

# The War Within

## 1 Peter 2:11-12

**Introduction** – Peter had earlier encouraged these saints to “*rejoice, though now, for a little while, if need be you have been grieved by various trials*” (1 Pet 1:6). Those are the external trials. But there is an array of battles that must be fought that no one else imposes on you. It is the battle brought on by your own flesh; your own *‘fleshly lusts’*, he says. Simply put, everyone here is in a battle over his or her soul.

**The Saints Addressed** – Peter is not addressing the misfits, those who are not quite measuring up to the standards of the fellowship. It is self-deceptive to think that you do not have natural lusts that war within. If you think you have no sin, you deceive yourself (1 John 1:8).

**“Beloved”** – Remember, Peter is speaking on behalf of Jesus Christ. This is the Word of God, and He addresses you as ‘the beloved’ of God. You have been chosen ‘in love’ (Eph 1:3-6). God loved you when you were in your sin, and He loves you in Christ now even as you struggle with your fleshly lusts. And it is because He loves you that He tells you to stop it.

**“I beg you...”** – This is a big deal to Peter. This is of great importance to your Savior. And yet, how concerned are we? Some have not fought well, and have become useless to the kingdom of God. Others have fought well and are weary, yet heartened to be soldiers of Christ.

**“Sojourners and Pilgrims”** – Peter is not speaking geographically here, but ethically. They are aliens with regard to ‘the flesh’ and ‘the Gentiles’ (the unbelievers). Our *‘spiritual house’*, of which we are built into, is a home of holiness. But we live in a body that is still ‘fleshly’, that is, fallen. And that means there will always be war (Gal 5:17).

**War and Sanctification** – Understanding verse 11 is connected to an understanding of the doctrine of our sanctification. Heb 10:14 says, “*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified*”. There is a ‘definitive’ sanctification that all who are in Christ have already received. But there is also a ‘progressive’ sanctification whereby we are being made holy by the grace of God.

**Ditches** – The ‘perfectionist’ argues that one can come to a place where one does not sin anymore. He has forgotten that, while he is not of this world, his ‘flesh’ is quite at home here. The ‘defeatist’ argues that a person will always sin and therefore is passive in fighting against his temptations. He has forgotten that God has called him to ‘abstain’.

**Nature of the Lusts** – They are fleshly, and therefore very comfortable here. Real Christians have to put these things to death (Col 3:5-7) and put on the new man, and so we see it is a constant battle of renewal.

**Fought Off By the Spirit, Not the Flesh** (Rom 8:12-14) – This is very important. Your battle must not be fought with the flesh. Legalistic rules will never win this battle (Col 2:20-23). They are not called ‘fleshly’ because they are pleasurable, but because they are perverted, unlawful idols.

**The Battle is Over Your Soul** – “Calvinists” believe that a true Christian cannot lose his salvation. But this verse (and plenty of others) teach us that this is no reason to be complacent. A true Christian fights for his life – he perseveres in his faith to the end. A false, ‘still-born’ Christian is complacent, because he isn’t alive. We must hold both of these truths together: (1) – There is a real war being waged over your soul, and (2) – You are promised victory in the battle.

**The Spoils of War** – The results of our victory will be the light of the gospel to the unbelieving world to the glory of God.

**Your Conduct** – The war is within, but the effects are in the conduct of your life. This will be the subject of the next several paragraphs in Peter’s letter.

**Christian Extremists** – We live in a day when our society more and more will look at your lifestyle and choices and call you a ‘fundamental extremist’. You don’t believe in ‘choice’, you don’t support the ‘public schools’, you believe there is only one way to heaven, you are so intolerant of other views. We are only a step away from being grouped with Islamic terrorists. We live in a world that will call ‘evil’ ‘good’, and ‘good’ ‘evil’.

**Your Good Works** – You will be labeled ‘an evil-doer’. Nevertheless, God will use your faithful service to bring these unbelievers to see that you have something they do not have – and to the glory of God. This may mean that Peter here is calling ‘*the day of visitation*’ the day an unbeliever is converted and gives glory to God for your faithful witness. But one must keep in mind the context of the church in the first century, just before 70AD. Faithful believers are anticipating a particular event that will further vindicate the words of Christ.

**Applications** – We believe that faith alone is the instrument of our salvation. But that saving faith is never alone. It is always accompanied with good works; works that put to death the deeds of the flesh.

**“Mopping Up”** – The death blow has been dealt, but just as in any war, the final battles can be some of the messiest.

**Why am I battling now?** – It wasn’t difficult when you were lying in the stream, floating with the current. It was when you decided to turn and swim against the current that you found out how hard it really is to fight this battle. This is a sign of life.

**Remember the Balance** – We must stand in this war soberly. But we must stand in this war by faith in the promises of God.