



REFLECTIONS

January 3, 2016

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:11-12

Cause for Celebration

The parties ended sometime after the New Year made its entry into this world and the old year completed its journey into history books. It's funny that only one year ago we were celebrating the beginning of it. Or were we?

What are New Year celebrations all about any way? Are they celebrations of a conclusion of unpleasant times? Or are they celebrations of hope found in a fresh start? Or did we even bother to think about the cause for celebration in the first place; and just mindlessly go in pursuit of a state of mind away from the difficult realities of life? How easily it is to be sucked into the ways of the world we live in. As the old adage goes, "When you sleep with dogs, you get fleas."

The Apostle John warns, "*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*" (1 John 2:15-17)

So as we journey through this world let us not forget we are traveling through a foreign land alongside the citizens of it; but as much as we might like to be, we are instructed not to become a part of it. Yet how easily it is to adapt to the ways of the world and to conform our lives to its behaviors.

We seem drawn to the sinful desires that war against our souls. We don't really want to be different. The desire for acceptance seems to be a part of our being. *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."* (1 Peter 1:15-16) Or as the author of Ecclesiastes wrote: *here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

So, throughout the New Year just beginning, *let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.* (Matthew 5:16)

For in so doing will give cause for celebration.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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