

How would you like to live in a glass house?

Rev. John Belden

Imagine living in a glass house with see-through walls. Your neighbors can look out their window anytime and see what you are doing. To make matters worse, imagine your glass house being constantly surrounded by people staring at you. You have no privacy. There is no time when you can relax and forget your conduct. You're constantly under watchful eyes.

Sound unpleasant? Not too many people would like this arrangement. But all Christians are called to live in a glass house.

Consider I Peter 2:12: "[have] your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

God saves people to put them on display. He expects all of our conduct to be entitled to honor from others, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Our conduct should be honorable "among the Gentiles." This means among unbelievers, not just in front of other Christians on Sunday. God wants unbelievers to "observe" us and see something different. He wants us to live up to what we profess.

Peter is simply echoing the words of Jesus, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

But isn't this vain? Isn't this self-centered? Didn't Jesus say elsewhere not to do our good works to be seen by men? He did. But Jesus was confronting the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who did religious works for the purpose of drawing attention to themselves. Here Jesus and Peter are talking about an entirely different purpose for the way we live in front of the world, "that they may glorify God in the day of visitation."

The goal here is God's glory, not ours. In the Bible, "the day of visitation" can mean drawing near in judgment or mercy. Here it probably means drawing near in mercy, because the phrase "glorify God" always means voluntary praise.

Peter is saying that God uses the daily conduct of Christians to cause unbelievers to believe and praise Him for salvation.

This means that when God draws near in mercy to press to their hearts the claims of the gospel you spoke, He will also press to their hearts the memory of how you lived in front of them. And God will remind them that you maintained good works in the face of their speaking "against you as evildoers."

Furthermore, if we think of the previous words of Peter and Jesus concerning joy, we see something even more powerful. We see a picture of Christians who not only maintain good works and honorable conduct when they are being slandered, but we also see them doing it with "joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8) and rejoicing and being "exceedingly glad" (Matt. 5:12).

Maybe you're thinking, "I can't do that." That's the point. There is no human explanation for this. That's why they "glorify God" not you. Unbelievers realize that it is humanly impossible to respond joyfully and honorably when all this world's props to joy are knocked out. They say, "what could possibly make this person continue to live honorably and be joyful while he is being slandered?"

The only answer is that Christians must have something other than this world to give them joy. It must be something God has given them. It must be an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). It must be our great "reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12). They will want to know the God who can give this kind of joy.

Christian, how are you doing? How do you live Monday through Saturday? How do you respond to people who slander you? Do you rejoice when people "persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you" (Matt. 5:11)? Or do you respond just like all the other people who have only this world to make them joyful? Remember, you're living in a glass house. I hope you're living in such a way that others want to move in.

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