

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305

oldhickorycofc.com

June 30, 2013

Volume 33, # 27

Worldliness

As a young preacher, I moved with my family from the hills of northwest Arkansas to Baytown, Texas. I was greatly fascinated by the huge vessels that came through the ship channel to the Port of Houston. Tankers and freighters weighing thousands of tons each, which would be totally incapable of any movement on land, moved with ease and grace through the water. Ships belong in the water, but the water does not belong in the ships.

Even so, what the Master noted primarily of his apostles secondarily applies to all his disciples. We as they must be "in the world" (John 17:11) but "not of the world" (John 17:16).

What should be the attitude of disciples of Christ toward worldliness?

Definition

To answer this question we must define "worldliness." The term is unknown to Scripture, but the idea is found throughout.

In Romans 12:1-2 beloved Paul states the general principle which relates the gospel to our daily lives. He exhorts, "present your bodies a living sacrifice." How do we do so? We must "not be conformed to this world" but be "transformed" into the image of Christ. Rather than being fashioned according to this world, we should be changed so as to reflect Christ in character and life. One who is worldly is conformed to this world.

What then is the "world"? John forbids us to love the world or what it contains (1 John 2:15-17). Does he mean we are not to love the material creation of which God is the author? (cf. Acts 17:24). I believe not. Nor do I believe he condemns our love of the people who inhabit the earth (John 3:16). Rather, the inspired penman identifies the contents of the world of which he speaks as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). The "world" we must not love is sin and its enticements. "Worldliness" is the love of sin and the allurements of sin.

But one can be guilty of worldliness without succumbing to that which is inherently sinful. Paul the aged prisoner grieved, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas simply allowed the love for things of this life to cause his love for the Lord to grow cold. Those "who set their mind on earthly things," i.e., make the things of this life their primary concern, "are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18-19). The Christian's citizenship is heavenly, and he must love his country! (Philippians 3:20) The man who values material things above spiritual is worldly.

Results

What are the results of worldliness?

The devastating consequences in the home are dramatically demonstrated in the life of David. David was guilty of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11). Though he repented at the preaching of Nathan and was forgiven, God through the prophet warned the king that evil would rise up out of his own house because of these sins (2 Samuel 12:1-14). What grief David suffered in the rebellion of his dearly loved son Absalom, in fulfillment of God's word! Are any words of deeper anguish recorded than those of David at the news of Absalom's death? (2 Samuel 18:32-33) Worldliness will destroy our homes.

Likewise, a nation that forgets God and turns to the world has turned to its own destruction (Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 14:34). Even more than terrorists, our nation should fear the consequences of its own worldliness!

But of greater importance yet, worldliness will destroy the souls of those who succumb to its charm (Galatians 6:7-8) and, where left unchecked, will destroy the Lord's church (Revelation 2:14-16). Worldliness is the most destructive force mankind faces.

Cure

Since this is true, we surely need to know how to overcome worldliness. In past generations many thousands were killed or maimed by polio. But Dr. Jonas Salk discovered a vaccine to prevent this horrible disease. Now that merciless killer is virtually

eradicated. We had much rather vaccinate to prevent polio than contract the disease and need the cure.

In like manner, let us learn how to prevent the worst killer of all, worldliness. To be protected, we must first change our attitudes to spiritual mindedness. This means to love and seek the things of God rather than the things of this life (Colossians 3:1-4). We must study the Bible to learn the difference between right and wrong (Psalm 119:11). We need to attend the worship assemblies of the saints to be strengthened (Hebrews 10:24-25). And how we desperately need sound, fundamental, Bible preaching from our pulpits that will plainly point out sins and duties rather than the flashy, shallow entertainment that passes for preaching in so many churches of Christ today! (Titus 2:11-15)

But for those who are already afflicted with the spiritual malady of worldliness, the cure is essential to eternal life. As an inoculation for a bodily infection is unpleasant but essential, so genuine repentance is difficult but necessary for the sinner to overcome worldliness (Revelation 2:16).

If a limb has contracted gangrene, as horrible as the thought is, that limb must be amputated so as to save the whole body. When a member of the church will not repent of worldliness, as difficult as it is and as much as we love him, we still must withdraw from him that we might save both the church and the sinner (1 Corinthians 5:3-6).

Conclusion

Too many Christians are trying to achieve the impossible, to hold on to God and to the world at the same time. We must choose one or the other (James 4:4). And remember, we will reap the rewards of the choice we make: either spirituality to life or worldliness to death (Galatians 6:7-8). Which will you choose?

- Keith Sharp

Like The Days of Noah

Many people have questions about what it will be like when the Lord returns in final judgment. We don't have all the answers. (Only the Father in heaven knows every detail - Matthew 24:36). But Jesus made a statement relative to that time that sheds some valuable light on certain aspects of the event:

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

(Matthew 24:37-39)

Notice some things that we learn from Jesus' words:

People will be very busy with the earthly pursuits.

While it is true that much wickedness does (and will) exist in the world, it is worth noting that not all of the activities mentioned involve sin. For instance, "*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*" could be sinful (via gluttony, drinking intoxicating beverages, unscriptural marriages, etc.). But it is possible to eat, drink (non-intoxicants), and marry (scripturally) without sin. The main point of Jesus' statement is that people got busy and forgot about God. That certainly describes lots of people in the world today.

Spiritual apathy will be in evidence as it was back then. The folks in Noah's day "*knew not until the flood came,*" but it was not for lack of information. Noah *was* "*a preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:5). They just were not listening. See the similarity to today?

It will be a day of damnation for the unprepared and the unrepentant. "*The flood came, and took them all away.*" Those who think that God is 'too loving' to ever punish anyone need to think again!

It will be a day of salvation for those who love God and who obey His will. "*Eight souls were saved*" (1 Peter 3:20) because Noah made preparation. Are you ready!?!

- Greg Gwin

The Right Choice

Often we are reminded of Joshua's statement to Israel of old, "choose you this day whom ye will serve... ..but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). What choice are you making? Are you submitting to the Lord? Are you serving Him? Just what is the right choice?

For the non-Christian, the right choice is to obey the gospel. Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). A failure to obey the gospel results in "everlasting destruction" (2 Thes. 1:8). Obey today!

For the unfaithful Christian, the right choice is to repent and pray. When a Christian named Simon was guilty of sin, Peter commanded him to "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven" (Acts 8:22). In sin, one is separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Choose to be rejoined in fellowship with the Lord and your brethren!

For the faithful Christian, the right choice is to keep on keeping on. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Be thou faithful unto death!

- David McPherson

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- > "Trust not the world. It never pays what it promises."
 - > "There are no idle rumors - rumors are always busy."
 - > "To get to heaven: turn right, keep straight."
 - > "There is no right way to do a wrong thing."
 - > What ought one to say then as each hardship comes? "I was practicing for this, I was training for this."
 - > "Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life, and when it comes, hold your head high, look it squarely in the eye, and say, "I will be bigger than you. You cannot defeat me."

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Look What Love Can Do!*" (text: John 13:34-35); Sunday evening: Bi-monthly Singing!

SCHEDULE: Our Gospel Meeting will be July 28 – Aug. 2, Sun. regularly scheduled times, M-F at 7:00 p.m., with Tanner Campbell, of Piggott, AR.