

## Why We Separated from the World

IT REMAINS a truth to this day, however unpopular and seldom proclaimed, that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4) — and necessarily so, since everything, however seemingly innocent or even “life-improving,” which serves to crowd God out of our thoughts and hearts, is *His* enemy and ours. Not only is it true that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8), but it is also equally true that the world, which rejected Him, has not changed in the years that have since elapsed. The line of separation from the world, which is drawn very sharply in Scripture, has become very confusing and practically obliterated in the minds of many professing Christians.

The Savior said that those who have been regenerated should have only their “feet” in contact with the world – their hearts and minds were to be far from it (John 13:10). But today it seems to be generally taken for granted that Christians might submerge themselves in worldliness and be absolutely indistinguishable from those who are utterly worldly.

Again, utter confusion has resulted from the fact that the Church has completely lost sight of the real nature of the mission that has been entrusted to her. The prevailing notion, even among the very few who give any serious thought to such subjects, is that the Church was commissioned by her Lord to convert the world during His absence; and so we see the Church and the world linking arms and going off together upon the friendliest terms, the Divine idea of separation being wholly thrust aside. But the mission of the Holy Spirit is just the reverse of this. God has visited the nations that He might take out of them a people for His name (Acts 15:14). Many Scriptures speak of the Church as a “little flock,” suggesting her isolation, and precluding the idea of absorbing a converted world (Mt. 7:13-14; Luke 12:32; 13:24; John 15:18-21). Still others describe the condition of the world immediately preceding the Lord’s return as wholly given over to evil, pleasure seeking and indifferent to spiritual truth (Luke 17:26-30). Men will be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, and evil men will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13; Jude 17-18).

God’s purpose for us is that we should be in the world as *strangers* to all its affairs and pursuits, and *as passengers through it* (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11). It was never contemplated that God’s people should make themselves at home here. They were to be (and they who are truly His are) in the world as in a foreign country, for their citizenship is in heaven, from whence also they wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).

That separation has from the very beginning been God's order for His people is beyond all doubt. He separated Noah and his family from the worldlings of their day, and after the flood mankind again started on a high plane only to run down hill, as has always been the case in human history. God separated Abraham from his own people, and righteous Lot and his household from the inhabitants of the cities of the plain. He carefully separated Israel from the nations, fencing them off by peculiar laws and customs; and now, in this age, He bids His Church to have no fellowship with unbelievers and not to be unequally yoked together with them. Clearly then, it is the duty of all who truly love the Lord Jesus to take a definite stand in this matter. No reason can be offered for not doing so, nor will any excuse avail.

We find that it is impossible to mix in our lives the things of God with the things of the world. The mere fact of becoming interested in the things for which Christ came to earth makes the things of the passing moment appear insignificant and unimportant. We find that the pursuit of pleasure and the gratification of the natural senses, however refined and tasteful, are incompatible with doing even the little that we can towards hastening the coming of Christ and His Kingdom. Sin is a serious matter. Christ, the Son of God, suffered and died to put it away; and yet the whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). A thousand souls a minute are going down to perdition. The Church is talking about converting the world, while professing "Christians" are taking an active and prominent part in the world's merrymaking and mad scrambles after wealth and temporal benefits.

Jesus died for *all*, so that they who live should not live for themselves, but *for* Him, Who died for them, and rose again from the dead (2 Cor. 5:15). If we truly recognize the fact that we owe our life to Him, will it not follow that we should desire to devote that life to His service?

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – 1 John 2:15

(Adapted from *Why We Separated from the World*, by Philip Mauro (1859-1952), revised and condensed)