

Sojourners & Pilgrims

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 Pet. 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 (Heb. 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.

- by Ed Brand

You, Me, and The Bible

You may understand the Bible and I may misunderstand it. I may understand it and you may misunderstand it. We may misunderstand it differently. We may misunderstand it alike. But we cannot understand it differently. What kind of book would the Bible be if it said something to you that it didn't say to me?

- by Eugene Britnell

Irony

Irony, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is "The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning". Consider the following examples.

"Please drink responsibly." Out of context, this statement might be suggesting that consumers should exercise reasonable precautions with ordinarily harmless beverages. For instance, a cup of steaming hot coffee should be handled in such a way as to avoid spilling it on one's lap. However, every television viewer recognizes these words from advertisements promoting alcoholic beverages. That's ironic because there is no responsible way to consume an

alcoholic beverage. The consumption of alcohol leads directly to drunkenness, which is explicitly and repeatedly forbidden in scripture (Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Intoxication is doubly sinful in that it prevents self-control, a necessary quality in every Christian (Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6). There's nothing responsible about drinking alcohol.

"Please play responsibly." This phrase might be used to warn a pitcher not to bean the batter. Instead, these words come from advertisements promoting lotteries in those states where such is legal. The lottery is a form of gambling which involves the drawing of lots for a prize. There is no such thing as responsible gambling because gambling is covetous (Ephesians 5:3; Hebrews 13:5), and violates the principle of legitimate gain (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

"Practice safe sex." To a Christian, this means that sexual intercourse is reserved for marriage and marriage alone. Sadly though, safe sex to the world means taking precautions – even while engaging in sex with various partners – to make sure you don't contract STDs and HIV. The only safe sex that has ever existed is intercourse with one's own husband or wife (Proverbs 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Hebrews 13:4). All sexual relationships outside marriage are immoral (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), and are unsafe because they incur the wrath of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 21:8).

- by Bryan Matthew Dockens

5th in a series

Jesus' Law on Marriage

Our study of false doctrines concerning divorce and remarriage continues:

4) DIVORCES AND REMARRIAGES WHICH OCCUR BEFORE ONE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE, BECAUSE NON-CHRISTIANS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF CHRIST IN THIS MATTER.

Those who hold to this view argue that Christ is, indeed, King over His kingdom, but those outside the kingdom are not subject to the laws of the king. These folks maintain that the only sin of the non-Christian is the sin of unbelief.

THE TRUTH IS:

Actually, Christ has all authority "in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18), and all flesh is under his authority (John 17:2). This means that every man and woman must comply with His law in every regard, including His law on marriage. To prove this is so, consider 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. There Paul lists a whole group of sinners who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God". In the list are idolaters, drunkards, thieves ... and adulterers. Now note that Paul says "such were some of you: but ye are washed ... " Obviously, then, even when they were alien sinners, these people were held accountable for the sins they committed in violation of the law of God, including violation of His marriage law.

We should also notice that the very statement of Jesus' marriage law in Matthew 19:9 says "whosoever shall put away his wife..." - indicating that the restrictions stated there apply to all mankind.

This is yet another of the many false doctrines being taught in an effort to justify unscriptural divorce and remarriage.

We'll continue our study next week . . .

- by Greg Gwin