

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE VICTORIOUSLY

PART 7 – CAN THE WORLD RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Certainly, it is God's desire that the world accept His only Son, Jesus as the Messiah and receive His Holy Spirit. Yet God's desire and man's will are often at odds; this divergent relationship began in the Garden when Eve and Adam exercised their free will and ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. It is as if Man's will has been at war with God's ever since.

The World is the bastion of Satan, filled with all manner of cleverly disguised temptations to lure us away from the righteousness of God. The lure to bridge the gap between the World and the Church through association with the worldly aspects of our society has resulted in the Church watering down the Gospel and diluting the teachings of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in 2nd Corinthians 5:16 -20, ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Do we fully appreciate what Paul is telling us here? The Church in many instances has considered this as an instruction that we are to become as the World that we might reconcile the World to God through Jesus; at least if this is not what is confessed, it is what is being acted out.

But this is NOT what Paul is saying. What Paul is saying is that we are to be in the world as ambassadors. Recall that ambassadors are folks from one country, sent into another to represent their homeland. They are NOT to become citizens of their host country nor to take on their culture but remain true to their own country's culture. Christians are Ambassadors for Christ, we are of God's Kingdom and as we are empowered by God's Holy Spirit, we are sent to represent His Kingdom in a fallen world NOT to become friends with the world. In the 4th Chapter of the Epistle of James, Verse 4, James writes:

*Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of **the world** makes himself an enemy of God.*

We cannot befriend the world and still be God's Ambassadors; we must choose, either to be of God's Kingdom or of the world.

Yet our everyday is filled with compromise. The world stands as a whitewashed tomb which indeed appears beautiful outwardly, but inside is full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. And it's outward beauty calls to the blind believers who seek to gain acceptance of a world that is filled with men who have nothing but contempt for the things of God. And each little compromise that is yielded to gain the acceptance of these worldly men and women removes us farther and farther from the presence of the Holy Spirit. And as we become citizens of the world through our abdication of our ambassadorship, we draw others with us expecting them to compromise also.

This entire activity is nothing less than outright warfare; spiritual warfare to be exact. And our God his whole has given us the Holy Spirit to abide in us to help us become victorious in this spiritual battle. And remember from our earlier teachings that spirit is spirit and flesh is flesh. Flesh cannot become spirit nor can spirit become flesh.

And so we must choose to follow our spiritual guide, the Holy Spirit, or follow our human counterparts who are of the world and compromise our Christianity to gain their approval.

This whole battle could be easily resolved and won if Christians would simply follow the pattern set by Jesus and follow in His way instead of following each other. Jesus was very clear on this point as He responded to his disbelieving brothers who sought to counsel Him to go into Judea, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.” (John 7:6-7)

We need to appreciate that Jesus was talking to brothers who did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, and so they were of the world; this is why Jesus said “the world cannot hate you...” they were the world, and the world could not hate itself.

In this same vein of who is and who is not hated by the world, the Gospel of John records Jesus’ saying to His disciples: ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Jesus’ disciples are chosen by Him and when they respond through repentance, Baptism, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they are no longer of the world. You, Beloved of Christ, are no longer in the world, unless, against the prodding of the Holy Spirit, you choose to be so.

It is as if there is a chasm separating the Redeemed Christian and those who are of the world. It is much like the separation between Lazarus and the rich man; and in fact it is the same chasm. In the final analysis what scripture tells us is that there is only one way to the Father, and that is through the redeeming presence in our lives of Jesus Christ and the on-going nurture provided to us through the Holy Spirit.

While this is politically incorrect, it is the truth and we know that the World and those who are of the World abhor the Truth. The truth is that:

- no one can become a redeemed Christian simply by associating with the Redeemed,
- no one can become a redeemed Christian by religious contact,
- no one can become a redeemed Christian by religious education.

People become Redeemed Christians only when they have been called by God and respond to that call and accept the new birth that comes from God through accepting Jesus, repenting of our sins, and opening our spirits to His invasion.

Paul in his first letter to the Church in Corinth wrote about those who are of the world referring to them as “the natural Man” and said:

¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

So there are two kinds of people in the world, Redeemed and Natural, and no other division is of any importance. Division by sex, ethnicity, color, or any other division other than the redeemed and the natural is of no importance.

John, in writing his first epistle to Christians wrote:

⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are of the world. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. ⁶ We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4:4-6

I don't believe that it could be written any plainer. The language used is not confusing, it is straightforward and understandable. But as with most of scripture, our problem is not one of understanding, rather it is one of faith and obedience. What this teaches is not some deep mysterious theological precept, rather it teaches a straight forward moral principal; If I am to be saved in the end times, am I willing by faith to be obedient to God's will or do I prefer the acceptance of the world?

To be a follower of Jesus, He tells us we must take up our crosses; we need to ask ourselves, "Am I willing to do so?, Am I willing to separate myself from the world even though it may mean giving up worldly aspects of my life and entering into spiritual warfare? Are we ready to live our lives by the standards God has given us in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount?

A.W. Tozer writes:

"...the Sermon on the Mount gives in brief the characteristics of the kingdom of renewed men. The blessed poor who mourn for their sins and thirst after righteousness are true sons of the kingdom. In meekness they show mercy to their enemies; with guileless candor they gaze upon God; surrounded by persecutors they bless and curse not. In modesty they hide their good deeds. They go out of their way to agree with their adversaries and forgive those who sin against them. They serve God in secret in the depth of their hearts and wait with patience for His open reward. They freely surrender their earthly goods rather than use violence to protect them. They lay up treasures in heaven. They avoid praise and wait for the day of final reckoning to learn who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

If this is a fairly accurate view of things, what can we say then when Christian men vie with one another for place and position?

What can we answer when we see them hungrily seeking for praise and honor?

How can we excuse the passion for publicity which is so glaringly evident among Christian leaders?

What about political ambition in Church circles? What about the fevered palm that is stretched out for more and bigger “love offerings”?

What about the shameless egotism among Christians?

How can we explain the gross man-worship that habitually blows up one and another popular leader to the size of colossus?

What about the obsequious hand-kissing of moneyed men by those purporting to be sound preachers of the gospel?

There is only one answer to these questions; it is simply that in these manifestations we see the world and nothing but the world. No passionate profession of love for “souls” can change evil into good. These are the very sins that crucified Jesus.

It is true also that the grosser manifestations of fallen human nature are part of the kingdom of this world. Organized amusements with their emphasis upon shallow pleasure, the great empires built upon vicious and unnatural habits, unrestrained abuse of normal appetites, the artificial world called “high society”—these are all of the world. They are all part of that which is flesh, which builds upon flesh and must perish with the flesh. And from these things the Christian must flee. All these he must put behind him and in them he must have no part. Against them he must stand quietly but firmly without compromise and without fear.

So whether the world presents itself in its uglier aspects or in its subtler and more refined forms, we must recognize it for what it is and repudiate it bluntly. We must do this if we would walk with God in our generation as Enoch did in his. A clean break with the world is imperative.

In his 1st Epistle, John wrote:

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

God did not give us these words in scripture for our consideration, they are given so that we understand that we can do this thing that God calls us to do; we can be obedient to His will, we can overcome the lures and temptations of the natural man and the world for unless we do, we have no right to claim the title “CHRISTIAN” and we will not be graced with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit.

