

We continue our study in 1 Peter. It was in the providence of God that Rev. McIntyre preached on 1st Peter 1 last week, reinforcing what I had already told you. If you remember 1st Peter is an exhortation to the pilgrims of the dispersion – that is, those who had to flee their home because of their faith in Christ.

He writes to them to encourage them and to tell them that they can still have joy in spite of their circumstances. He tells them all that God has done for them through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two weeks ago we saw that God had called us — His people by some very special names – as we read in 1st Peter 2:9-10: *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”*

We, as Christians, are indeed a special people. We have been chosen by God, just as God chose Israel to be His people. As Ephesians tells us we have been chosen before the foundation of the world! Wow!

We are also a *“royal priesthood”* in the sense that we all have immediate access to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is our high priest. We can come to God in prayer and in worship – indeed this is why we can pray *“Our Father, who art in heaven ...”*

We are also *“a holy nation”* in the sense that we are separated from the world ... the pagan world. Remember, that the ways of the world are often in conflict with the ways of God, and so as Christians, we have been set apart from the world. As such, we are *“His own special people”* or, as the King James puts it, and a term I like, we are *“a peculiar people”* – we are different from the rest of the world. Everybody tells me that I am different – how about you?

The purpose of all this is so *that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*. This means that we are to tell others what God has done for us. But not only that, we are to do certain things as we live our lives out here on this earth.

And that is exactly what we see as we go on in our passage in 1 Peter 2. As a result of the special people who we are, God has chosen us to do some very special things for Him. This week we look at the first of Peter’s exhortations to those who are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a special people.

As we live our Christian lives in the world – a world in which we are strangers and pilgrims we are to live and act in a special way. The first of those ways is in 1st Peter 2: 11-12, where we read: *“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak*

against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Again, we see the truth that we are *sojourners and pilgrims* – we are just passing through this earth on our way to heaven. Remember we saw early on in our study those introductory verses from 1 Peter 1:3-5: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

This is what we have waiting for us, and as such our status is that we are only *sojourners and pilgrims* – we are just passing through. And it is because we are only *sojourners and pilgrims* that we are to not do certain things and we are to do certain things.

The first of those is that we are to *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*. We live in a world of temptations – of all types. We live in a world where we are told that we only go around once in life, so we should go for all the gusto that we can. We live in a world where we are told to live life at its fullest. We live in a world where much of what is acceptable to the world is an abomination to God.

And it is a battle for us to avoid the temptations of the world. It is a battle for us *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*. John tells us this in 1 John 2:15-17: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

I have to admit, the temptations of the world, are just that – temptations. I would love to have a BMW. I would be satisfied with a 5 series. I would love to have a house down at the shore and in the mountains of Southern Vermont. And quite frankly, sometimes lust is involved.

But there is another reason that we are to abstain from these fleshly lusts, and that is the fact that these things keep us from worshiping and serving God fully. Quite frankly, these things can get in the way of our serving God.

You might remember the story of the young man who came to Jesus, and we read in Matthew 19:16-24: *“Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, “ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept*

from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

If God allows us to have material possessions, that is fine. But they must never get in the way of our worshiping and serving God. They get in the way. As Bill Gates once said, he had better things to do than to go to church on Sundays. Boy, will he be surprised!

But these are not the only temptations that are out there other than money, there is material things in general, sex, power, fame. And these fleshly lusts do war against the soul. That is precisely why Paul describes this battle as a spiritual battle. In [Ephesians 6:12](#) we read: *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

This is why Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God. It is the only way that we can win this spiritual battle. The armor of God is a subject for another time, but it is mainly prayer, the Word of God and being filled with His truth – knowing what is right and what is wrong.

As we abstain from these fleshly lusts, Peter tells us that there is a great purpose to it – *having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles*. He means having our conduct honorable among the non-Christians that surround us ... the pagan world that surrounds us.

If we call ourselves Christians, then we have to know that the world is looking at us. They are looking at what we do, and what we don't do. Look at what happens when someone who calls themselves a Christian is caught in sin of some type.

Just recently the wife of a prominent pastor was charged with assaulting a flight attendant. It made national news, and with the internet, probably international news. And there have been other examples through the years. The point is, that the world is looking at the Christian, and they expect us to be perfect.

We know that we are not perfect ... we know that we "have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." This is exactly why we need Jesus ... this is why we need a Savior.

But we need to be constantly on our best behavior, as it were. Not because it saves us, but because the world is looking at us. As we go on in our passage Peter tells us the reason why: *"having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

Again, remember that the world is looking at us. And as they look at us not giving in to the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, it is a witness to them, even if they speak against you as someone who does evil. But even more than that – it brings glory to God.

We often pray that all that we do would bring glory to God. As we live our Christian lives as sojourners and pilgrims in this world, trying to abstain from the fleshly lusts that war against the soul – as we succeed, albeit not perfectly – it brings glory to God.

And, according to our passage, it will even cause the gentile, the non-Christian to give glory to God. We know that at the final judgement, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But for now, it is the actions and lives of the Christian that is used by God to bring glory to His name.

So, remember that there is a purpose to us being a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a special people – it is so that we can be witnesses to God ... and all that He has done for us, and to bring glory to His name.