

## #192 “In the World But Not of It”

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It is not easy being in a fallen, corrupt world, especially as believers. Temptations are everywhere, persecution is on the increase, and those who hate Jesus continue to multiply. Even Lot, who was not the most shining Christian example, testified to just how oppressing and tormenting it was to be around the sinful practices of the world in which he lived (2 Peter 2:7-8). Our modern world might make Sodom and Gomorrah blush, and it certainly should make us blush (Jeremiah 6:15, 8:12). Even though we are in the world, tormented and oppressed by its ways, God calls us to be separate and distinct from the world. He doesn't say to go out of the world as if we are just to isolate ourselves and ride out the storm. Neither does He say that we should compromise by trying to make the world fond of us by identifying with its lusts. Rather, we are to go to the world with the gospel, challenging them to repent, maintaining a love for the lost, and yet being separate from their evil deeds so that we have a legitimate testimony. As 1 John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” We are not of the world, and we don't love the things of the world. Therefore, we can expect the world not to like us but to hate us. Jesus said in John 15:19, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.” The world hates us because it hated Christ. If we are like Christ in conduct, some may respond to the gospel, but, by and large, we should expect hate in return. Yet we must not be discouraged because we have work to do. Christ has put us in the world for a reason, to go to the lost with the gospel and to teach them all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). Thus, we are in the world. Yet, in order to truly impact the world, we must not love it such that we appear to be of it. Too often the world impacts the church more than the church impacts the world. In order to turn the tide, we must heed the principle of Biblical separation.

2 Corinthians 6:14, 17 says, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Therefore, ‘COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR; And I will welcome you.’” Biblical separation means not indulging the pleasures of sin that are marketed and celebrated by the world and also not joining hands with those who compromise the integrity of God's Word, whether in marriage, business, ministry, etc. Too often Christians are afraid to call out those who have veered from the truth because they claim that doing so would be unloving and divisive. The reality is that truth does divide, and Christ came to bring a sword of sound doctrine (Matthew 10:34). We must accept this, and we must identify the leaven of sin lest it corrupt the whole lump of dough.

Biblical separation applies to all that we touch, see, hear, and think about. We must remember that whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23). We should also remember Philippians 4:8 which says, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good

repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” God’s Word cannot be any clearer that there is no room for thinking about garbage and sinful pleasures. Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.” In other words, who we are and what we do are dictated by what we think about. If we want to honor God, we must win the battlefield of the mind by taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), thinking only on what is good, right and pure. When we do this, it will transform all the areas of our lives, from how we dress, from what we watch, from what we listen to, to who we hang out with, etc. Psalm 119:9 says, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.” When Jesus was tempted, He merely quoted the Scripture back at the devil. It was how He kept His way pure. The same will be true for us. Scripture is our only hope of learning how to remain clean from the world and to avoid joining hands with those who appear to be of light when they are really of darkness.

James 1:27 says, “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” True religion involves reaching the world with the love of Christ yet remaining uncorrupted by sin. Some teach that in order to relate to the world, we must educate ourselves in its practices so that we can reach the lost. This teaching is of the devil. It is one thing to be able to relate to the religious beliefs of the day as Paul did at Athens in Acts 17, and it is another altogether to take in the evil of the day. Romans 16:19 says, “For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.” What a testimony! The believers were so pure that their testimony reached to all. We can reach the world without becoming like it. Being innocent of evil is not a weakness but a strength.

Being separate from worldly things that corrupt might cause us to be mocked and ridiculed, even from those in the church. Yet, the world will be able to recognize that we are of Christ rather than of the world, and this will give us the opportunity to legitimately share the gospel. If the world embraces us, if they have nothing to question about us, and if they cannot see that we are different in how we conduct our selves, we have failed. Let us be separate, not because we are weird, judgmental, irrelevant, or outdated, but because we are pure in heart and in life. Separation will lead to sanctification within the body and to salvation without. How can we possibly argue with that?