

Sermons on THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD

#1 -- 5/5/96 a.m. -- "The Christian and the World" -- 1 John 5:19.

#2 -- 5/19/96 a.m. -- "Not of the World" -- John 15:18, 19.

#3 -- 5/26/96 a.m. -- "The Things of the World" -- 1 John 2:15-17.

#4 -- 6/2/96 a.m. -- "Kept from the Evil One" -- John 17:15-17.

#5 -- 6/9/96 a.m. -- "Holy Living in An Unholy World" --
Rom. 12:1, 2, Part 1.

#6 -- 6/23/96 a.m. -- "Standing Against the World" --
Rom. 12:1, 2, Part 2.

#7 -- 6/30/96 a.m. -- "The World and the Gospel" --
Acts 1:8

Related Scriptures: 1 Cor. 1:17-25; 2:1-5.

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THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD

1 John 5:19

Intro: Tonight I want to begin a series of messages on the subject, **THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD**. I could have chosen as my subject, **THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD**. The true church is made up of true Christians, and so to speak of the true church is to speak of all who genuinely are trusting Jesus Christ for their salvation. But I want to make these series as personal with each one of us as I can, and so I have chosen to call the series, **THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD**.

I. WHO CAN RIGHTLY BE CALLED A *CHRISTIAN*?

In referring to people, no two words can be farther apart from each other in the mind and purpose of God than the words *Christian* and *world*, or *church* and *world*. Actually the word *Christian* is only used three times in Scripture. You will find it in Acts 11:26, the latter part of the verse where we read, "And the disciples were called **Christians** first in Antioch." The second time we find it is in Acts 26:28 where King Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a **Christian**." The third occurrence of the word is in 1 Pet. 4:16 where Peter was writing about suffering as a wrongdoer, or suffering as a Christian. He condemned the former, but said concerning the latter, "Yet if any man suffer as a **Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

The title means *a follower of Christ*. Through the years the term *Christian* has lost its Biblical meaning. People who are church members will call themselves Christians even though they may make no claim that Christ has saved them from their sins. It used to be (I don't know how widespread this idea is now) -- but it used to be that people thought that if they were Americans, they were Christians. You will often find a person who never goes to church, never reads the Bible, a person who makes no profession of faith in Jesus Christ, will nevertheless call himself or herself a Christian just because he or she is law-abiding, pays their bills, and seeks to live a moral life. But in the New Testament a Christian is a person who believes in Christ, who believes that He is the Son of God, and who is trusting in Christ as his Savior. He believes that it is only through Christ and His death on the Cross that anyone can be forgiven of his sins and can become a child of God.

So it is more in line with Scripture to speak of a Christian as a believer, one who is trusting Christ; or as a child of God. A Christian is one who has been born again -- a work which God does in the hearts of those

whom He has saved from the judgment of God. Sometimes the people of God are called *saints* in Scripture, but because God has set them apart from the rest of the world to be holy. A true Christian is one who has passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life. He is a new creature in Christ. He is a child of God, a son or daughter of God. The term *Christian*, which means, as I have said, *a follower of Christ*, indicates that a person who bears that title has been saved from his sins and who is seeking to follow Christ through obedience to the Word of God, the Bible.

I hope we are all clear on what the Bible means when it speaks of a Christian. Now let me ask,

II. WHAT IS *THE WORLD*?

The word for *world* which the Apostle John used in his epistles (1 and 2 John; not in 3 John) and primarily in his Gospel, is the word κόσμος. It speaks of the earth, those people living on the earth who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, who do not have any place for God in their lives, but who are governed by, as the Apostle John said in 1 John 2:16, “the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

The people of the world have their own way of life. They are concerned about this present life with its possessions, pleasures, positions, and power. They are alienated from God, antagonistic to any talk of sin, and totally uninterested in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are deceived in their hearts and blinded to the truth of the Word of God. In the world we see a whole system of living which is thoroughly man-centered and which is deeply resentful of any suggestion that man is accountable to God.

Furthermore, the word κόσμος speaks of a harmonious system. This means that wherever you will find people, you will find a way of life that is the same throughout the earth. This is because that which makes people live like they do is because of the natural condition of the human heart, which is a *sinful* condition. Cultures may differ, and languages differ, people can often appear very refined and genteel, but the people of the world throughout the world are basically the same -- God-less (speaking of the true God), self-centered, pleasure-loving, earthly-minded, sinful and corrupt before God. And no amount of what we might call morality or good works can compensate for the fact that man is sinful at heart, without God and content to stay that way. People who are a part of this world's system are totally depraved, never as bad as they could be

(because of the restraining hand of God), but capable of all kinds of sin, and at heart in rebellion against the Lord God of heaven and earth. The Lord was speaking of this world when He said,

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26).

Now looking at our text, 1 John 5:19, we see in this verse that the Apostle John stated:

III. A TWOFOLD CERTAINTY (1 John 5:19).

The verse says,

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (1 John 5:19).

The word *know* in some form appears thirty-nine times in 1 John. It is an epistle which was purposely designed of God to give us assurance. Through the Word of God we know things, revealed by God, which we could not possibly have known in any other way. And two of them are stated here:

- 1) "We know that we are of God."
- 2) "We know that...the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Let us take the first statement and examine it first.

A. "We know that we are of God."

John had stated this before. Cf. 1 John 4:4-6. (It is in both 4 and 6.) What does it mean "that we are of God"?

Before I answer that question, let me remind you that at one time we were all a part of the world. We belonged to that system. And today we would have been just like the people of the world if God had not sovereignly intervened in our lives.

Listen to what the Lord said John 15:19 where he was speaking to His disciples on the way to Gethsemane:

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, **but I have chosen you out of the world**, therefore the world hateth you.

Then, when the Lord was praying the prayer recorded for us in John 17, He said this to His Father:

I have manifested thy name unto **the men which thou gavest me out of the world:** thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word (John 17:6).

— What was true of the disciples, is also true of us. We were once in the world and of the world. But now we are “of God.” What does this mean?

We have this same expression in the Greek in John 1:13. Most of you could quote John 1:11-13, but let me read those verses to you:

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 **Which were born,** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God.**

Lit. translated the expression “of God” means *out of God*. It means that God is responsible for the change that has taken place in our lives. He is the Source, the Cause, the Originator of our new birth and the transformation that has taken place in our lives. Paul was praising the Lord for this in Colossians 1 when he was giving thanks to God the Father,

— Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).

And so the Apostle John says that “we know that we are of God,” lit., *out of God*. Our new birth, our new relationship with God in Christ, has been all of God’s doing, and not our own. And “we know that we are of God” because, as John had been saying in this epistle, we have the evidence in our lives that we belong to God. We now love God. We enjoy fellowship with Him. We love His Word, and we want to obey His Word. We no longer are in bondage to sin, but have been set free. Cf. 1 John 5:13. Oh, how wonderful it is for any of us to be able to say, “And we know that we are of God.” And when we say it, we know that we must say it to His glory, not our own. He didn’t choose us and take us out of this world system because of anything that He saw in us. All that He saw in us should have made Him turn away. No, it was not our goodness, but His goodness, His grace, His mercy, His love. And now we can say that “we are of God.”

— Make sure that you can say that about yourself this morning, and that you say it on the basis of what the Word of God says concerning what your

heart tells you. And the glorious sequel to being able to make such a statement is that you and I could never go back to what we were before. We are still in this world, but we are no longer of this world.

— But what else do we know, according to our text?

B. “We know that...that whole world lieth in wickedness.”

I think that there is almost unanimous agreement that the word “wickedness” should be translated, *the wicked one*, speaking of the Devil. The NKJV says, “And the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one.” The NASB has it, “And the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.” In the NIV you will read, “And the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

Two ideas seem to be present in the word “lieth.” One is helplessness; the other is contentment. This is the word that the angel used with the shepherds when he told them that they would find the baby Jesus “lying in a manger.” But notice that this is another verse which indicates that “the whole world” does not mean everybody in the world. There are millions of people who have been delivered from the Devil’s power, and they are no longer “of the world,” but “of God.” God has lifted us out and set us free. We used to love our sin, but hated God. Now we love God, and hate our sin. In fact, I feel that I express the feeling of every child of God here today when I say from my heart that I wish I had never sinned! But thank God, we are free.

— This is what Paul was talking about in **Eph. 2:1-10**. (Read.)

Now let me point out to you that “we know that...the whole world,” every person who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, “lieth *under the sway, under the control* of the wicked one.” *But the people of the world don’t know this!* They think that they are free. They think that they can do whatever they want to do. They don’t know that “whosoever committeth sin is the servant (the bondservant) of sin” -- but we know it! And we know it because the Lord Jesus Christ said it. The words are recorded in John 8:34. And He prefaced those words with, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” People would learn a lot if they would only read the Bible. But the Devil who holds them under his power is going to do everything that he possibly can to keep them from ever seeing a Bible! That is a part of the bondage he keeps them under. The entrance of God’s Word gives light; it gives understanding to those who don’t know what they ought to know, and need to know.

But let me point out another great contrast in this verse. It is greater than the contrast between those of us who are “of God” and those who are lying under the power of the Evil One. It is the contrast between God and the Evil One.

Our sinful hearts and the Evil One as well make us afraid of God, when we ought to fear the Evil One and get to God through Christ as fast as we can go. God is good. The Bible tells us that over and over again. But the Devil is called *the Evil One* because everything he does is bad. He is incapable of doing anything good. If what he does is made to look good, it is only to deceive you and me. He makes sin so attractive, but afterwards we experience the bitter results. People may hate the effects of their sin, but they go back to it again and again, as the Bible says, like a dog returning to his vomit. Why do people do that? Because they are under the control of the Evil One. The Devil is running their lives, and they don’t know it. But how wonderful it is to be able to say to you today, as the Lord Jesus said so many years ago, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36) -- not free to sin, but free from sin.

Concl: So the whole world fits into one of two groups today. There is a large group of people who can truly say, “And we know that we are of God.” They have been delivered from Satan’s power, and they belong to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. They have been delivered from sin’s power as well. And they are looking forward to the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come, and they will be forever free from sin itself.

But there is another group, a very large group, and they are still lying both contentedly and helplessly under the power of the Evil One who has just one objective in mind: the eternal damnation of their souls. Many of them are what we would call good people, but all good people who are without Christ are going straight to hell. There are “of the world.” They live like this is where they will always be. They live like there is no eternity to come, no God before Whom they are going to be judged. They live like there is no sin, and that it makes no difference what you do. If there is a God, they think that He spends most of His time turning the other way, or that He doesn’t care what people do.

I say again, dear friend, if you cannot say that you are “of God,” read the Bible, and you will have your eyes opened to truth that will convict you of your sin, and show you how desperately you need Jesus Christ as your Savior. There is no hope for any person except in Jesus Christ. He died

to save sinners. He is our only hope, our only Savior. God may be working on some of your hearts at this very moment, showing you your need, and preparing to deliver you from Satan's power to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Today we are going to observe the Lord's Supper again. We do this to remember what our Lord did to save us. The cost was so great that we could never have paid it, but He has paid our penalty in full. He has secured the salvation of all whom the Father has chosen and given to His Son. Let us come to the Table with humble, repentant, and grateful hearts remembering that the Lord went to the Cross for us, not because of who we are, nor because of any good that we have done. But He went to the Cross by the grace of God, and because of the Father's love and His own great love for guilty, helpless, hopeless, and unworthy sinners. Those who feel righteous in themselves will never come, but those who see themselves to be nothing but guilty sinners come and experience the forgiving, liberating, transforming power of a risen Savior. May this be the very day when some will be able to say for the first time, "And we know that we are of God."

“NOT OF THE WORLD”

John 15:18, 19; 17:14-16

Intro: When the Lord spoke of His disciples and their relationship to the world, He used several prepositional phrases which we need to become acquainted with. They are very simple, but they are full of meaning. One of them is the expression, “of the world.” Then sometimes the Lord put a “not” in front of those words, and then we have, “not of the world.” The Lord also spoke of those whom He had called “out of the world.” And then there is the phrase “in the world.” Let me point out some of these to you in the Gospel of John, chapters 15 and 17

Look with me at John 15:19. The word “world” is found five times in this one verse. Count them.

In verse 18 the Lord spoke of the way the world hated them just as the world hated Him. Then He said that it was because they were not “of the world” that they were hated, and that if they had been “of the world” the world would have an entirely different attitude toward them. But the fact was that the Lord had chosen them “out of the world,” and this was the reason that the world hated them.

So the Lord was saying that there was a time when they had been “of the world,” but the Lord had “chosen them out of the world,” and so the world hated them.

In John 17:6 the Lord said this to His Father as He prayed, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me **out of the world.**” And then twice, once in verse 14 of John 17, and then again in verse 16, the Lord said to His Father, “**They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**”

Then look back to verse 11 of this same chapter and we read that the Lord said as He anticipated His return to the Father in heaven, “And now I am no more in the world, **but these are in the world,** and I come to thee.”

Now let me bring all of these together for you:

- 1) We are all “in the world.” That should be easy for us to understand.
- 2) Originally we were not only “in the world,” but we were also “of the world.” That is we were a part of this world. We belonged to this world. Paul was describing what it means to be “in the world” and “of the world” when he wrote Eph. 2:2, 3. Let me read those verses to you:

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

When a person is “in the world,” like we all are, and “of the world,” he lives to fulfill the desires of his flesh and his mind, and by nature he is a child of wrath, under the judgment of God. He may not know that, but nevertheless it is true. At one time it was true of all of us.

But what has happened to some of us? God, according to John 15:19, chose us “out of the world” so that while we are still “in the world,” we are no longer “of the world.” We are now, as I pointed out in my previous message in this series -- we are now “of God.” God in His grace has intervened to save us from His wrath, we have been “born of God,” and now, while we still live “in this world,” we are no longer “of the world.” And so, as our Lord said, we are “not of the world” just as He was “not of the world.” In other words our relationship with the world is just like that of our Lord. He came into this world, but He was never a part of it; He was never “of this world.” We were “in the world,” but we were also “of the world,” but now the Lord has chosen us “out of the world,” and so now it can be said of us that we by God’s grace are “not of the world.” Our position in the world today is exactly what the Lord’s position always was. He came into this wicked world, but He never lived like the world lives. The purpose of His life was always to be pleasing to God, and you can’t please the world if you are going to please God.

Now I hope you understand these very important phrases which our Lord used not only in teaching His disciples, but in His prayer to His Father as He prayed not only for those who were disciples when He was here on earth, but as He prayed for all future believers. See John 17:20. These words explain why, if you and I really know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and if we are seeking to live lives that are pleasing to Him and to God -- these words explain why we don’t have an easy time with the people of the world, and why, as the Lord said, the world hates us.

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:13, “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you,” and our Lord said in John 15:18, “If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.”

You see, this world is not our home. Listen to what the Apostle Peter wrote to believers who had been driven away from their homes because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will see that he called them “strangers and pilgrims.” Here are his words:

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

For Peter to say that we are “strangers and pilgrims” in this world is exactly what the Lord meant when He said that we are “not of this world,” just as He was “not of this world” (John 17:14, 16).

Paul told the Philippians, “For our citizenship is in heaven.” We may have our citizenship in the USA, or Canada, or some other country, but a believer’s true citizenship is in heaven. We are to subject to the laws of our land, and to pray for our leaders, but what day is there that your soul is not vexed with the things that are going on in our country? Our leaders and the majority of the citizens of our country go on every day in disobedience to God, not knowing that that is why we have the problems we have, and why things are going to get worse, not better.

Now let us look a little closer at our Lord’s description of His people when He said that we are:

I. “NOT OF THIS WORLD.”

First I want you to notice what Marcus Rainsford called *the dignity which the Lord placed upon us*. He said, “They are not of the world, **even as I am not of the world.**” What better position could we have in this world than a position identical with that which our Savior had? What greater honor could be conferred upon us?

But this statement not only speaks of the place of honor we have, but it speaks of our emancipation! Paul said this in Gal. 1:3-5 about one purpose the Lord had in dying for us:

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, **that he might deliver us from this present evil world**, according to the will of God and our Father:

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And in the sixth chapter of the same epistle, in verse 14, we have these words:

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

Oh, the troubles and the sins we have been spared because, to the glory of God, and because of the death of Christ for us, it can be said of us that we are “not of this world.”

I was struck with those words in our SS lesson for today, found in the opening part of 2 Peter 1, and perhaps it was because I have been thinking this week about what it means that we are “not of this world.” Although many of you have heard this in the last hour, let me read again for you 2 Pet. 1:4:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

We have so much to be thankful for because of what our Savior has done for us in delivering us from this world with its sin. And every day we live the Lord continues to deliver us from the temptations and sins which are causing such tragedies and heartaches in the lives of people who are still “of the world.” Before I finish this series I want to speak about our responsibilities to the people who are still a part of this world system.

But let me say a few words now about:

II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORLD TOWARD CHRISTIANS, WHICH THE LORD DESCRIBED AS *HATE*.

Let me read for you John 15:18, 19. (Read.)

Earlier in the Gospel of John we have words which seem to be slightly in

contrast with what we have just seen in John 15 until we see that he was speaking to His brothers who did not yet believe on Him as they did later. And so He said to them,

The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil (John 7:7).

Two very common words which are used in Scripture are generally misunderstood. One is the word *love*; the other is the word *hate*. I am sure that we all know that there are different degrees of *love* just as there are different degrees of *hate*. But aside from the differing degrees there are some basic characteristics of love and some basic characteristics of hate which are always present regardless of their intensity.

Always in the idea of love there is the idea of *having a preference for a person*, and along with that is *the idea of pleasing that person, and of seeking that person's welfare*. It can even speak of *showing an interest in a person, what he has to say, or the way he lives*.

To *hate*, on the other hand, can mean anything from *loving less*, *disregarding a person*, or just *total indifference*, to the opposite extreme, as it was with the enemies of our Lord and of the apostles, where *they wanted to kill them!*

So when our Lord said this,

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26),

He could not have meant what we think of when we think of hating a person because elsewhere in Scripture we are told to honor our parents and to love our wives both as Christ loved the church and as husbands love themselves. What the Lord did mean was that not even the dearest of human relationships were to be greater than our love for the Lord. He must always be the pre-eminent Person in our lives.

In the early days of the church the apostles and early Christians experienced the fiercest kind of opposition from the world, just like the Lord Jesus experienced. Their hatred went to the extreme. Tradition tells us that all of the apostles gave their lives as martyrs for their faith. And we know that there have been times of great persecution for the Lord's people at different periods in church history. The same was the case often in the OT.

But we have not had to face that kind of opposition -- at least, not yet! Does this mean that the world has changed, and that the world has a more favorable attitude toward those of us who know the Lord? If the world has changed, then this would mean that parts of Scripture are no longer true because the Word says, in addition to what we have seen already today that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” for “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4).

This does not mean that we cannot have friends who do not know the Lord. I have many friends who are not Christians. We all live in neighborhoods where we have good neighbors who do not know the Lord, and we have no trouble getting along with them. That is, we get along OK as long as we don't talk to them about their need of Christ, or as long as we don't talk to them about sin. Our Lord must have been One of the most wonderful persons you could ever meet, meek, lowly, gracious, loving -- and yet He said, as we read a moment ago in John 7:7 that the world hated Him “because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.” People didn't like the Lord when He spoke of sin. They didn't like Him when He pointed out things they were doing that were wrong because they were displeasing to God.

Do you remember what our Lord told Nicodemus about love and hate with respect to sin? Listen to these familiar words:

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men **loved** darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil **hateth** the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (John 3:18-21).

After 2,000 years the world is still the same. People reject the truth, they refuse to accept the truth, in other words, they hate the Word of God because they love their sin.

Perhaps one reason we don't feel this more than we do is because in this twentieth century we lack the boldness that believers in the past have had, and so we don't bear witness to the truth by our lives or by our lips the

way we should. We somehow have forgotten what it really means that we are “not of the world.” We love the Lord, but we do not hate sin the way we should, and so the church has become worldly and we are not making the impact on the world that we should make and would make if we really loved the Lord with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and really loved each other the way we should.

Concl: The tragedy within the church today is that we have found ways of conducting our work, and our services, and yet have sought to avoid the reproach that fell upon our Lord Jesus Christ. In a future message I want to deal with our relationship to the world, what the Word says that it should be, and how we can in these terribly evil days begin to make more of an impact upon a world that has gone wild with sin. Those of us who know the Lord and have some understanding of the Word of God, know what’s wrong with the world today. We know what is wrong with our country. And it can all be described by that little, three-letter word, S-I-N!

We need to be concerned about how we can be more pleasing to the Lord, first of all, and then pray every day for ourselves and for each other, that, as the Apostle Paul prayed, the Lord would enable us to open our mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, and to speak as we ought to speak. The world doesn’t want it, but the world needs it, and God will honor the faithful testimony of His precious Word.

Remember, if you know the Lord, you are “not of the world,” but we are “of God.” Let us live and speak like people who belong to the Lord.

THE THINGS OF THE WORLD

1 John 2:15-17

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:1-17.

Intro: It is generally agreed that the Apostle John's main purpose in writing 1 John was expressed by him in 1 John 5:13. (Read.) He was writing to those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation to give them assurance that they were really saved. Even in those days there were those who professed that Christ was their Savior, but their lives did not back up their claim. Although many years had passed since the Lord Jesus had been crucified, yet John would never forget what Judas had done in betraying the Lord Jesus into the hands of His enemies. In the nineteenth verse of chapter 2 the Apostle John made a reference to some who had claimed to be Christians, but who had turned away from believers, and had not come back. (Read 1 John 2:19). So it is clear that this was a major problem even in the first century. It seems that many who believed were nevertheless concerned that they might not be saved, and so the Apostle John wrote this epistle to tell them how they could *know* that they were saved, and that they truly belonged to the Lord.

For example, note 1 John 1:6, 8, 10, 2:3, 4, 6, 9, 10. And then we come to verse 15 in chapter 2. (Read.) Note especially the words, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The command of Scripture is that we are not to love the world, "neither the things that are in the world." Any person who lives otherwise and manifests a real love for the world, John said, does not love the Father, and so is not a true child of God. In these days when we see a great deal of worldliness not only in the lives of professing Christians, but also in our churches, this verse should come as a very solemn warning to all of us. It should make us examine ourselves, as Paul told the Corinthians to do, to make sure that we are "in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5). Every Christian should be able to say what Paul said in 2 Tim. 1:12, the second part of the verse,

For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that
he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him
against that day.

In two previous messages we have seen that there are only two classes of people in the world from God's perspective: those who are "of the world," and those who are "of God." Everybody living is "in the world," and most are "of the world," but the Lord's people are no longer "of the world"; they are "of God." Christians no longer live like the people of

the world live. They no longer talk like the people of the world talk, nor do they think like the people of the world think. Their standards are different. Their objectives in life are different. In character they are different. And all of this creates a barrier between the people of the world and the people of God. This is why the Lord said that we should not marvel if the world hates us -- if it rejects us, if it is not interested in hearing from us, if it prefers to go a different way from the way we are going.

Let me say again today as I have said many, many times before: *The Bible does not recognize a doctrine of salvation which leaves people the same as they were before.* A Christian is “a new creature.” He has been “born again”; he is the possessor of a new kind of life, called in Scripture, “eternal life.” He is so changed that he cannot change back into what he was before. God has done a work of grace in his heart; he has become a child of the living God. So it follows that when a person has really been saved, his life will be different. He can no longer continue on in a life of sin. And by “a life of sin” I do not mean necessarily a degraded life from a human perspective. There are many people who are not Christians who live decent lives, respectable lives, moral lives. But they are living in sin because they are doing what God disapproves of, and they are failing to do that which pleases God. In fact, they are held in bondage by their sin, and really cannot change themselves into God-fearing people. They are “in the world” and “of the world,” and they will be “of the world,” they will belong to the world until God in His grace causes them to be born again. A person shows that he has been born again in the first place because he is trusting in Jesus Christ as his Redeemer and his Lord.

I trust that the Lord has made these truths clear to each one of us.

Now let me attempt again to describe what John meant by *the world*.

I. WHAT IS THE WORLD?

Let me begin by saying what it is not.

John was not saying that we are not to love the earth upon which we live. David said that “the earth is the Lord’s.” This world and the heavens surrounding the earth display the glory of God. He is the Creator and the Sustainer of this world. He made man in his own image, and He made the earth, or the world, where He placed man to live. A Christian enjoys living on the earth more than anyone else because he sees on the earth and in the heavens that which declares the glory of God.

Neither was Paul saying that we are not to love the people of the world. But our love for them is not a love of approval for what they are and the way they live, but a genuine concern for their souls. Paul expressed his love for the people of Israel by saying that he would give up what He had in Christ if only God would save the people of Israel. We are not to choose our best friends from the people of the world, but neither are we to ignore the unspeakable peril which they face if they do not turn to Christ for salvation.

No, Paul was speaking of the world as being under the control of Satan. He is actually called “the god of this world” in 2 Cor. 4:4. He has blinded people’s minds so that they cannot understand the Gospel of Christ. It is foolishness to the people of the world. People live the way the Devil wants them to live. They can be very religious, but the Devil doesn’t want them to have anything to do with Jesus Christ. The Devil is God’s enemy, and he is out to destroy the knowledge of God, and if it were possible for him to do so, he would destroy God Himself. The world is under his control as we learned from 1 John 5:19. The people of the world have always gone the way the Devil wants them to go with their lives revolving around themselves and their possessions and their pleasures, but not around God! A. W. Tozer was speaking of life in this world when he spoke of what he called “self-sins” which, he said, include “self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, and a host of others like them” (*The Pursuit of God*, p. 45).

The Apostle Paul described this world in Romans 1, verses 28 through 32, in these words:

- 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
- 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
- 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
- 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
- 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:28-32).

This is the world that the Apostle John was speaking about.

In Paul's last letter he wrote to Timothy describing what the world would be like in the last days. Listen to what he wrote, and compare it with what he wrote earlier to the church at Rome. Here is what he said:

- 1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
- 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
- 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
- 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
- 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Basically the two lists are the same, aren't they?

How did the Apostle John describe the world? Basically he spoke of:

II. "THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD."

He said that everything in the world falls into one of three categories: either "the lust of the flesh," or "the lust of the eyes," or "the pride of life." What does each of these mean?

- 1) "The lust of the flesh" -- Flesh in Scripture can mean one of two things, and often the two are related. It can mean the body, and/or it can mean man's sinful nature. A "lust" is what Martyn Lloyd-Jones called "an inordinate desire" (*Walking With God, Studies in 1 John*, Vol. 2, p. 85). *Inordinate* means "that which exceeds reasonable limits" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, p. 663). It can mean that which is good and right which is out of control, such as a person's eating habits, or it can mean that which man's wicked heart has perverted. The greatest examples of "the lust of the flesh" are sexual relationships outside of marriage, and the worst of all is homosexual relationships. And our passion for abortions as a nation is related to this because it has become the way millions of Americans have chosen to do away with the results of their sins -- and our governments supports it! Instead of condemning "the lust of the flesh," our nation had taken the lead in supporting it. I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I can assure you that the most severe judgments await us as a nation because we are despising God in supporting that which He condemns.

- 2) “The lust of the eyes” -- Solomon said in the book of Proverbs, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied” (Prov. 27:20). Eve fell into sin because of what she saw. Cf. Gen. 3:6. So did Achan, by his own testimony. Cf. Joshua 7:21. David sent for Bathsheba when he saw her bathing, and you know the rest of the story. Cf. 2 Sam. 11:2. And the Devil even tried this trick of his on our blessed Lord. Do you remember the temptation which the Devil placed before Him when he took the Lord up “into an exceeding high mountain, and **sheweth** him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, all these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:8, 9).

Unspeakable corruption and violence is being provoked in the minds of people because of **what they see on TV**. And the sin of covetousness is being encouraged by the commercials that are **seen** every day on the TV screen, as well as in magazine and newspapers which come into our homes. Oh, the tragedies which are the result of “the lust of the eyes.”

- 3) “The pride of life” -- Let me give you a Biblical example of “the pride of life” from the pages of Scripture. I am referring to what Paul boasted in before he was saved. First he spoke of what he had become by the grace of God, and then he looked at what meant everything to him before he was saved:

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless (Phil. 3:3-6).

“The pride of life” is why we have so much trouble with race prejudice, and why some women are always talking about “the gender gap.” We boast in our birth, or in our education, or in the position that we may hold, the places we have been, the people we know, the awards we have, or the organizations to which we belong.

— “The pride of life” was evident when the Jews told the Lord, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” (John 8:33). As they spoke these words they were in bondage to Rome, and evidently had forgotten about Egypt, and Assyria, and Babylon, and many other defeats.

You see, “the pride of life” blinds us to our real need. It was when Paul saw Christ, and realized what his own real need was, that he considered all of those other things that he boasted in as “dung.” None of the things we are inclined to boast in draw us near to God. They contribute nothing to the salvation of our souls. They lead us farther and farther away from God, and make more certain the eternal damnation of our souls.

None of this is “of the Father”; it all is “of the world.” And the Apostle John said that we are not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world.

My last point is simply one word, a question:

III. WHY?

— Why are we not to love the world? The Apostle John gives us three reasons in our text.

A. We are not to love the world because it is “not of the Father.”

We are “of God.” Our Lord has chosen us “out of the world.” If loving the world could have been what we needed, the Lord Jesus never would have needed to come and to suffer and die for our sins. Our hearts need to be set on the things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. To love the world is only to add to our defilement and sorrow.

B. We are not to love the world because “the world passeth away.”

— A more literal translation would be, *the world is passing away*. This is not something that is going to take place in the future. It is happening right now. The world is under the judgment of God, and everyone who places his hopes is going to pass away, too. All of these things which men prize so highly are really nothing. Women glory in their beauty, and men glory in their strength. But what happens? Age changes all of that.

The wrinkles come, the gray hair, declining strength, sickness, and then death, and what then? The Lord Jesus said very plainly, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). And In our SS lesson for today we had those inspired words given to us by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Peter when he said,

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

And then three verses later he wrote:

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13).

All that we have in this world, good or bad, is only ours for a very short time. And you won't find that any of it helps you in your relationship with the Lord. This leads me to the third reason *why* we should love God and the things of the Word instead of the things of the world:

C. "But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

— Doing the will of God is not the way of salvation; it is the evidence of our salvation. We are born again by the Word of God, and we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as evidence that we are born again. Then begins that most glorious of all lives, the life of obedience to the Word of God. That is the person who "abideth for ever," not here on this earth, but abides forever in heaven where there is not sin, but where all is righteousness and peace.

Concl: Where is your love, your affection? Is it in this world, and on the things of this world? If so, you are headed for eternal death and eternal separation from the presence of God. But if you love God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you love the Word of God, then you are headed for heaven and glory. If you love the world, you can't love the Father. But if you love the Father, then the things of this world are not your hope. Your hope is in Christ. May the Lord enable all of us to make sure that our hope is in Christ.

KEPT FROM THE EVIL ONE

John 17:15-17

Intro: In considering what the Scriptures teach about us as the children of God in our relationship with the world, we know that we are all “in the world,” and that we originally we are what the Lord meant when He said that we were “of the world.” That is, we were a part of this evil world which lies under the control of the Devil, called in Scripture, *the Evil One*.

As I have said, it seems to me that the best definition of what it means to be “in the world” and “of the world” is that given to us by the Apostle Paul in the first three verses of Ephesians 2. Let me read those familiar verses to you again:

- 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
- 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

To be “of the world” means that we were “by nature” sinners and under the judgment of God. We lived according to the lusts of our flesh and of our depraved minds. We were under the control of “the prince of the power of the air,” another title for Satan. Spiritually we were dead, and so unable to do anything to change our condition.

However, now we are “of God.” God chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be His. We have been “born of God.” Cf. John 1:11-13. We are *new creatures in Christ*. Cf. 1 Cor. 5:17. We have been made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). We are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20 All of this should cause endless rejoicing in our hearts. God has made changes in our lives which can never be reversed. For those who truly know the saving grace of God, they can never go back and be what they were before.

And yet the solemn fact remains that we are still in this world. And even though we have new life in Christ, we still have our old sinful nature. We can still be tempted to sin, and we are still capable of sinning. The chief difference is that we are no longer in bondage to our sin, nor are we in

bondage to Satan. And so we stand in daily need of the Lord's help and of the Father's help, and in need of the protection of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Lord prayed, as He did, in John 17:15. (Read.)

— *This prayer clearly indicates our Lord's total confidence in the Father's ability to keep us from the Evil One* (which is the preferred translation). God never tempts us to sin, but the Devil and his demons are constantly seeking to drag us down into sin. And James tells us in James 1:13, 14 that while God cannot be tempted with evil, and He never tempts us, yet we are tempted when we are "drawn away" by our own lusts, our old nature, "and enticed." This word means that temptation is like bait that is set before us to deceive us and to draw us into sin.

So we live in a wicked world, surrounded by temptation, faced with the tricks and methods of the Devil, and with an old nature that is responsive to the temptations which we face every day.

Illus: Recently we have heard a great deal about how thousands of mines have been placed in the area of Bosnia where our servicemen have gone. And perhaps you have seen pictures of how cautiously military personnel are going through those areas where mines have been placed. And it would be certain death for anyone to go into those areas like he was taking an afternoon walk.

— Let this be an illustration of the dangers that we face as the children of God. We are living in a world where temptations have been placed all around us. By nature we are attracted to many of them. And the Devil himself goes about "as a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He is not only after the Lord's people, but he is after all people. And we either see or hear of people falling before temptations to sin every day. *And the casualties from the beginning of time have been staggering!* We need to be aware of the dangers, and to know that the Lord Jesus prayed this prayer for us, and for all believers, before He left this earth. After all, it is quite an amazing prayer, isn't it? You would think that, knowing the world like He did, and knowing the power of Satan like He did, and knowing the weakness of His people like He did, He would have prayed for the Lord to take us out of this world and take us to heaven just as soon as we were saved. But instead we have his prayer in John 17:15. (Read again.) In fact, notice verse 18. (Read.) We are not only left here in this world, but actually sent into it. We are hear to wage spiritual warfare against the forces of evil, and to spread the Gospel of the grace of God throughout this world. And the believers in the first century demonstrated that this, too, can be very dangerous work.

Many of them were casualties in this spiritual warfare. I want to spend a Sunday morning service on this before I conclude this series on *The Christian and the World*. But for now we are thinking about what the Father does to keep us. And I am thinking about how the Father keeps us for Himself and how He keeps us from sin. *How are we kept from this Evil One, this one whose purpose is always to take us away from God, to defile us, to drag us down, this one who promises us happiness but always delivers us into the worst kind of unhappiness? How are we kept? This is a question of the greatest importance for all of us who claim God as our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ as our Savior.*

How does the Father keep us? Let me give you at least five ways in which we are kept. All of them have to do with God's work in us, but it is important for us to see that we have responsibilities in this, too.

I. WE ARE "KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD."

Most of you will recognize that as a phrase I have taken from 1 Peter 1:5 where Peter address the believers to whom he was writing with these words:

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

What a powerful prayer our Lord was praying when He prayed, as He did in verse 11 of John 17, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me..."

There is power even in God's Name. When we speak of God's power we are speaking of *omnipotence, all power!* We are speaking of the power of a God Who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). We are speaking of the power of Him Who spoke, and brought the heavens and the earth into existence, along with all that is in them. We are speaking of Him by Whom we have been born again. It is His power that has changed us from being hopeless sinners into saints who are on our way to heaven and to glory.

The Lord Jesus said that He had kept those whom the Father had given to Him, and that none was lost. Judas fell away, but he never really belonged to the Lord. The Lord's record on keeping is perfect, and so is the Father's record. He is able to keep us from falling, but even when we fall through our own willfulness, He is able to restore us and to cleanse us from our sin. The person who has doubts about his security in Christ needs to be taught about the glorious, sovereign, unfailing power of God.

If it were not for the power of God, none of us would have endured in our salvation. But because He keeps us, He is faithful even when we are unfaithful. There is great comfort for all of us when we think about the mighty power of God. Paul prayed this for the believers at Ephesus after he had spoken of the hope of God's calling, and of His inheritance in the saints. This is what he said,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph.1:19-23)

There would be no need for Paul to pray about our hope, nor about God's inheritance in us, if he could not also pray for "the exceeding greatness of" God's "mighty power." Haven't you been conscious of how God has delivered you many times when you have been tempted to sin? And if you have sinned, haven't you marveled at His grace and power in restoring you to fellowship with Himself?

God keeps us by His mighty, unfailing power. There is nothing impossible with Him.

But there is another way we are kept.

II. WE ARE KEPT BY THE PRAYERS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Isn't this what we have in our text for today? (Read v. 15 again.) And can it be possible that Christ would present a petition to His Father that His Father would not grant?

Cf. Heb. 7:25:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

And I agree with those expositors of Scripture who say that John 17

gives us a good idea of what our Lord is praying now at the Father's right hand. And His work of intercession is a major part of the assurance we have that our salvation is secure. Many times we have shown that we are not worthy to be kept, but our worthiness never has been in ourselves. We were not saved because we are worthy; we were saved, and continue to be saved, because of Christ.

Paul mentioned the intercession of Christ for us in Rom. 8:34, plus the intercession of the Holy Spirit for us in Rom. 8:27. How blessed we are to know that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit Both are continually praying for each one of us!

Let me give you a third way the Lord keeps us.

III. THE LORD KEEPS US BY HIS WORD.

See John 17:17. (Read.)

The Lord does not keep us from temptation and sin, from any and all forms of worldliness, by building fences around us all of the time to keep us from sinning. No, His greatest work is in sanctifying us so that we will be like our Lord Jesus Christ Who loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. Cf. Heb. 1:9, 10 which is a quotation from Psa. 45:6, 7. And this is where the Word of God plays a major role in God keeping us. And this is where we have a major responsibility.

You will remember the Psalmist, probably David, said in Psa. 119:11,
Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin
against thee.

It was important to David that he read the Word, that He meditate on the Word, that he memorize the Word, and that He obey the Word – doing what God wanted him to do; not doing what God did not want him to do.

It is even written of our Lord that He said,
I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within
my heart (Psa. 40:8).

Many of you will remember that I had a friend in my school days whose parents gave him a Bible. On the outside front cover of the Bible they had these words printed in gold:

This Book will keep you from sin,
Or sin will keep you from this Book.

And those words had an effect on my friend because I am happy to be

able to tell you that today, in his 70's, he is still walking with the Lord. Neglect your Bible, fail to read it daily, and it will only be a matter of time until the tragic effects will begin to appear in your life. God uses His Word to keep us, but our responsibility is to see that it gets in us.

A fourth way God keeps us:

IV. GOD KEEPS US IN ANSWER TO OUR OWN PRAYERS.

Do you remember that our Lord taught this to His disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray? One of the requests was this: "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil," or, as we have it in our text for today, *from the Evil One*. Cf. Luke 11:4.

Now if you want to know how to pray according to the will of God, how could it be clearer than for us to pray what the Lord Himself taught us to pray. Did you pray this prayer this morning before your day got started? Or how long has it been since you prayed this request?

Here again, you see, we have a responsibility before God. But God gets the glory for our praying because He has made it possible for us to approach Him in the Holy of Holies because through the death of Christ the veil in the temple was torn in two. *But now we must pray!* You can see in the Word how many times the Lord's people have called upon Him in a time of spiritual danger and need, and the Lord has answered. I am afraid that one regret we all may carry with us to heaven is the regret that we have not prayed more than we have. And I am equally sure that one reason the level of spiritual life among us, the Lord's people, has dropped so low, is because we have prayed so little. One request we can be sure always touches the heart of God is when we pray that He will help us to please Him, and that He will keep us from sin.

Let me give you a fifth way the Lord keeps us, and this will be my last.

V. THE LORD KEEPS US THROUGH OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.

We see this right here in John 17. Have you noticed that twice in this prayer the Lord asked the Father to *keep* His people? The one we have been considering is the second of these; the first is in verse 11, the latter part of the verse. (Read John 17:11b.)

"That they may be one, as we are."

Let me call your attention also to John 17:20-23. Notice how the Lord referred to oneness in these verse. (Read.)

Now let me ask you: What did the Father and the Son have as a result of Their perfect oneness? Answer: *They had perfect fellowship!* What do believers have when there is oneness between them? *They have fellowship!*

What is the purpose of our fellowship together here on Sunday morning, and Sunday night, and Wednesday nights? Hebrews 10:25 gives us a part of the answer to that question:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The Greek word for “exhorting” is παρακαλοῦντες, from παρακαλέω, which not only means *to exhort*, but it also means *to encourage, to comfort, to support and help*. Our main purpose in coming together is to worship God and to learn of Him, but thinking about what it is to mean in our relationship with each other, *we are here for fellowship*. We are here to encourage each other, to help each other, to comfort each other. And the Lord uses fellowship as a means of keeping us from sin, and of encouraging us to live according to the will of God. This is what fellowship is!

Let me give you another passage which teaches us the same thing: 1 John 1:3-2:2. Can you see in this passage how the idea of fellowship leads immediately to the question of sin. Sin hinders fellowship with God, and sin hinders our fellowship with each other. And so the Lord uses fellowship as a means of keeping us walking in the truth. The greater our oneness is, the greater will be our fellowship with God and with each other. And the better our fellowship, the more we will experience the keeping power of God upon our lives.

When people begin to neglect meeting with the people of God, in other words, going to church, it is only a matter of time until spiritual troubles begin to develop. No Christian is so mature, so spiritual, that he, or she, can get along without the fellowship of other believers. You need it, and I need it. And we need it not just once a week, but we need it as often as we can get it.

One of my concerns about our own fellowship is that we don’t see some of you as often as we used to see you. Hebrews 10:25 says that we ought to be more concerned about being together as we see the day approach-

ing, not less concerned. The Devil knows that his time is short, and he is going to be doing all that he can to drag us down spiritually, and to interrupt our fellowship with the Lord, as we get closer to the coming of the Lord. So the Lord has provided the fellowship, but our responsibility is to see that we take advantage of it.

Concl: The Lord prayed that the Father would not take us out of the world, but that He would keep us from the Evil One. And He is able to do what His Son asked Him to do. He does it by His own power, working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He does it in response to the intercession of Christ. He does it through the sanctifying influence of the Word of God upon our lives. He does it in answer to our own prayers. And He does it through the fellowship that we have with Him and with each other as He draws us together in the kind of oneness that He and His Son have with each other.

Let us pray for ourselves and for each other that the Lord would keep us for Himself, keep us from sin, and cause us to desire more than anything else that our lives would be pleasing to Him. And to Him will belong all of the glory for the blessings that His keeping power brings into our lives.

HOLY LIVING IN AN UNHOLY WORLD

Romans 12:1, 2

Part 1

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

Intro: My text for today is Romans 12:1, 2. But let me say at the beginning that I do not plan to get through both of these verses today. There is too much in them to try to hurry through them. And so I will limit myself to verse 1 today, and, the Lord willing, take up the second verse next Lord's Day.

When the Apostle Paul got to what is the twelfth chapter in his epistle to the believers at Rome, he had completed the doctrinal section of his letter. He had written down for them the truth concerning man's condemnation before God. He had shown that man was totally and hopelessly under divine judgment because of his sin without either the inclination nor the ability to do anything to bring about a reconciliation between himself and God. Then, beginning with chapter 3 and verse 21 he began to unfold the great truths of salvation, beginning with justification. He showed how God had intervened through the sacrifice of Christ to redeem all who would put their trust in Christ. This theme goes through chapter 5.

In chapters 6 through 8:17 we have the third great doctrine of our salvation: sanctification. In that section of the epistle we see how God continues to work in the hearts of those He has redeemed to make them holy. This is not an instantaneous work like the work of justification, but a gradual work of God by which He begins to change the child of God in his character and in his behavior. It is both an inward change and an outward change. It is a change in a believer's whole being, and this is what we are concerned about in my message today.

In chapter 8 beginning with verse 18 and going to the end of the chapter we have the third great doctrine of involved in our salvation, that of glorification. This speaks of the completion of God's work in us when we are "conformed to the image of" God's "Son." This is the goal of our salvation and the purpose of our sanctification when we become like the Lord Jesus Christ. This will not take place until the Lord comes and those who have died in Christ are raised and glorified, and those who are living are caught up to meet the Lord and are made like Him.

And so our salvation includes our bodies, our souls, and our spirits.

In chapters 9, 10, and 11 Paul took up the subject of Israel, and how the work of Christ fits in with God's purpose for His ancient, chosen people.

Then, as I have said, Paul concluded at the end of chapter 11 what he had to say about the doctrine of salvation. But his epistle was not finished. At that point he began the application of the doctrine to the lives of the believers in Rome, and to the lives of all believers. His application applies just as much to us today as it did to the Roman Christians two thousand years ago. And it is his introduction to this final section of his epistle that I want to consider with you today: Romans 12:1, 2.

I have called this present series of messages, **The Christian and the World**. And you will notice the word "world" in Rom. 12:2 where Paul said, "And be not conformed to this world." It is because of this statement that I have chosen these verses as my text for today. The person who comes to this point in the epistle has learned a great deal about *what God has done, and continues to do, in our salvation*. But at this point the emphasis changed, and Paul began to say *what we are to do*, not without God, but by His grace and in the strength that He gives us.

Notice that there are three statements, three commandments, in these verses which are directed toward every child of God:

- 1) "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice...unto God."
- 2) "Be not conformed to this world."
- 3) "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

In our Scripture reading for today the Apostle Paul wrote essentially the same things to the church at Corinth, although he used different words. There he said, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord..." And there he was probably quoting from Isa. 52:11 in the OT.

So both the OT and the NT teach that when a person comes to the Lord in salvation, his life is to be changed. I can state it even stronger than that: When a person comes to the Lord in salvation, his or her life will be changed, not immediately made perfect, but changed, changed immediately, and changed progressively, from what he or she was before he became a Christian into what God intends for him to be afterwards.

In most cases people who are saved realize this before they become acquainted with Rom. 12:1, 2. The Spirit of God Who comes to indwell every Christian at salvation teaches us this. We know that we can't talk like we used to talk. We know that we can't go on living like we used to

live. We see life in an entirely different way, and realize that before we were doing many things that could not possibly have pleased God. Now in our hearts for the first time we have a desire to please God first instead of always thinking about pleasing ourselves, or pleasing other people.

Paul was asking some great things of the believers at Rome. In fact, he couldn't have asked for more than he did. And so, before we consider his commands (because they are more than suggestions or requests), let me point out from Rom. 12:1,

I. THE BASIS UPON WHICH HE MADE THESE DEMANDS UPON THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Look at the first part of verse 1 in Romans 12: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."

If I were going to write a book on salvation, I think that I would take this as the title of the book: *The Mercies of God*. That is what Paul was referring to when he spoke of "the mercies of God." He was saying in so many words, "On the basis of what God has done for you in saving you, I am beseeching you on behalf of God that you do three things for Him." Now I repeat that Paul was not just making a suggestion that we can take or leave, or making a request that we could treat in the same way. No, he was *beseeching* them on the basis of God's mercies to them that they present their bodies to God.

To beseech is not just to request, but it is *to exhort, to call them to do something, to command or entreat them* to do what he was about to say. But he did it most graciously! He prefaced what he had to say in words that would make you anticipate what he was about to say. And the fact is that God has done such a great work for us in saving us, that nothing He would ask of us could possibly be too much. But the way God deals with us in seeking our obedience is always in the most gracious way and with the most gracious words so that we can always tell that what pleases the Lord is always going to be the best for us, too.

But what does God want? How should our lives as Christians begin?

I have already mentioned from these first two verses in Romans 12 that there are three things we all are to do. But I didn't emphasize the order of the exhortations, nor did I say anything about the positive or negative nature of what Paul was calling upon the Roman believers to do.

We might think that the thing of first importance was for them to stop living the way they had been living, but there is something else that really comes first. Let me entitle this section,

II. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S ENTREATIES ON BEHALF OF GOD.

Remember that there are three of them.

A. **“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).**

God wants our bodies. They are to be presented to Him!

Let me support this by referring again to something which Paul said to the church at Corinth, only this time I am going to point out what he said along this line in his first epistle to that church. I am referring to 1 Cor. 6:19, 20 which reads like this:

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, **and ye are not your own?**

20 For ye are bought with a price: **therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, WHICH ARE GOD'S.**

When Paul said that we are to present our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices, he was saying that we are to give our all to Him. To give our bodies to the Lord means that we are not holding anything back for ourselves. We not only give Him our eyes, our ears, our mouths, our hands and feet, but our minds, our wills, our affections. All that we are, body, soul, and spirit, we are to give to God as living sacrifices. But when you see what Paul said in 1 Cor. 6:19, 20 you realize that we are simply giving to God what He has purchased with the precious blood of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you remember that I have pointed out to you that we used to be “of the world,” but now we are “of God.” We belong to God. We are His, and He wants us to give ourselves completely to Him.

Actually Paul had used the verb “present” before in this epistle, but it is translated by the word “yield” in Rom. 6:13, 16, and 19. **Let me read to you what Paul wrote in Rom. 6:11-19**, and please pay attention to the word “yield” in those three verses: 13, 16, 19. (Read.)

David Brown, in the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary on the

Bible, had this to say about our bodies:

As it is through the body that all the evil that is in the unrenewed heart comes forth into palpable (perceived) manifestation and action, so it is through the body that all the gracious principles and affections of believers reveal themselves in the outward life. The Christian must never forget that as corruption extends to the whole man, so does sanctification (Vol. VI, p. 263).

Now let me call your attention to the last part of verse 1 and to the words which describe our bodies after we are saved: They are “holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

One thing every believer needs to realize after he is saved is that God has redeemed him in his whole being, represented in this verse by the word “body.” But even before the work of sanctification has really made much of an impact upon him personally, he must consider that he is “holy.”

Here, I believe, we are to take the word “holy,” not as meaning godly in character, but as meaning, as it does, *set apart unto God and, therefore, set apart from sin*. We tell the Lord that we are His. He has redeemed us for Himself. He has set us apart from the world to belong to Him, to live for him, and no longer to live as the servants of sin. This was the teaching of Romans 6.

The point that Paul was making is that by our salvation our standing before God is a holy standing because our standing is in Christ. And this is why we are “acceptable unto God.” We do not make ourselves “acceptable to God” by our obedience; we have been made acceptable to God by “the mercies of God,” by the salvation that we have in Christ. And we become holy in character and life through the new relationship which we have in Him. This is important for all of us to understand. To be sure, God is pleased by our obedience. He is pleased by our desire to do His will. But our holy standing with God precedes anything that we do. Our holy standing is ours in Christ, and that is something which we can never lose.

For a person to present himself to the Lord apart from Christ is an affront to God and to Christ. It says that we think we can please God without having our hearts cleansed and changed through Christ. No, we come to God to give ourselves to Him, having been made “holy” and “acceptable to God” through our Lord Jesus Christ. Make sure that you understand this, and that as you come to the Lord you realize that it is only because

of Christ and His death that you have the right to come and to find acceptance with God, perfect acceptance.

— And then Paul said, “which is your reasonable service.” What did he mean by this?

The Greek word which is translated “reasonable” is the same word from which we get our English word *logical*. But Paul was not speaking about *human logic*; he was speaking of *divine logic*. After all, if God sent His Son to die for me, to purchase me for Himself, then it is to be expected that I should give myself to Him. Human logic often breaks down, but the reasonableness of God never does! I think we can all understand what Paul was saying.

But we need to understand also the “service” that Paul was speaking about. To refer to David Brown again, we must say that this is “not that of a ‘servant,’” or Paul would have used the word διακονία, but it is the service “of a ‘priest’” (VI, 264). And so Paul used the word λατρεία, which is the word for *priestly service*.

— So what does this mean? It means that we as believers are priests, and that the first offering that we are to bring to the Lord is ourselves. We are that which was signified by the burnt offering in the OT which was offered entirely to the Lord.

In this we follow the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only our Great High Priest, but He was the Sacrifice. He came into the Holy of holies, not with the blood of bulls or goats, but with His own blood.

This is the starting point of all of our service. If our obedience and if our labors are to mean anything to the Lord, we must give ourselves first. Even then, the presentation of our bodies is never as complete as it needs to be. As long as we live, we will still find ways in which we need to be giving ourselves more and more to the Lord. But this is where we start, and this is where we must continue. This is the positive side of living a holy life in an unholy world.

— **Concl:** We will find out more about this life next week, the Lord willing, as we looking into verse 2. But we all need to ask ourselves if we are living in this world so that people will be able to see by our conduct and by our speech and by the goals we have, that we know that we belong to God, and that we have given ourselves to Him. Do we really feel that way in our own hearts? Is our main desire each morning

when we get up that we might be able to do God's will in everything, and that our lives on that particular day would be pleasing to the Lord.

How amazing it is that we should be set apart for God and set apart from sin! And how equally amazing it is that by our salvation we have been totally "acceptable to God" through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save us from our sins. May the Lord give us grace today to please Him in whatever role we may have in life -- as husbands and wives, as parents, as children, as single people, at home, in business, at play.

I can still remember my mother telling me and my brothers when we were going out with our friends, "Remember whose you are!" That is a good word for all of us. Let us remember that we belong to the Lord, and then let us live like those who are His.

Closing verses: 1 Peter 2:9, 10:

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:
10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

STANDING AGAINST THE WORLD

Romans 12:1, 2

Part 2

Intro: Last Sunday was Father's Day, and I turned aside from the present series I am preaching on **The Christian and the World** to bring a special message for fathers and their families. Today I want to complete what I began two weeks ago when I spoke on Rom. 12:1. My text for today will be the second verse of that great chapter. And so please turn in your Bibles to Romans 12.

I think it will be worthwhile for me to spend just a few moments in review of what I said about the place that the place that these two verses hold in the book of Romans, and then remind you of the message of verse 1.

Romans 12:1 and 2 mark an important transition in what Paul was writing to the believers at Rome. Up to this point Paul had been writing about **the doctrine of salvation**. With what in our Bibles is chapter 12, he began to speak about the practical application of the doctrine to their everyday lives. This is not to say that we don't find any practical teaching in the first eleven chapter, because we do. But I am saying that Paul's special emphasis on godly living began with chapter 12. This division emphasizes an important point that is descriptive not only of Paul's teaching, but of all of the writers of the NT. That point is that God's work of salvation produces profound changes in the life of any person who really believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth of Scripture is that it is impossible for a person who has truly been saved to go on being the same kind of a person who lives the same kind of life as before. Paul told the Corinthian church,

Therefore if any man be in Christ, **he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

And earlier in the book of Romans Paul said this:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life** (Rom. 6:4).

So when you put those two verses together they teach us that when we are saved, God changes us, and the result of the change that He makes in us is that our lives will be changed.

This is really the opposite of what the world tries to do. Psychology and

psychiatry try to change us by changing our behavior. But nobody's heart has ever been changed in that way. The world starts on the outside and tries to work in, but God starts inside, with the heart, and then a person's behavior is changed.

Nevertheless, even though a person is wonderfully changed when he or she becomes a Christian, yet we need instruction as to how we are to live and what we are to do. And the only place we can find that instruction is in the Bible, the Word of God.

Now speaking of Romans 12:1, 2, these verses are found here between the doctrinal and practical sections of the book of Romans to tell us some major changes which need to take place in our lives, not only when we are starting out to live as Christians, but these are some basic principles which we need to act upon every day that we live. Two weeks ago we spoke of the first of these. It was that each one of us to "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is" our "reasonable service."

I hope you remember that I mentioned that this verse "present" is the same word in the original Greek which is translated in chapter 6 as "yield." So we are to give our bodies to God and to recognize every day that we live that we are, as Paul also told the Corinthians, *not our own, but that we have been bought with a price*. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. And that price was, as the Apostle Peter also said, "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19). *The Lord Jesus Christ not only died to deliver us from our sins, but He died to purchase us for God!* That is why in Rom. 12:1 Paul could speak of this offering which we make to God as "holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." If the Lord has redeemed us not only *from* sin, but also *for* God, then it is consistent with the infinite wisdom of God that we offer ourselves continually to the Lord. And you will remember, I trust, that the sacrifice here is *a priestly sacrifice*, and so this means that in presenting, yielding ourselves to God, *you and I are both a priest and the sacrifice*.

Now this brings us to verse 2.

Let me point out to you the divisions that I mentioned two weeks ago, and then I want to build upon those divisions in my message today.

The first thing that we have in Rom. 12:1 is *the basis upon which Paul made his appeals to the believers at Rome* -- and it was the basis of his appeal to every generation of believers from that day long ago until the

Lord comes to take us all to glory. God says to us today through this part of His Word, “I beseech you (plural) therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.” *Paul appeals to us on the basis of what God has done for us by His mercies in saving us.* He has done everything necessary for our salvation, and, therefore, we owe Him our ALL in the light of what He has done.

Secondly, I mentioned in my last message that Paul made *three entreaties* on behalf of God. Perhaps the word *entreaty* is not strong enough. Coming from God these are more than suggestions or requests which we can take or leave; they are three of the many commands of Scripture. But these are basic commands because they determine the value of our obedience to God in everything else. I say this because God does not want us to obey Him because we have to. He wants us to obey Him because we love Him, because we want to please Him, and because we take special delight in being submissive to His will.

The first command is that we *give ourselves as living sacrifices to Him to do His will.* What a difference it will make in our lives if we always remember that we belong to the Lord! He has the right to say what we are to be and what we are to do. And He also has the right to do with us as seems best to Him.

I trust that you have done this in the past, and that today you stand by your commitment to the Lord.

The second of these commands is given to us at the beginning of verse 2:

B. “And be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2a).

(For the first part of the outline, see Part 1 of this two-part series on Rom. 12:1, 2.)

I have said a lot about this world since I began this series. We know that we are living in the world, and that we are exposed daily to many of the evils of the world. We know that the Devil is “the prince of this world” and “the god of this world.” We know that the world is presently under the control of the Devil. Once we were “of the world,” that is, a part of this evil system, but God has chosen us “out of the world.” Now we are not to be “conformed” to this world anymore.

This word “conformed” suggests being in fellowship with the world, and taking on the habits, the fashion, the speech (because the world has its

own language). It means to participate in what the people of the world do, and what their objectives in life are. These are things which we are not to do. And the emphasis in this word is upon **outward conformity** to the world. I will speak of **inward conformity** in just a few moments. Let me give you some ideas as to what this means to be “conformed to this world, and I hope you young people will listen carefully to what I am about to say -- although we all need to understand what Paul was talking about.

It means that we are not to be obscene and crude and rude in our speech just because the people of the world talk the way they do. It means that we are not to be indecent in our dress just because the world is. It means that we are not to be promiscuous in our behavior with those of the opposite sex just because the world is. It means that we are not to brag about ourselves, or about our children, just because others do. Parents it is commendable if your child is an honor student, but I doubt if we as Christians should put a bumper sticker on our cars saying that this is the case. We are not to cheat or lie or steal just because others are doing it. We are not to set our hearts on money and possessions and pleasures just because others do. This exhortation means that we are not to pick up our habits and our behavior from the world; we are to do what is pleasing to God, and to please Him regardless of how others may make fun of us.

As far as our churches are concerned it means that we are not to follow the world in making our music like the world's music. It means that pastors are not to be stand-up comedians, nor, on the other hand, to try to display our knowledge so that people will admire us. We are not to be after people's money, but we are to be concerned about the salvation of their souls and the perfection of the people of God. We are not to be concerned about what pleases men; our chief objective must always be to please the Lord. Young people, just because you have friends who refuse to do what their parents want them to do, don't fall into that trap yourself. And the same applies to the school teacher and to the police officer. Be thankful for anyone who helps you do what is right, and stay as far away as you can from those who try to get you to do what is wrong.

If you and I have really recognized that we are not our own, but that we belong to the Lord, then it will follow that we will not want to be conformed to the world. *But we face this danger every day -- all of us! I face it; you face it. And sometimes our conformity to the world even in just some things is so subtle that we don't realize what is happening to us. This is why we all need to be taking our stand continually against the ways of the world.*

If what I have been saying is objectionable to you, perhaps you need to look carefully at your own relationship with the Lord. The Apostle John said long ago, and you will find this in 1 John 2:15b: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This means that the person who wants to be conformed to the world, probably is not a Christian. If you want to go the way the world is going, it ought to frighten you more than anything else possibly could.

But having said all of this, we still have a problem, don't we? Because we all have to admit that, being sinners by nature, we have something within us which makes us think that the world is not so bad after all. And we think that we are going to be able to stand against the sin the world even though it pulls down and ruins others.

What else do we need in addition to being told not to take on the world's habits and fashions, the ways of the world? This brings us to Paul's third command:

C. "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2b).

I mentioned a moment ago that Paul's prohibition of conformity to the world speaks of *outward* conformity. To "be...transformed" speaks of an *inner* transformation which will result in an outward change.

Both "be not conformed" and "but be ye transformed" are present passive imperatives. They indicate that there are powers from without us which are designed to change us -- one, the first, for evil; the other, the second, for good. The world is constantly putting pressure upon us to conform outwardly to what everyone else is doing. The second, the power of the Word working upon us inwardly to make us what God wants us to be.

This verb, "but be ye transformed," is the same word that is used by Matthew (17:2) and Mark (9:2) to describe the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the glory which He possessed inwardly was seen for a time outwardly. This is also the verb which Paul used in 2 Cor. 3:18 to describe the sanctification of every child of God:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

You can tell from the wording of this verse that the change, the transformation that Paul was speaking about was not an instantaneous change,

but a day to day, progressive change. This verse and Rom. 12:2 are speaking about the same kind of a change: a transformation.

It all amounts to this: Every Christian is being subjected every day to two pressures: (1) the pressure of the Devil from the world to conform more and more to what the world wants us to be; (2) the pressure exerted upon us by the Holy Spirit to become more and more what God wants us to be. The pressure that the Holy Spirit uses is the pressure of the Word of God upon our minds. We need *a renewing of our minds*. This renewal starts when we are regenerated, and is a work of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 speaks of this. The whole passage is Titus 3:3-7 where the Apostle Paul was reminding Titus of what we used to be and what we have become by the grace of God. Let me read that passage for you.

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, **and renewing of the Holy Ghost;**

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In 2 Cor. 4:16b Paul said that “the inward man is renewed day by day.”

Thayer, in his lexicon, says that to be renewed to changed for the better, and that it anticipates *a complete change*. To have our minds renewed means that our way of thinking has to be changed. The person without Christ never takes God into consideration. The wisdom of God is foolishness to him. But not so with the child of God. He reads the Word. He wants to be taught. He seeks to bring his life into conformity with the Word. His whole way of thinking about life is being changed. And as his thinking changes, his way of life is being changed. He is growing, maturing, and becoming the person God wants him to be.

What is the result?

He is *proving*, or *putting the will of God to the test*. The outcome: *He heartily approves of it, and learns in his own experience that the will of God is “good, and acceptable, and perfect” -- that is, it is better than the*

old way of life, it is completely satisfying to him, and he finds that he needs nothing in addition to the Word to be “a lamp” to his feet, and “a light” to his path. Is it any wonder that the Apostle Peter wrote,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious
(1 Pet. 2:2-3).

God in His Word and in Christ has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). And if we want to know if the Word satisfies, and if the Word is enough when we are placed in the worst possible circumstances, let Jeremiah the prophet give us his testimony:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word
was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am
called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts (Jer. 15:16).

Concl: What is our responsibility in all of this?

First, we need to make sure that we really know the Lord. And if we aren't sure, we need to make sure.

Second, we need to give ourselves to the Lord as “a living sacrifice.” We have no choice in this. The Lord has purchased us by His blood, and we need to recognize that we belong to Him.

Third, we need to keep a watchful eye upon anything in our thoughts, or desires, or speech, or dress, or objectives, or methods which comes to us from the world, and we must steadfastly, by the grace of God, refused to be affected by them.

And finally, we must give ourselves to the Word, reading it, seeking to understand it, going where we can be taught it and can be with other Christians who also want to please the Lord, and then trust the Lord to make us obedient to His precious Word -- doing what He wants us to do, and refusing to do that which He does not want us to do.

What will happen? We will find that as we obey the Word and pray for the strength to do God's will, we are being changed from what we were when we were first saved, and daily are becoming more like we will be in that day when we will see our Lord, and finally be like Him.

I trust that we all understand Rom. 12:1, 2, and that they will be descriptive of the way all of us will seek to live for the rest of our lives.

THE WORLD AND THE GOSPEL

Acts 1:8

Related Scriptures: 1 Cor. 1:17-25; 2:1-5

Intro: Today I want to conclude the series I have been following for the past several weeks on *The Christian and the World*. Of course, teaching the Bible we never get very far from what they teach about this world in which we live. Morally it is very corrupt, and it would be hard to think of a time when the corruption was more apparent than it is today. Christians today surely are in a better position to understand what the Bible says about Lot, Abraham's nephew, after he departed from Abraham to live in the city of Sodom. The Apostle Peter said about Lot that he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Pet. 2:7). And then Peter went on to say this:

For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds (2 Pet. 2:8).

Actually, although the KJV gives us the word "vexed" both in verse 7 and verse 8, Peter used two different words in the original Greek. The word he used in verse 7 is the Greek word *καταπονέω* which means that he was oppressed and depressed. Life in Sodom for him was like a heavy burden that was crushing the life out of him. Why? It was because of the shameless, outrageous, uncontrolled sinfulness of the way the people were living.

In verse 8 of 2 Peter 2 the word Peter used for vexed was *βασανίζω*. This conveys the same idea that we get from verse 7, but specifically means that he was tortured mentally, and probably physically as well, by what he saw and what he *heard* "from day to day," i.e., *day after day*. And the deeds which he saw and heard were not "unlawful" in Sodom, but were "unlawful" to God. People didn't have to look for sin in Sodom; it was all around them day after day and night after night.

Don't you feel that way about our society? Men and women and children take the Lord's Name in vain. It seems like every day our newspaper carries the news of another murder, or murders. Divorce is rampant, and so is adultery. Homosexuality is safeguarded by law. There is little or no respect for authority. People are dishonest in business and in government. Corruption is everywhere. We wonder how much worse it can get. And most people do not see that God is doing what He said He would do. When we disregard God and His Word, and blatantly do what His Word says that we should not do, then He, as we heard in our Scripture reading,

destroys “the wisdom of the wise, and” brings “to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1 Cor. 1:19, quoted from Isa. 29:14). We legalize what we can’t control, and fail to punish sin the way God intended for it to be punished. The result: everything gets worse, and not better.

Early in this series we learned that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19), or *under the sway, under the control, of the Wicked One*. The Devil is the god of this world, the prince of this world, and the world is rushing on into greater judgment as fast as it can go.

We also have learned that we are not to be conformed to this world, that we are to “come out from among them” and be separate. Does this mean that we have no responsibility to the world? Should we isolate ourselves from the world, and let people suffer the consequences of their sins?

What is the answer to these questions? What is it that we as the people of God should be doing in these evil days in which we live? What hope is there that the tide of evil can be halted?

To answer these questions I am going to be referring to several different passages of Scripture today. The Scriptures do not leave us in the dark as to what is going on, nor as to what the remedy is.

First, let me affirm, that is, declare in a positive manner, what every true Christian must believe. It is this:

I. WE BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

We believe this about the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, and about the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. And we believe that nothing can be added to the Bible which would fall into that category, and we do not believe that anything can be taken away from the Bible which God has placed there. We believe that the Bible was written by men chosen by God for that purpose, but that God led them so carefully that He guided them in the very words which they wrote. Among the last words which the Apostle Paul wrote which were to be the infallible, inerrant Word of God, he had this to say about the Scriptures:

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Paul was saying that the Bible, the books of Scripture, were written under conditions that were different from those under which any other book or books were written. Our Lord Jesus said in prayer to His Father in John 17:17, "Thy word is truth." And the Apostle Peter agreed perfectly with what Paul and our Lord had to say about the Scriptures. After saying that the Scriptures were not of human origin, he said this:

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:
but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the
Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

The Bible tells us about God. The Bible tells us about ourselves, where we came from, and what went wrong soon after the first man and the first woman were created. The Bible tells us how man's disobedience to God has brought upon us the kinds of problems which every generation from the beginning has had to face. It describes the things which are displeasing to God as sin, and places the charge of sin against every human being who has ever lived with the lone exception of Jesus Christ Who was God's Son Who became a Man. The Bible explains very clearly why our world is like it is today.

Going back to what the Apostle Paul wrote, the Bible tells us what we are to believe about God, about ourselves, about sin, about the world, about history past, present, and future. It tells us what is wrong with man and with the world. It tells us what He wants us to be and how He wants us to live. The Bible instructs us in everything necessary for us to be able to live quiet and peaceable lives. The answers to life's most important questions are to be found in this book which God has given us, and which He has preserved for us. Many things change, but the Word of God which gives us the will of God, does not change! The Bible is thoroughly up-to-date! It never needs revision because God never changes, His will never changes, people never change, and the solution to man's problems never changes.

Now let me speak about

II. HOW THE WORLD TRIES TO SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS.

A study of history past and present shows that men have always recognized that we have problems. But it also shows that most people have been inclined to look to themselves, or to look to other people, or to look to governments, or to look to various kinds of religion, for their answers. Generally it is thought that if we can improve people's environment, we

can solve their problems. Oftentimes the lack of money is looked upon as the culprit, and so money is thought to be our savior. Different people have different answers, but they can all be thrown into one category, and that amounts to saying that the solution to our problems is to be found in us, in people, in what we can do for ourselves. Why, in the light of what we face today around the world, we can't understand that we have been looking in the wrong places for our answers, is hard to understand except for the fact that God has brought our understanding, such as it is, to "nothing."

Where, then, is the answer? The Apostle John was directed to write that "the world passeth away," or, *is passing away* (1 John 2:17). The Apostle Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, said, "This know...that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). And he also said in the thirteenth verse of that same chapter that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). So we have no hope that things are going to get better and better. The opposite is the truth: things will get worse and worse.

So with all of the political ideologies and various branches of human psychology, and with all of the great discoveries of science, the world is not going uphill, but it is going downhill. *The world by its wisdom does not know God*. That is what we read in 1 Cor. 1:21. And that is what is wrong today. The people of the world, and some have been very brilliant from a human standpoint, have come up with countless ideas, but man's big mistake is that he is always inclined to leave God out, or to come up with his own idea of what God is and what He can do.

And so I ask again, what is the answer?

III. THE ANSWER OF SCRIPTURE.

We have the answer in the passage which was read to us in our Scripture reading a few moments ago. Paul called it "the preaching of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18). He said in verse 17 that Christ did not send him to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. The city of Corinth was a city devoted to human philosophies, but Paul said to those who had received his message, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

God's answer, and therefore the right answer, for the needs of men is the Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news about Jesus Christ.

We have in the first chapter of the book of Acts, the fifth book of the New Testament, Luke's account of the last words which the Lord spoke after His death and resurrection, and just before He ascended back to heaven. His apostles were interested in whether or not He was going to establish His kingdom on earth at that time. Listen to how He answered them:

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:7-8).

They were to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit so that they would be able to do the most important task ever committed to any people, and in many respects the most difficult task ever committed to any people. And yet our Lord expressed it so simply. He said, in so many words, "I want you to begin here in Jerusalem, and spread out into all of Judea, and then move into Samaria, and keep going until you have reached the ends of the earth. And I just want you to do one thing: I want you to tell them about me."

What specifically did He have in mind?

Let us notice what we have in the Gospel record written by John Mark, chapter 16, verse 15, where we have these words spoken by our Lord:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

They were to go into all the world, to Gentiles as well as to Jews, with one message: the Gospel, and they were to make sure that it reached "every creature," that is, every person, regardless of sex, age, color of skin, language spoken. This was a message ordained of God for every person in every generation to hear. This is the only message of hope, and it is a message for all!

What is the Gospel? Again let me take you to the Scriptures. Paul defined the Gospel for us in 1 Cor. 15:1-4 where he wrote this:

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the

scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

- If we are to bear witness of Christ, if we are to preach the Gospel, we are to tell people about Christ, Who He is, what He did and why. He died for our sins. But we are also to tell them that He was raised from the dead as evidence that God was satisfied with what His Son had done.

You see, our problem is sin. This is the world's problem today: sin! We are under divine judgment because of sin. It is sin in our hearts that causes us to sin outwardly. It is sin in our hearts which makes it impossible for us to please God. It is sin in our hearts that makes us make us think we can handle our own problems. God sent His Son to die for sinners, to put away the sins of all who would ever trust Him. And so God makes us new creatures when we look to Him to do for us through Christ what we could never do for ourselves. And salvation does not come to us as a nation. It does not come to us in families. *It comes to us as individually we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.*

But now we have

— **IV. A PROBLEM.**

To the Jews, Jesus Christ is a stumblingblock. To us who are Gentiles, the Gospel of Christ is foolishness. People will either say that what Jesus of Nazareth did 2,000 years ago has nothing to do with us today. Or they might say you have to be very simpleminded to believe anything like that. And so we learn that whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile, he or she will never come to Christ if he or she is left to himself. We are sent into the world of which we are not to be a part, with instructions that we are not to conform to what they want us to be, and our instructions is to give them a message about Jesus Christ which they don't believe, and won't believe, and don't want!

The Lord gave those early disciples an impossible task. And that same task is ours today. We know that the Apostle Paul was right when he quoted King David as saying, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11).

- We need to ask ourselves, How, then, were we saved? And how can we expect that anyone we talk to will be saved?

The answer is to be found in

V. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

— Did you pay careful attention to the words Dr. Sayson read to us at the end of 1 Cor. 1? The Apostle Paul, again speaking by the Holy Spirit, spoke of those who are saved as being “called,” and “chosen.” And then notice what Paul said in verses 30 and 31 of 1 Cor. 1:

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

God knew that no man in his sin would believe the Gospel. He knew that no one on his own would come to Christ. And so in eternity past He chose those whom He intended to save, He sent Christ to die for them, and then one by one God is calling to Himself those whom He has chosen. And our Lord spoke of those who would be saved as those whom the Father had given to Him. Listen to these very important words of our Lord Jesus Christ which He spoke while He was here on earth on one occasion when He was speaking to some unbelieving Jews. Listen carefully to what our Lord said. In John 6:44 we find these words:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

(Repeat.) And then this is what the Lord also said:

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

Concl: You see, we don't get any of the credit for our salvation. The Lord chose us in eternity past. Christ died for all whom the Father chose and gave to Him. And throughout history the Holy Spirit has been wooing and winning those who have been saved. And so all of the glory for our salvation belongs to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

— Perhaps there are those here today who have come to this service, and you have never trusted Christ for your salvation. But the Lord has been opening your eyes, and you know in your heart that God is dealing with you, and that He has shown you that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One you need to save you from your sins. And perhaps before I have gotten to this point in the service you know that you have trusted Him as your Savior. If you haven't already trusted Him, it is my prayer that the Lord will

grant saving faith to you before you leave today, and that you will go home today a new creature in Christ.

For those of us who know the Lord, let the message today be a reminder to all of us that daily we should glorify God Who has shown mercy to us in choosing us, calling us, saving us, with the promise that He will never cast us away. How thankful we should be for the gift of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ! Be sure to spend some time today giving thanks to God for His unspeakable gift.