

Title: Living Faithfully on Foreign Soil: Identity, Character, and Witness in a World That Is Not Our Home

Sermon Summary: Drawing from 1 Peter 2:11-17, this sermon establishes three foundational theological pillars that run throughout the entire book of 1 Peter. First, the ethical and moral values of a Christian must flow naturally from a new and true identity in Christ rather than conforming to cultural norms. Second, a believer's character, choices, actions, and reactions form the very foundation of their witness to the world. Third, submission to human government must be rooted in submission to God's theocratic rule. The preacher speaks with pastoral urgency and personal transparency, confessing his own failures and calling the congregation to honest self-examination. He challenges believers to recognize that they are resident aliens -- citizens of heaven on temporary assignment in this world -- and that the nature they feed, whether the old or the new, is the nature that will dominate their lives. The sermon concludes with a call to let heavenly citizenship determine every daily decision, from financial choices to relational habits, so that the church's witness is credible and Christ is genuinely glorified.

Key Points:

- Christians are resident aliens and strangers in this world whose ethical and moral values must flow from their new identity in Christ, not from cultural conformity
- The new self described in Scripture is characterized by righteousness, holiness, and truth, and believers must ask honestly whether the old nature or the new nature is more visible in their lives
- A believer's character, choices, actions, and reactions are the foundation of their witness, and corrupt character undermines the credibility of the gospel message
- Christian freedom is not license to do as one pleases but rather liberty to choose the new nature, and that freedom must be exercised in love and consideration for fellow believers
- Submission to human government is not merely civic duty but a spiritual discipline rooted in the recognition that God sovereignly establishes and removes rulers according to his providential purposes
- The two natures within every believer are in constant conflict, and the nature that is fed through the Word, prayer, fellowship, and worship is the one that will dominate

- True religion, as described by Henry Scougal, is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine presence, not merely moral behavior, orthodox belief, or emotional experience
- The church must stop the pattern of gossip, whispering campaigns, and criticism of one another, and instead follow the biblical pattern of going directly to the person with whom one has a grievance
- Christians must be willing to be seen as strange or different by the surrounding culture as a natural consequence of living by a heavenly standard
- Every daily decision -- financial, relational, and otherwise -- should reflect heavenly citizenship rather than earthly conformity

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Peter 2:11-17 (the primary passage, introduced as the framework for the sermon)
- Romans 6:4 (burial and resurrection with Christ into newness of life)
- Ephesians 4:23-24 (renewal of the mind and putting on the new self)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (anyone in Christ is a new creation)
- Colossians 3:10-11 (the new self renewed in the image of the Creator)
- Titus 3:5-6 (salvation by mercy through the washing of regeneration)
- John 8:32, 36 (the truth sets free; the Son sets free indeed)
- Galatians 5:13-15 (called to freedom, but not freedom as opportunity for the flesh)
- 2 Corinthians 3:17 (where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty)
- Psalm 115:3 (God does whatever he pleases)
- Daniel 2:21 (God changes times, removes and establishes kings)
- Proverbs 21 (the king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord)
- Isaiah 40:23 (God reduces rulers to nothing)
- John 1:12-13 (to those who received him he gave the right to become children of God)
- Romans 8 (the Spirit testifies that we are children of God and fellow heirs with Christ)
- 1 Peter 1:14 (as obedient children, do not be conformed to former lusts)

- 1 John 3:1 (behold what manner of love the Father has given that we should be called children of God)
- Philippians 3:20 (our citizenship is in heaven)
- Ephesians 2 (no longer strangers and aliens but fellow citizens with the saints)

Stories:

- The preacher shares a personal moment of vulnerability, acknowledging that his wife Terry witnessed the old nature in him during the week of the sermon, and that it broke his heart almost immediately
- A story is told of a man who grew a beard for a Christmas church play in the 1970s but chose not to keep one because a woman in his congregation found beards deeply offensive; he did not grow a beard until after she died, out of deference to her conscience
- A story is told of a church youth group that refused to take young people to Kings Island because a few men in the church objected on the grounds that the park served alcohol; the youth leaders honored that conviction out of love for their brothers in Christ rather than insisting on their own freedom
- The preacher references the historical account of William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English so that common people could read it, and who was strangled and burned at the stake for doing so; his last recorded words were a prayer that God would change the heart of the King of England, and within two years an English Bible was produced
- Henry Scougal's 1677 letter, later published as a book, is referenced for its definition of true religion as a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine presence
- A poem is quoted in full: "Two natures beat within my breast. The one is foul, the other blessed. The one I love, the one I hate. The one I feed will dominate."
- The preacher references DC Talk and their song encouraging believers to embrace being called a Jesus freak as a mark of living differently from the surrounding culture