

THE WORLD: BATTLEFIELD AND MISSION FIELD

Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Intro: The Bible is the only place where we can get the truth regarding many, many subjects. And these subjects are among the most important subjects which people need to be concerned about. The main subject of the Bible is God – the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. All kinds of ideas are continually circulating about in the world, but the one and only reliable and authoritative place to go for information about God, is the Bible.

In the same way, the only place where we can find out the truth about ourselves, is the Bible. The Bible tells us where we came from. The Bible tells us what happened to man soon after he was created. The Bible gives us the truth about man's nature, and about his relationship to God. This is where we find the truth about sin, and the only remedy for man's sin. Both the OT and the NT point to Christ as the only Savior.

While the Bible is not primarily a book of history, yet wherever it touches the subject of history, it is totally reliable. Wherever the histories of men collide with the history of Scripture, the Bible must always be followed.

The Bible also give us the truth about the world. Sometimes it speaks of the world as being synonymous with the earth. Sometimes it speaks of the world with reference to the people who live in the world. But it also speaks of the world as the domain of Satan, alienated from God, and hostile to the things of God.

When the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians about the way people in Ephesus lived before they knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, he said this:

- 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).

So we all were once a part of this world system, and Paul describes

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exactly what is wrong with every person who is born into this world. And he also went on to say that for those in Ephesus who were truly saved, it was because of the intervention of God in their lives.

But with reference to the world, the Lord Jesus explained the past and the present of Christians when He spoke to His disciples just shortly before He died on the Cross. We have his words in John 15:18-21:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 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.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

The Apostle Peter spoke of this same situation in word which we find in 1 Peter 4:1-5:

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

And then let me add to these words, the words of our Lord in His great high priestly prayer in John 17. I would like to take the time to read the whole prayer, but will resist the temptation to do so, and concentrate on just a few words. These are found in John 17:6-17

6 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.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

So we learn from this passage that when we were drawn to Christ and saved, we immediately became the objects of the world's hatred.

Now when the Lord spoke of the world, He did not mean that everybody in the world was as bad as they could be, but He meant that people by nature are opposed to anything that has to do with the true God, and they really are enemies of the people of God.

If you are reading according to our schedule in the NT, you have just finished Acts 9, the chapter that tells us when Saul of Tarsus was saved. Saul was what we might call "a rising star" in Judaism. He was deeply religious, but he hated Christ, and he hated all Christians. He, by his own testimony, surpassed many of his equals in his opposition to the Gospel – and he thought all along that he was serving the Lord. He was on his way to Damascus to bring Christians, men and women, bound, back to Jerusalem, in order to stop the spread of the Gospel. But it was then that the

Lord intervened in his life, and he was gloriously saved. So instead of arresting the Christians when he got to Damascus, he joined with them. All of the truth that he had learned as a young Pharisee suddenly came to life, and he began preaching the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He was the Christ. But then an interesting thing happened. It is stated in Acts 9:23: “And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.” *The darling of the Jewish leaders, this man who was certain to rise to great heights in Jewish circles, suddenly became an enemy!* And why? Because he had become a Christian, and now was preaching the faith which he once sought to destroy, as he explained later to the churches of Galatia. See Gal. 1:23. The believers in the churches were saying “that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.”

Even today you can talk about God and church and religion generally, but when you talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is the only One through whom we can come to God, and know God, and be accepted by God, that is the kind of preaching and teaching that stirs up opposition from the world in a hurry.

Paul described this world as a battlefield and the Christian life as a warfare in Ephesians 6. This is what he said:

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Eph. 6:10-20).

Now as Paul indicated in this passage, we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. We are not seeking to destroy the world, but we are seeking to spread the Gospel, trying God Himself to call people out of the world to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, in writing to Timothy, told him this:

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:1-4).

This last verse brings me to the next point that I want to make. And it is found in several passages of Scripture. I will just mention two. The first is 1 John 2:15-17:

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The Devil cannot take us away from God. Our relationship with Him is eternally secure. But he will always seek to be nullify our effectiveness as the people of God. And he does that by seeking to allure us back into the ways of the world – loving the world.

The other passage is one of the main texts I have chosen for tonight. And it goes right along with 1 John 2:15-17. But this second passage was written by the Apostle Paul, and is a very familiar passage found in Rom. 12:1-2:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,

which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: 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.

The world has a certain pattern of behavior. But one of its chief characteristics is that it has no place for God, no place for Christ, no place for the Bible. It is the pattern referred to by the Apostle John in which he spoke of “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Our way of life is to be characterized by the will of God. And how do we attain that. It takes place by an inner transformation as our minds are renewed by the Word of God used, of course, by the Spirit of God. Going back to Paul’s words to Timothy, we are not going to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ if we are *entangled* with the affairs of this life. To be entangled is to be all tied up in the world. We are not going to change the world, but by God’s grace we are going to see people delivered from the world, and from the power of Satan and sin, and from the judgment of God.

What then is to be our relationship with the world?

The Lord Jesus indicated what it is when He told His disciples just before He returned to heaven, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He also said in Acts 1:8,

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost 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.

Now let us go to the second text I chose for this message. It is found in the last two verses of 2 Cor. 5, verses 20 and 21:

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

I call your attention to the word “beseech.” It is a word *imploring* people to be reconciled to God. And it is God Who will do the imploring through us on behalf of Christ. What an amazing position to be in?

We go to the enemy, those who are at enmity with God, and we plead with them from the heart to come to Christ that they might be at peace

with God. It's amazing, isn't it, that God would send His Son to die for sinners, and then have to plead with people to come to Him that they might be saved and be at peace with God?

But what is more amazing, this is a part of our warfare. The Lord Jesus said, "The field is the world" (Matt. 13:38). We never know who is going to respond to the call of the Gospel. But it is our responsibility before God to live our lives according to God's will as it is revealed in His Word, and then to carry the message of salvation wherever we go. We are not going to change the world. The Lord will do that some day when He burns this one up, and makes a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. What we are to do is to walk with God, and tell others about Jesus Christ.

So let us not be surprised with the world's opposition to the Gospel, neither let us be discouraged by it. Let's make sure that we are keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, that we are pursuing holiness, and that we courageously and with deep concern for people, tell them how they can be assured that their sins will be forgiven, and that when they die they will go to heaven.