

church of Christ at Greenwood

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Sojourners and Pilgrims

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Peter urges saints to regard themselves as sojourners and pilgrims. A sojourner is one who lives among aliens. Pilgrims live in a strange place, away from one's own people. Hostility is injected into this alien, strange place by the phrase, which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11). He says the present dwelling place of Christians is in a strange, hostile land; a land where danger lurks in the form of fleshly lusts.

I know Americans who live abroad. They are literally sojourners. They are living in a country of which they are not native. The customs there are different from their homeland. Most of them live in relative safety from governmental persecution, but some do not. There is actual danger of deportation or threat of harassment while they live there. A remarkable thing about these people: they volunteered to live in this environment because they believe their being there would be helpful to the cause of Jesus. Living there is generally more rigorous and less comfortable than living in the USA. They have not forgotten their homeland and look forward to the time they can return.

Christians are living in a land which is not theirs and which is inhabited by people and influences which are foreign to them. How easy it is to forget that we are just pilgrims passing through. We are like Abraham who dwelled in tents (only a temporary home) while he traveled in search of the city which hath foundations (Hebrews 11:9-10). He was incessantly looking for this permanent dwelling place.

The world is out to make us citizens. Its efforts, sometimes subtle, sometimes bold, are to make us feel at home here. We need to slip into something more comfortable. Since we are going to be here for awhile we ought to at least enjoy being here. Don't be so uptight.

I'm afraid many saints are vulnerable to this persuasive song the world sings. Some have concentrated so hard on the here and now that the there and then have all but been forgotten. We are surrounded with the gadgets of culture which dazzle and amaze our eyes and minds. The popular media praise modern paganism and denounce Christians with convictions as right-wing fanatics and bigots. Surely we do not want to be either fanatics or bigots. The only way to be relieved of those names is to cease opposition to the world's agenda, be silent and lay down our arms.

Dear brethren, when we become sophisticated and are comfortable in our surroundings, the enemy has won. Our lips will be silenced in opposition to wrong and closed for use to convert others. Our numbers will dwindle, our influence lessen, until we are gone. Vanished! Unless we remain conscious to the designations of sojourners and pilgrims and act consistently with the meaning of those terms.