

I Peter 2:11-12

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. [NASB '77]

Peter begins to apply the theology he's taught to this point. If believers are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's own possession, it affects how they live. We are different from those who don't belong to God and we're citizens of a different world. Thus, our thoughts and actions shouldn't look like the natives of this one. We must abstain from the temptations of this world that endanger our soul, and live in such a way that we become a testimony to those who are otherwise enemies of the faith.

11

The key to understanding these verses is to focus on the first phrase – *I urge you as aliens and strangers*. The context of everything Peter says here is built around believers' standing as citizens of another world (it's the theme we've explored throughout the book – living as exiles). He began this letter by addressing it to those who *reside as aliens* (1:1) and here he wants to remind them again of who they are before admonishing them about their behavior. Their status affects how they live – it's the foundation for everything in this text.

He says they should – as aliens and strangers – *abstain from fleshly lusts*. He doesn't simply say to abstain. He says to abstain because they're aliens and strangers. Because they're not of the world, it affects their thoughts and motives.

Remember that he's just called them *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*. As believers we're set apart. We are in no way like most people. God has set us apart as His possession; and as His possession we ultimately belong to His world. Paul calls us citizens of Heaven (Phil 3:20). That makes us aliens in this one.

As aliens we shouldn't be interested in the same things as the world's natives. What appeals to them and what motivates them shouldn't appeal to or motivate us. We're of a different world with different priorities and different precepts. How can we think the same as people who are of an entirely different world than us? They have their minds set on earthly things (Phil 3:19) and we're to have our minds set on things above (Col 3:2). We're to aspire to a better country (Heb 11:13-16). And since that's the case, we should stand out – we should look and act differently. [When I visited China some years ago, I didn't – as a 6'5" American who speaks only English – have to go around explaining that I wasn't from China originally. Nobody got confused as to whether or not I was a tourist. I didn't have to try to stand out. In the same way a believer whose true home is somewhere else should stand out in this one. If he doesn't – and he looks just like everyone else – then there's a real question about the authenticity of his citizenship.]

[Aren't you glad in light of all the events of the past year that this isn't our home? And aren't you glad that there aren't elections or changes in administration at home? We can be invested and we can have strong