and then go in His House forever!

## IV. The Divine Walk In Good Behavior

### A. The Path To Which We Are Called

We are called to walk with Jesus! We are to follow Him. Our life is not one of rules but one of a Redeemer. We are not following the law but following the Way, the Truth and the Life. His life is a suffering life and so shall ours be. If you aren't willing to suffer something for Him, it is possible that you are not one of His. Jesus did not retaliate! Jesus did not make threats! He entrusted His case to the One who judges justly. We are called to walk in His footsteps everyday.

### B. The Provision To Which We Are Committed

We are committed to the provision made at the cross for us. He bore our sins. He is the sin-bearer. We once were lost but now we are found. We have come home to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Our souls are under attack, but there is provision for our souls.

In verse 12 we read that one day God is going to visit us. Remember, this means that Christ will come with the power of salvation upon the lost. We are called upon to be faithful, God will do the rest. That is the kind of trust that Jesus had in His heavenly Father, that is the kind of trust we need!

So let us behave like children of God in a wicked and perverse world. If you are not part of the family of God, you can be today. Turn to Him in faith and be born again and placed into a relationship that joins you forever to The People Of God.