

"Strangers in a Strange Land"
Pastor Wally Contreras
August 15, 2021

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:9-12)

* * * * *

The Kid's Warm up song was "God of WOW!" In what way(s) has God "wowed" me in the last week? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that when we take a stand for Christ, when we move forward in His will that the "defeated enemy" will try to slow us down "with 1,000 paper cuts". If that's true, then I've allowed Satan to get close enough to me to inflict those cuts. 1 Corinthians 6:18 tells me that I am to flee sexual immorality. 2 Timothy 2:22 tells me that I am to flee youthful passions. After those warnings I am told in James 4:7 that when I submit myself to God and resist the devil, and Satan will flee from me. If Satan has been getting close to me, then either 1) my "Flee Machine" is broke, 2) I like what Satan is showing me, or 3) there is a part of me that I've not submitted to God's authority. Which is it and why?

Speaking about being a "chosen race", John Piper pointed out that "I know that this is a corporate identity, he's talking about the church—the true Israel. But the implication is individual, because this race is not racial. The chosen race is not black or white or red or yellow or brown. The chosen race is a new people from all the peoples—all the colors and cultures—who are now aliens and strangers among in the world. See verse 11, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers . . ." What gives us our identity is not color or culture. But chosenness...That's why this amazing phrase is individually crucial for you; you are part of the "chosen race" because the race is made up of individuals who were chosen—from all the races. So your first identity is that you are chosen. God chose you. Not because of your race—or for any other qualification—God chose you. Who am I? I am chosen. I do not know why. It was nothing in me of value above other humans. I did not earn it or merit it, or meet any conditions to get it. It happened before I was born. I stand in awe of it. I tremble with joy at it. I bow and accept it. I long to be faithful to its purpose. I am chosen." If I was called upon to describe myself, what would my very first characteristic be that comes to mind (e.g., gender, color, age, nationality, being chosen, etc.) and why?

Charles Spurgeon made an interesting observation in his message that was preached on November 15, 1874. He said: "UNDER the Law, only one family could serve God in the priest's office, but under the Gospel all the saints are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). In the Christian Church no persons whatever are set apart to the priesthood above the rest of their Brethren, for in us is fulfilled the promise which Israel, by reason of her sin, failed to obtain—"You shall be a kingdom of priests unto Me (Exodus 19:6) ...All the saints have this honor. According to Peter, in the second chapter of his first Epistle, it belongs even to newborn babes in Grace, for even such are spoken of as forming part of a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Nor is this confined to men as was the Aaronic priesthood, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. My subject, today, is the consecration of priests, but it does not refer exclusively, or even especially, to persons called clergymen, or ministers—but to all of you who believe in Jesus, for you are God's clergy, His clerics, that is, His inheritance, and you should be all ministers, ministering according to the Divine Grace given to you." So, do I see myself as one of God's clergy? If so, how well have I been performing my priestly duties for Jesus of late? If not, why not?

If I am all of those things set out in 1 Peter 2:9a I "may" proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness." (1 Peter 2:9b)...the passage does NOT say that I "can" proclaim which implies that I have the ability to proclaim His excellencies, but rather that I "may" proclaim them which implies that I am allowed to proclaim His excellencies. Is this a distinction without a difference or does it make a difference? If so, how so? If not, why not?

John Piper continued to say that "[God] has given us our identity in order that his identity might be proclaimed through us. God made us who we are so we could make known who he is. Our identity is for the sake of making known his identity. Therefore, being a Christian and making the greatness of God known are almost identical. We can do it in church services with preaching and singing and praying and reading. We can do it in our small groups as we tell each other what God has been for us, or what we need him to be for us. We can do it at work as we tell people what we love about God and why we think he is great. And we can do it in a thousand different ways of love that suit our situation and personality." What are a few of the "thousand different ways of love" that I can make known God's identity to others...to my "Who's Your One"?

Webster's 1828 dictionary defines a sojourner to mean "[a] temporary resident; a stranger or traveler who dwells in a place for a time" while a nomad is defined to be "[o]ne who leads a wandering life, and subsists by tending herds of cattle which graze on herbage of spontaneous growth." To be a "temporary resident" (a sojourner) implies that there is a "permanent residence". I do not believe that to be the case of a nomad who simply "wanders" from place to place without any real direction. Do I at times feel closer to the wandering nomad than I do the temporary resident sojourner? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally said that I must distance myself from the cravings (controlling) of the flesh because they wage war against my soul because I can't have the world and Jesus. What "cravings" have been particularly troubling to me in my walk with Jesus and why?

Back in 1987, John Piper, in discussing this passage of Scripture, said regarding 1 Peter 2:11 said that it "describes the internal battle to be fought if we are going to make the glories of God known in our society. Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. This is probably the most crucial battleground of all—the internal battle for our desires. In this week's Christianity Today, there is a report of a gathering of 50 evangelical leaders to plan a meeting called "Leadership '88." They discussed the resources and legacy that a generation of older leaders could leave a new generation. I found it amazing that at the top of their list was 'the cultivation of the inner life with Christ'...And these were people very sensitive to the cultural and social issues of our day. Nevertheless, they said the number one resource to pass on to the next generation of leaders is the cultivation of the inner life with Christ. I think the reason is simply that this is the motor that drives everything else. If the motor dies, it doesn't really matter which way the car is pointing...This means making God your passion. Fill your mind with things that exhibit the greatness and value and beauty and truth of God. And shun all the things that stimulate desires that compete with God. Regulate your life in order to cultivate a passion for God and the things of God. Be ruthless in cutting out of your life everything that stirs up desires displeasing to God." It may be an old cliché, but have a stopped putting fuel on my fire...stopped fanning the flames of my passion for Him? Explain.

What does it mean for me to be "ruthless in cutting out of [my] life everything that stirs up desires displeasing to God"?

How do I find the strength to be "ruthless" getting rid of those things in my life that displease God – those things that hinder my ability to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9b)? Explain.

If I am to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" in order that I can "stand against the schemes of the devil". (Ephesians 6:10-17), how much time am I spending in His armory on a daily basis studying His sword?