

Joyous Spirituality of Christian Pilgrimage

by Hugh Martin

The Christian life is a pilgrimage of separation from the world and its ways, lived by faith and looking forward to a heavenly inheritance.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 29:14, Psalm 39:12, Psalm 119:12, Psalm 119:19, Psalm 142:7, Matthew 25:35, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Galatians 3:9, Hebrews 11:13

Topics: "Christian Pilgrimage", "Spiritual Joy"

Description

Hugh Martin preaches about the joyous spirituality of Christian pilgrimage, emphasizing the genuine admiration of the cross of Christ that alienates believers from the world, leading them to confess being strangers and pilgrims on earth. He addresses objections raised against this aspect of Christian life, highlighting the quiet loneliness and separation from worldly interests that believers experience. Martin explains that believers, though strangers on earth, find deep joy and peace in their relationship with God, experiencing His righteousness, love, and salvation. He encourages believers to cultivate Christian friendships, showing that true friendship is found in being a friend of God and being a stranger on earth.

Transcript

Joyous Spirituality of Christian Pilgrimage by Hugh Martin (1822-85)

Genuine admiration of the cross of Christ - imbuing a man with the evangelical spirituality which is the lack of the age, and which alone has been found powerful enough to alienate us from the world at every point - makes him, there can be no reason to doubt, what the psalmist calls himself, "a stranger on the earth" (Ps. 119:19). Living by that faith which does not, and from the nature of things cannot, in this life "receive the promises, but sees them afar off, and is persuaded of them and embraces them," and realizes the splendidly dominating power of them, the man wakens up to the clear consciousness, and sees no reason for withholding the confession: "I am a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth" (Heb. 11:13); "a stranger and a sojourner as all my fathers were" (Ps. 39:12).

It is of some importance to vindicate this aspect of the Christian life from those objections which intelligent and average healthy-minded men of the world are not unnaturally apt to raise against it, as abnormal, melancholy, ascetic, adverse to the cultivation of friendship, and to such interest in the affairs of our own age as that religion must be false which would forbid. There can be no doubt that the protestation, "I am a stranger on the earth," or "I am a stranger and a sojourner as all my fathers were," has a certain air of melancholy about it, a quiet tone of loneliness.

The very reference to the "fathers" gives it an air of the antique or the archaic. It has a little in it, one would say, of the ring of a voice grown old before its time. It is the utterance of a man longing for sympathy and finding little; a man occupied with interests and prospects and desires which obtain no favor in the eyes of those around him. He descends into himself, and discovers there matters of trial and sorrow, which the world in its levity is ignorant of; and he looks forth into futurity, and there he apprehends materials of anxiety and hope to which the world is content to close its eyes.

He looks upward to the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and as one who has been awakened to the knowledge of his responsibility to the King, he realizes that he has business in the court of heaven that the world knows not of. And looking round upon the very world itself, and perceiving its condition of wretchedness and danger as itself sees it not, his feelings towards that world are unintelligible and unacceptable to it. Whether he look within or around, whether he look forward or upward, he is sensible of emotions in which the thoughtless and ungodly world cannot sympathize; and quietly and with something no doubt of mournfulness in his heart, realizing that he is separated in spirit from the vast mass of his fellow-men, he gives expression to the fact in the somewhat pathetic protestation: "Well, well, I am a stranger now, and a sojourner as all my fathers were."

It is not that he regrets it. This is not the language of querulousness or of discontent. The fact of his separation and estrangement from the world is not unwelcome to him. It is his deliberate choice that it should be so. Or rather it is the inevitable result of a choice that he has deliberately made already, and which he is not repenting of, but repeating. Be the issue what it may, this at least is certain, "I am a stranger on the earth." I have come forth and am separate: and "I am a stranger on the earth."

My chief desires and my chief distresses alike tell me that I have lost the sympathy of the world. My deepest sorrows arise from sin; from finding that I am myself so unlike to God; from so frequently displeasing God; from having so little heart to seek or to enjoy fellowship with God; from having so little ability to worship and love and serve God; from beholding so little of the light of his countenance, and seeing so seldom his glorious goings in the sanctuary. My deepest desires are for glorious views of the Son of Man, whom the Holy One of Israel has made strong for himself and for me - strong for the magnifying and manifesting of the glory of God, and for the justifying and renewing of me, a sinner.

My peace and joy now are when Messiah, in his infinitely precious righteousness, rises to my view as a shield and hiding-place; my refuge and my deliverer; when in spiritual faith I see the Father reconciling me unto himself, searching all my heart and meeting all my case; telling me that he can be righteous in freely loving me, a lost, rebellious, polluted sinner; and that I can be safe and blessed in fully trusting him, the Just and Holy One. My heart is then opened in its depths, and the light of grace and glory passes through it.

And though that light reveals my heart's wickedness, it testifies also its free salvation in the love and righteousness of God my Savior; though it discloses deep springs of evil and depravity, thus humbling me more and more, it yet gives me a relief from the anguish which the shutting in of that depravity upon the soul to fester there, never fails to create. But this is a light which the world knows not of: the things which it discloses both in me and in my God; in me, the sinner, unrighteous and depraved; in God, the Just and Holy One of Israel; are things which the world sees not, and will by no means believe though a man declare it unto them: the distressing exhibitions of sin and bondage and death in me, which the searching light of the Lord affords; and the disclosures of righteousness, liberty, and life in Christ, my living head and treasure, which the same light reveals; of these things the world is ignorant, - they are "foolishness unto

them, neither can they know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

But the world's joys and distresses are as much foolishness to me. To mourn, as they mourn, the loss of some perishing portion; to joy, as they joy, in the obtaining of some fleeting idol; I now regard as foolishness indeed. I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. Our judgment and our desires are at variance; and that on no secondary or subordinate themes of interest. On the vital and primary objects of desire, or matters of distinguishing and fundamental interest, we are at variance.

The shadow with them is the substance with me; and the shadow with me is the substance with them. They behold me pursuing something which they do not see at all; and little wonder (I excuse them) though that seems to them absurd enough: while I see them following what I know to be a phantom and a dream. Little wonder, then, if a deep and very practical alienation has arisen between us, a separation realized and ratified on both sides. We are fatally and forever strangers; "I am a stranger on the earth."

Let any man read the Psalms of David deliberately, let him look upon them as the honest expression of the writer's actual state of feeling: apart from the credit which he has been taught from his youth to assign to the Scriptures as inspired by the Holy Spirit, so as to form, simply and literally, the Word of God; let him simply contemplate with something like deliberation the state of heart, the character, the principle of conduct, the secret experiences which find vent in these wondrous compositions: and whether he has sympathy with the writer or not, he must come to the conclusion, "Assuredly this man was a stranger on the earth."

The very revolt which the worldly mind feels from the sanctity and searching holiness of these spiritual songs is an involuntary confession that the writer of them must have been "a stranger on the earth," and the very reason why the ungodly man revolts and recoils from them, and never by any chance turns voluntarily to their pages with desire to meditate upon them, and be imbued with their spirit, is because, on the one hand, he is not prepared to be "a stranger on the earth," and, on the other hand, cannot but shrewdly know that the actual molding of his heart and character by these Psalms - the admission of their sentiments into any place of vital love in his heart, and of their principles to any place of influential government over his character and conduct in life, would inevitably make him what, from his love and friendship to the world, he is not prepared to be - "a stranger on the earth."

But what the world recoils from, the Christian heart desires. Nor will the believer claim for his personal piety any sincerity and progress, except in so far as his heart has been molded into conformity with the Word of God and the experience of God's people as there recorded. Though it be in every case by a gracious and omnipotent operation of the Divine Spirit that the heart is renewed into the saving faith of Jesus Christ, and brought under the influence of the fear and love of God, the change thus produced is not of such a nature that no account and no explanation can be given of it.

Though accomplished by a secret and sovereign energy, it is accommodated to a most express and definite rule. It is achieved by the Spirit, but it is accommodated to the Word. And though the baptism of the Spirit and of fire, under which the heart is melted into self-abasement and kindled into the growing appreciation of the beauty of holiness be beyond our finite comprehension, yet the mold into which the heart thus melted is, so to speak, poured - the impress which it now assumes - is brought most tangibly and fully within the sphere of notice; for it is formed and framed into harmony with that potent Word of God, which he has been pleased to place into our hands, and condescend to entreat us to search: and if a heart, professedly changed by the Spirit of God, whose working we cannot trace, is not in harmony with

the Word whose principles we can and may trace, the change professed has not really been undergone.

It follows that if we are true Christians and growing Christians, we will enter with true and growing sympathy into the protestation which the Word of God makes in the name of every Christian, of being a stranger and a sojourner on the earth. In proportion as the depth and decision of our personal piety are enhanced, will this sentiment gain ground. As the Word of God dwells in us more richly, as we increase in the study and knowledge of the believing heart, and increase in sympathy with it, in its joys and sorrows, its responsibilities and privileges, its burdens and reliefs, its blessings and hopes, as these are opened up to us in the Scriptures; we will feel more and more alienated from a sinful and unsatisfying, and really very shallow world, and more and more satisfied with our position as "strangers on the earth."

We will pronounce no censorious and indiscriminate condemnation on those from whom in spirit the grace of God has separated us. We will even watch against giving them unnecessary offence. We will remember, from our own experience, that true spiritual Christianity is sufficiently obnoxious to the dislike of the carnal mind to render it other than highly criminal in the Christian to present it to the unconverted in any additional and unnecessary offensiveness, or shorn of those features of acceptableness of which, even with all its sin-repelling integrity and purity, it is very far from being destitute.

And whatever the world is really right in counting excellent and lovable, we will feel bound to show that living Christianity, instead of repudiating, rather sanctions and embraces, and is indeed alone capable of ripening into full maturity. But still we will never fail to see, if living in habits of reverential and lively fellowship with God, that the whole world of unconverted men is one wide waste of utter ungodliness, to which it is no sad doom but a saving grace to be a "a stranger."

The unconverted world seeks not the glory of God; it acts not on the principle of fearing and pleasing God; its affairs are conducted with no reference to the will of God; in that world our Father's word, and will, and presence, and claims are habitually, coolly, continually set aside. How then can we ever be other than strangers on the earth? The secret of maintaining this trying position towards the world in all honor and truth of spirit, to the glory of God, to the promotion of our own spiritual interests, and comfort, and to the benefit even of the world itself - the secret of being truly, and comfortably, and usefully "strangers in the earth" - lies in our being no strangers to God.

It is well to give diligent heed to this. It is well to give heed to the process and principle whereby the believer is really enabled to take up and sustain this particular relation to the world. To the worldly man himself it appears exceedingly unnatural and incomprehensible how any human being can have his heart so removed from all that is usually accounted interesting and desirable here below, as to be passing through the world in the real character of a stranger and pilgrim.

But if he would attend to the principle on which the Christian acts - if he would but deliberately judge of the process whereby the Christian has become, and still continues to be, a "stranger on the earth," he might come to admit, if he be at all ingenuous, that there is nothing unnatural, nothing certainly irrational, and nothing in the nature of things inaccessible or unattainable, in a man even of an active disposition and a social, and sympathizing, and affectionate heart, aspiring to be as the man after God's own heart was, a "stranger in the earth."

Let us glance at the principle and process as they were seen operating in Abraham, the father of the faithful. A decided instance of the believer's relation towards the world, in this aspect of it, can be found in Abraham. The very platform and tenor of his outward life were constructed so as visibly to indicate his

spiritual separation from the world. He was not more truly the "father of the faithful" than he was obviously the Pattern of Pilgrims - the very model of a stranger on the earth.

"By faith Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And associating with their father all the ancients like-minded with him, the apostle adds, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Now, what could have prevailed with our father Abraham to assume the pilgrim's staff and the stranger's fare and garb? He had a land that he called his own. He had a kindred. He had a father's house. Doubtless he looked for dying in his nest, his destiny little shaken save by those usual events that gradually change if they do not mar the face of all things in all the homes of earth. Why should Abraham not live, as he has hitherto done, at home among the friends of his youth, the associates of his more active days?

What could possibly induce him at one decisive stroke - by one fell swoop - to tear himself away from all that he has counted desirable or dear, and be henceforth a "stranger on the earth?" "The God of glory," says Stephen, "the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you."

What could make him a stranger on the earth? "The God of glory appeared unto him." That would do it. From that moment he was alienated from the world. Formerly he had been at home in the world and a stranger to God. Now he is at home with God and a stranger on the earth. Formerly the world had "appeared" to him - and God was not in all his thoughts. Now "the God of glory" has appeared unto him, and the world disappears and fades from view. The "appearance" of God he beholds as real and glorious.

The "appearance" which the world put on, while it beguiled and occupied all his heart, he now discovers to have been false and delusive. He is in circumstances now to choose. The world has appeared unto him with its ease and gifts, its indolent sufficiency lulling his highest faculties asleep, or with its trials and hardships fretting his patience and crossing his aims. And in the counter-revelations of the world's offer and his Maker's glory - with which shall he now consent to be at home? to which shall he now resolve to be a stranger?

Ah! but he is not left to weigh his scruples and balance probabilities. He not only sees the glory of God, but he also hears his call; and it is indeed in his call, in the revelation of his character as given in his call - that Abram really sees the glory of God. The word of absolute, supreme authority commands obedience. The word of infinite love commends itself to his acceptance. "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house." Never was Abram so dealt with before.

It is the voice of the King. It is glory of sovereign majesty. And its effect is immediate and irresistible. Is Abraham dwelling indolently in the world's good - the spell of its contentment withering his energy of purpose? The voice awakens him - he starts to his feet. Is he eagerly running his own errand in the world - the strain of covetousness tasking all his effort? The voice arrests him: he stands still to listen. And clear and commanding, as of one having authority, having infinite sovereign right and power, that voice

penetrates a secret ear in his heart, and quickens and kindles there a feeling altogether new - the sharp resistless sense of responsibility - responsibility to One with whom Abram now discovers for the first time that he really has to do.

Ah! it is a voice that will brook no disobedience, no gainsaying, no delay. It is the voice of the King - the King Eternal and Invisible. It is the voice of the King at last: "Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from thy father's house." No more is Abram's lot in his own hand. "Get out into a land that I will show you." It is the voice of the Sovereign Disposer. Abram's all is in the hand of "the God of glory," and he knows it. But it is the voice of sovereign mercy also.

"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you." I will bless you: I who have the same authoritative right and power to bless that I have to command and to dispose. I will bless you - I whose blessing makes rich and adds no sorrow with it - whose blessing is effectual, all-reaching, all-sufficient, eternal: I will bless you." Get you out, therefore, unto where my blessing shall forever follow. Thus did the God of glory appear unto our father Abram; in sovereign majesty, demanding his unreserved unconditional allegiance; in sovereign mercy, conferring an unlimited and unconditional blessing.

And Abram beholds the glory of God: in the new keen sense of adoring loyalty Abraham welcomes and obeys his King: in the new sweet sense of filial confidence and final and eternal security, Abraham welcomes and puts trust in his reconciled Father who is in heaven. From that moment he is a stranger on the earth. He has believed God, and parted with the world. He has believed God, and it is imputed to him for righteousness, and the Scripture is fulfilled which says, "He was called the friend of God."

But the friend of God is a stranger on the earth, "By faith therefore he goes out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourns in the land of promise, as in a strange country." In the usual administration of the grace of his kingdom, the King of Zion is not wont to call for a local transference from one land to another, or away from the society of our relatives into seclusion or to the companionship of those unknown to us. But as to the spirit of our minds, as to the principles which shall govern our hearts and habits, as to the change of purpose and procedure which the sinner undergoes when he returns unto the Lord, and the Lord has mercy upon him and does abundantly pardon, there is a transference, a translation, an exchange from one system of feelings and principles, and desires and hopes and efforts to another, as complete, as sweeping, as decisive, as thoroughly producing a revolution upon his nature and character, as the call to Abraham to get out from his country, and his kindred, and his father's house.

Is it not as a pre-eminent example and model in this respect that Abraham is uniformly set forth to us as "the father of the faithful"? - that we are called upon to walk "in the steps of our father Abraham"? - and that "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham"? (Gal. 3:9) - and that "if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"? (Gal. 3:29) To us, therefore, as to him, if indeed we be of the seed of Abraham, God's friend, the God of Glory has appeared; to us the word of God has come.

We have seen the glory, and heard the call, of God. And his glory has appeared to us pre-eminently in the power and privileges of the call. It is indeed in our seeing glory in the call, a glory which the carnal mind never sees, that we realize the call as effectual, or rather that the call realizes itself as effectual upon us. The glory of the Sovereign Lord we see in his assertion of his claims over us, his right to command us at his pleasure, his right to dispose of us at his will.

"Get up, O slumberer, and flee from the wrath to come. Away to the refuge set before you! Repent, arise, and flee for your life." The glory also of a Sovereign Father we see in his most merciful and most majestic offer and determination in Christ to bless us - to bless us freely, to justify us fully and gratuitously, to reconcile and adopt us in his own Son's righteousness and titles, freely, finally, and forevermore. No longer do we cling to our old views of God - our dim and doubtful, hazy and suspicious, and half-slumbering views of the glory of God.

No more do we dally - dreamily tampering - with the call of God. His majestic and unreserved command, Get up and away from the lake of fire - away from your wicked companions - away from your worldly idols that are your gods, your all: this unconditional command deals mightily with all that is within you. And his merciful and unconditional determination, "I will bless you" - bless you with a free and full forgiveness, if, being guilty, you need that - bless you with an omnipotent regeneration of your soul, if being depraved and under Satan's bondage you need that; this sovereign, immediate, unconditional, free and all-sufficient grace deals not only mightily, but deals bountifully with you.

The Eternal King, in short, has come. He demands your allegiance: "Come forth from among them and be separate." But he charges himself with your lot and your blessedness forever: "I will bless you, and be a Father unto you." And believing his testimony and acquiescing in his proposal - seeing his glory and hearing his call - by faith you arise obedient to your Lord, justified by faith, and having peace with God; your faith working by love and overcoming the world: you arise, for this is no more your rest: the Lord is your friend; he is your strength and your song; he also has become your salvation.

Your treasure, your citizenship, your home is in heaven. And reconciled to God, and obedient to him, and glad to be so, you are a "stranger on the earth." It cannot, I trust, be warrantably inferred from anything that has now been said, that we could mean to represent the believer as a miserable recluse or a moping solitaire - as uncompanionable - not formed for or aiming at the duties and enjoyments of friendship. Any such inference would be alike unjust and untrue, alike false and calumnious.

The man who is scripturally and spiritually "a stranger on the earth" has assumed this relation and disposition towards the world, as we have seen, by becoming a friend of God; and that he should, and should therefore, be indifferent to the sacred claims and the frank and joyous privilege of friendship, is altogether incredible. It is frequently the estimate entertained by the world no doubt concerning the living Christian, that he is of a sullen and morose disposition, looking coldly on the innocent joys of life, and refusing all genial and gladsome association with his fellows.

But it is one of many misapprehensions and misrepresentations which the Christian must be content that his character in the eyes of the world should suffer - one of those many proofs that he cannot expect to be sympathized with or even understood by the world - that he is, in short, a stranger to the earth. There are those, however, who will deal out to him another measure, and do him justice. They will understand from their own experience how the case really stands. For it is a grievous misunderstanding.

The believer in reality is the only man who has thoroughly fathomed the nature and claims of true and incorruptible friendship. In his friendship with God he has had the glorious opportunity of learning them. And the lessons, which on that high field he learns, he will be prepared and desirous to bring into exercise in those lower spheres of friendship which he may be privileged to occupy among his fellow men. Nor will he lack opportunity for doing so. In this sense he is indeed no more a stranger and a foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God, admitted to a brotherhood of the widest extent

and of the most intimate kind.

Can it be forgotten that the David who gave utterance to the sentiment we have so often quoted, "I am a stranger on the earth," was the friend of Jonathan, and that it was precisely when realizing most intensely that he was a stranger on the earth, hunted even as a partridge on its mountains, that he enjoyed most intensely the sweetness and privilege of that most passionate and honorable attachment? Friendship, indeed, recruits its ranks from the kingdom of grace. The Christian, though separated from the world, is not isolated on a platform by himself, on which he can find none to share or sympathize with him.

Unforgiven sin may constitute such a platform - yes, a prison - for the soul. But the fellowship of God is a large and wealthy place, in which all the faithful dwell together in unity. "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise your name; the righteous shall compass me about, when you have dealt bountifully with me" (Ps. 142:7). Indeed, no man knows the calm, quiet, and confiding joy of true friendship, but he who is a friend of God and a stranger on the earth. For, when once he finds his deepest anxieties settled, and his deepest longings satisfied, in God, so that he needs no more to depend or draw upon created friends for his chief good; he returns now to find in them what it really is in them to yield - not a primary and supreme, but a secondary and subordinate enjoyment.

That he does find them capable of yielding. He finds them capable now of yielding what he now seeks - an accession, namely, a supplement, to a happiness already in the main secure. He found them incapable of yielding what he formerly sought, when he vainly assayed to make them, or any created good, his "all in all," his satisfying portion. Now, therefore, for the first time, he has in the fellowships and friendships of brethren a quietness of enjoyment, a real and full meeting of his expectations, which he never had before.

And being now, even if alone in the world and friendless, not friendless and alone, because the Father is with him, he finds, if surrounded by friends, enjoyment in them for the Father's sake. You are not at liberty merely, it is your imperative duty, to cultivate Christian friendship. Concerning each of his friends alternately, Jesus says to all, "He that receives you, receives me." One of the first effects, indeed, of living Christianity is seen in those of its disciples who once were, naturally, morose and isolated.

Of such, the world will witness with astonishment, and the Church with delight, the expansion which their affections undergo, the enlarged sympathies and genial sensibilities which they display, when grace has effectually loved on to its own delighted enthronement ("Grace reigns"). And why should not Christian men, and women too (women perhaps we should say, especially), be the very patterns of all that is lovely, and honorable, and frank, and open, and heartfelt, and mutually trustful, and helpful in their friendships with one another?

Yes, in point of fact, it is really so. None so joyous and genial as they: and so much the more, as they feel that they are strangers on the earth: and so much the more, as they see the day approaching. Conscious thereby the more truly that all their real treasure is safe; with their relation to the living God settled on his own infinitely holy, infinitely gracious terms, on his own infinitely glorious, and absolutely and eternally sure foundations; with their natures placed under the renewing and disciplinary influence of the Spirit and word and Providence of an Almighty Father; and the continuance and ultimate perfection of that process of renewal secured and guaranteed by an everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and sure: who can afford in an hour of recreation - when soul and body and spirit, after faithful duty, need to be relaxed - who can afford, as they can, to unbend and enjoy a brother's society and fellowship - ay, and with a zest, a cordiality, a quiet, calm, and deep pleasurable-ness, of which the worldling can form no conception, and

compared with which the world's noisy and most excited mirth is unnatural and hollow.

"Rejoice in the Lord, and be glad, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." Equally groundless is another objection that has often been brought against a style of piety so decided as to make a man a stranger on the earth, and to beget the evangelical spirituality of character which we have been describing. It is said that he will be thereby unfitted for discharging his duties in the world. It were useless to enter seriously on the refutation of this objection.

It may be sufficient to reply that it cannot possibly be so, inasmuch as it is precisely duty, and not desire, which dictates the entire communion which such an one maintains with the world. That the man whose whole desire is set upon the world should thereby be greatly disqualified for his duty, is natural enough. But that the man, who, by his supreme desire being turned away from earthly things, is thereby left free and unprejudiced to move among them at the dictates, not of inordinate desire, but simple duty - that he should be unfitted, and even thereby unfitted, for his duties in the world, is inconceivable.

It is really he, and he only, with whom duty is always constraining, and in whom responsibility is really awake. Do not be afraid, O believing reader, to be a stranger in the earth. Be assured your spiritual safety, comfort, and usefulness are all bound up with your really being so. "Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity to God? whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is an enemy to God." Whoever is at home in the earth is a stranger to God. But the more you are alienated in spirit from a passing, shallow, heartless, ungodly world, the more will you feel constrained to apply in livelier faith and prayer to your heavenly Father for friendship and fellowship with Him.

It was thus that the Psalmist pleaded his separation from the world as a reason for his obtaining clearer insight into the gracious purposes and holy will of God: "Open mine eyes that I may behold the wonders that are in your law. I am a stranger in the earth, hide not your commandments from me (Ps. 119:12). The more, also, will you love the worship, the house, the cause and kingdom of Christ upon the earth; and the more liberally, joyfully, and prayerfully will you give for the support and propagation of his gospel.

For thus again spoke this same stranger on the earth, Israel's sweet psalmist and king: "For who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of you, and of your own have we given you. For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding? (I Chron. 29:14-15). Nor will this be lacking to you in the hour of sorrow and anxiety, to plead with God as a reason for his hearing and answering your cry, when, as a stranger in the earth for his sake, you cast yourself upon his help and faithfulness: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not your peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

The appeal is one of inexpressible power with God. His heart warms towards the stranger. He has most solemnly assured us that he is the stranger's shield. He has forbidden us, under pain of his especial displeasure, to vex or oppress the stranger. He has in the most simple and affecting language commanded us to be kind unto the stranger. He has allured us to the duty of entertaining strangers by beautifully reminding us that some have thereby entertained angels unawares. His dear Son - in whose name we pray, and in whose sympathy we may continually rejoice and enrich ourselves - was preeminently a stranger on the earth, and knows more than any man the heart of a stranger.

In his members, and in his cause, he is a stranger still: and so highly does he estimate the entertaining of the stranger that, on the great day of accounts, one of his tenderest and most affecting commendations of

his people's faithfulness will be in these terms, "I was a stranger, and you took me in." With such affections on the part of the Most High as thus indicated towards the stranger, let me only be able honestly to plead at his throne, that "I am a stranger on the earth," and how can I doubt that in my every need and in my darkest hour he will hear my cry, and not be silent at my tears?

Rather, may I not assure myself, when poor and needy, when pursued by evil and by fear, when perplexed with guilt and with Satan, when ready to sink under trial and temptation, I flee to his door, he will give me invariable ground to bear this testimony to his grace and faithfulness: "I was a stranger, and the Lord took me in"?

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