

The Challenge Of Being Pure In An Immoral Society

By
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Do you ever feel like the world around you seems to be falling apart? Specifically, do you ever feel like people around you are descending deeper and deeper into sinful activities? Taking things one step further, do you yourself ever feel the pull towards sin? If we are being honest, I think all of us would say "yes" to these questions.

So how do we keep from giving in to the temptation to sin? Or put another way, how do we meet the challenge of being pure in an immoral world? The apostle Peter actually addresses this very issue in his two letters, and he tackles the issue from multiple directions.

First, Peter tries to help Christians maintain a proper perspective about what is going on around us. In 1st Peter he reminds Christians that we are "exiles" (1:1, 1:17, 2:11) while in this world. While we can feel comfortable in this life and enjoy many things, Christians ultimately belong in heaven. Heaven is truly our home. If Christians maintain a proper perspective of the spiritual reality of heaven and hell, then this will help us maintain hope and give us a target at which to aim.

Second, Peter issues a call to be "holy as God is holy" (1:16). This statement is actually a reference to multiple passages from the Old Testament (Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, 20:26). The whole idea here is that Christians are called to match the character of God. When you think about the characteristics of God you realize that He is truly impressive. God is always patient with those who deserve patience but never tolerates sin with those who do not seek to do better. God is

always sober. He has emotion but His reasoning is never overcome by emotion. God is always just.

We could go on, but hopefully you get the idea. If Christians are focused on achieving the goal of holiness, then we will not have time to be taken in by sins of the flesh. Sexual immorality, drunkenness, lying, gossip, envy, and so on will be less and less appealing as holiness is pursued.

Finally, to help with achieving the goal of holiness, several characteristics are listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Many times we read through these verses as if one characteristic adds to another. But the reality is all of these characteristics should be practiced and exercised concurrently. Going a little further we see that "if these qualities are yours and are increasing" (v. 8) then we receive a guarantee. In verse 10 Peter says "if you practice these qualities (i.e. the characteristics from vs. 5-7) then you will never fall". This is actually a very powerful statement. What Peter says is if Christians pursue the attributes found in this passage then they will never fall away from the Lord. (Note: It does not say Christians will not sin, but rather the passage is saying Christians will never let sin become an excuse for quitting.) This is a very reassuring passage to absorb because it gives us the recipe for remaining pure.

Ultimately, we all face temptation and we all sin. But we are given the tools/ideas/resources in God's word to overcome these challenges. If we put into practice what we read, "there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (v.12)