

Not of This World

Paul, in his letter to the Philippian church, encouraged them to follow his example even as he followed Jesus. During his encouragement, he cautioned them: **For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite (Lit. belly), and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Philippians 3:18-19 NASB)**

Paul is addressing people who are setting their mind on earthly things. In this passage, we may easily see that some are gluttonous (concerned about filling their bellies). We may also see this as a warning about those who follow other desires to satisfy; to satisfy fleshly lust, to pursue material gain, or things along those lines. Basically, seeking the things that the world holds up as objects of desire. Paul reminds them; **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20 NASB)**

We have, on more than one occasion, mentioned that we are pilgrims on this earth for a limited time. Christians are citizens of heaven. This is not to be taken lightly. As Jesus was agonizing in the final hours before His arrest, He prayed one of the most impassioned prayers found in scripture.

In this prayer we read where Jesus focuses and honors God the Father.

“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. (John 17:6-10 NASB)

Throughout His ministry, Jesus proclaimed God. He constantly told all who listened that the power they saw in Him came from God. Now, Jesus turns to a personal plea to God on behalf of the apostles. Jesus acknowledges that those apostles were a gift from God. He tells God that He (Jesus) has made sure that they understand that all of the teachings of Jesus came from God the Father. Jesus is making a special request for His apostles and not the rest of the world; His request is for those whom God the Father gave to Jesus. Jesus knows that in the next few days, the apostles will be cut off from Him. The temptation for them to leave the mission for which they were selected will be great. Jesus is asking for God the Father to watch over them. Jesus knows that His time on earth is drawing to an end. So, He asked the Father for His protection over the apostles.

I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We *are*. While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. (John 17:11-12 NASB)

Jesus mentions that He had guarded them and kept them with the exception of Judas. The loss of Judas was predicted in Psalms (41:9, 69:25, and 109:6-8).

But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take

them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one (Or out of the power of evil). They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:13-19 NASB)

Jesus is speaking very personally as He ask the Father to protect them from evil. The fact that they received Jesus as the Messiah and followed Him has caused them to be hated in the world. Jesus asked the Father to sanctify them. Sanctify means "to set apart," usually for some good purpose or use; its derivative meaning thus becomes "dedicate" or "consecrate." They are to be sanctified or dedicated in truth. Then Jesus proclaims that God's word is truth. This may point to the fact that Jesus is the word of God (John 1:1 & 14).

At this point, Jesus expands the protection for His disciples.

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:20-21 NASB)

The inclusion of all who believe through the words of the apostles reaches to us today. The common thread that connects God to Jesus to the apostles, to all disciples is one that helps the world to know that we are disciples. It is part of the ministry that helps the world to come to believe in Jesus as the Christ. Yet, if we are so like the world, there is no distinction, then there is nothing to point to God, Jesus or His message of salvation. Jesus plainly tells us that the world will not like us because we will point out error and the distinction between living a life that glorifies God will not blend in with Satan's call to satisfy worldly lust and appetites.

There are several basic fundamentals that we may miss. Some believe church attendance and affiliation are appearance things that mark us a Christians. We are still trying to blend in to the world. At one time, this was easy to do. However, the standards of the world have shifted to such an extreme that any Biblical teaching no longer is tolerated in the world. More and more, we are drawn to making a decision. Are we going to be Christians living in this world or are we going to be living in this world with a façade of Christianity? If we were to visit another country, we fully understand that we are Americans visiting that country. We observe the things around us, we enjoy certain things and customs. Yet, we are not citizens for that country. We understand that vacations may come to an end and we will return to our home country. For Christians, we are citizens of heaven and when our stay on earth is finished, we will go to our home.

As a Christian, we are called to be different than the world. From the text we have already read this morning, we see that Jesus tells while we are in this world we are **not of the world**.

Earlier, Jesus tells His disciples that following Him is not the way to win earthly accolades. Just look at John 15:18-19.

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (John 15:18-19 NASB)

Why does the world hate Jesus and thus hate those who follow Jesus? The world is under the power of Satan. **We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*. (1 John 5:19 NASB)**

Even though we are in this world and Satan has power over this world, we have more power since we are children of God.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4 NASB)

The apostle Paul calls for Christians not to become like the world. He knows that we have come out of this world into the realm of Christ. Because of our salvation in Christ, we are to change or transform into our new life.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 NASB)

Peter uses the same terms that Paul used in the scripture we considered earlier. Paul calls us citizens of heaven. **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20 NASB)**

For Peter, we are to live as strangers and aliens on earth. The manner in which we live is to be such that if we are accused of evil, others will see the truth through our actions.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of (Or as a result of) your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:11-12 NASB)

As an aside, the word visitation is actually the Greek word ἐπισκοπή episcopē (ep-is-kop-ay') and means investigation, inspection, or visitation (i.e. that act by which God looks into and searches out the ways, deeds character, of men, in order to adjudge them their lot accordingly, whether joyous or sad, The word is also used for the church office of elder or overseer).

Our behavior in this world is to define us as Christians and not just another person of the world.

In conclusion, John writes in his first letter a caution about loving the things of this world.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (2 John 2:15-17 NASB)

We are of Christ and not of this world. This is how Jesus sees us in His prayer in the garden as recorded in John the 17th chapter. This is how the writers of the New Testament sees us. We are not of this world and we need to remember that as we live each day.