

April 28, 2019

Strangers in this World

"To God's elect, strangers in the world..."

I Peter 1:1

"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

I Peter 1:8-9

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do...live your lives as strangers here..."

I Peter 1:13-17



As we have been discussing, being a true disciple demands our complete surrender of our own will to the will of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. So, if we have committed to becoming true disciples we will, I think, constantly be challenged to answer the Apostle Peter's question: ***"...what kind of people ought you to be?"*** (II Peter 3:11)

In his two short letters Peter shows us the answer to this question. At the beginning of his first letter he demonstrates what our lives will be like as we seek to live as true disciples. We will, he says, because of who we are, have to live as ***"...strangers in the world."*** As God's elect or chosen people, and because of our choice to believe in him, even though ***"...we do not see him..."*** our lives are filled with joy, and yet lived in a world that is now hostile to what we have become.

Thus, we will be ***"...strangers in the world"*** because we live by an entirely different standard. Peter's call to live as strangers is not easy and so he challenges us to ***"...prepare our minds for action..."*** One of the sad truths about most of us is that we do not live our lives intentionally. Most of us live reactively. That means that we wait for something to happen and then react to it.

Those who have prepared their minds live, I think, in a different way. We have chosen to be disciples and in turn, we have chosen to live as obedient children. Rather than living reactively, we live with an intentioned purpose to do what Jesus has commanded us to do in any and all situations and circumstances.

In every sense this is what it means to be ***"self-controlled."*** If I am living reactively I am not in control of myself. I am letting my emotional reactions to experiences dictate my actions and attitudes. The self-controlled have already decided who they are and how they are going to be and whatever they might experience is filtered through that choice.

Ultimately this is what a holy life looks like. If you and I have decided to be disciples, to follow Jesus, then we intentionally choose obedience. In every situation and under every circumstance we choose obedience and that constant choice means we are living holy, set apart lives.

Understand that living intentionally in this way will cause us to live in stark contrast to those about us and it will pose a huge challenge to us to keep to that path. For most of us, the tendency to live reactively is a long-standing habit. We see something or hear something, read

something or witness something, and we react almost always, without thought, without consideration.

For the self-controlled, for the intentional disciples, this reactive life style cannot continue. Whatever I see or hear, whatever I read or witness, I cannot react without first measuring my response through the sieve of Jesus' example and direction. I am self-controlled because I have given him control. If he is my Lord and Master, everything I say and everything I do must always reflect him and that must be my choice even when it is contrary to my own desires.

