



“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,”
Ephesians 5:15.

The Believer and the World

Lesson Aim: To emphasize the importance of the believer’s testimony in an ungodly world.

L521. Date: June 1964. **Text:** II Corinthians 6:14-18; Gal. 2:19-21; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:9-11. **Topic:** Sanctification; World: Separation from.

INTRODUCTION — Each Christian has been bought with a great price that he might become a servant of God. He lives in a hostile world which knows not Jesus. Even so, as a Christian he is expected to live a life worthy of his Master and to lead others to become obedient to Jesus also. Though he is not “of the world,” he is in the world, and here his influence is to be exercised to the glory of God.

In certain areas of Japan, tropical plants grow in the face of the cold winds. Volcanic heat under the soil makes their existence possible even in cold weather. In like manner, the Christian's relationship to God keeps him zealous in service though he may face a cold, unchristian generation. It is the very coldness and unchristian character of the world which makes it essential that God's people be clearly identifiable. The stronger the pressure, therefore, the more faithful the believer must be to his God.

Jesus prayed for His disciples concerning their relationship to the world. He said they were taken unto Himself out of the world, verse 6. Yet, they are to remain in the world, verse 11. The world has hated them because they are not of the nature of the world just as Jesus is not, verses 14, 16. He did not pray that they should be taken from the world but that they should be kept from the evil one. Moreover, Jesus has sent them into the world just as the Father sent Him into the world, verse 18. Now, each child of God who reads can apply all this to himself and see exactly what his relationship to the world is to be.

EXPOSITION

I. THE BELIEVER'S SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, II Corinthians 6:14-18.

1. The believer is clearly called to separation from the world, verse 14. In language so plain it is impossible to mistake its meaning, God says, **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”** Any union which binds a believer and an unbeliever on intimate terms and in a bond which cannot be broken is wrong. In spite of what agreement there is between the two, a faithful Christian serves a different Master than does the unbeliever, **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”** Amos 3:3. Jesus answers, “No,” A man must choose which master he will serve and devote himself to him. No man can be a “Mr. Looking-Both-Way's” for long. **“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon,”** Matthew 6:24. Neither can two people (whether husband and wife or only business partners) continue to walk together in harmony if one serves God and the other serves mammon. **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”**

2. The believer is given ample reason why he must be separate from the world, verses 15-16. “Living Letters” (a paraphrase of the New Testament Epistles) give this meaning to these verses 14-16. “Don't be chained to those who do not love the Lord, for what do the people of God have in common with the people of sin? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a Christian be a partner with one who scoffs at his faith? And what connection can there be between God's temple and an idol temple? For you are God's temple, the home of the living God, and God has said of you, “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.” Indeed, such relationships as “fellowship, communion, concord” between a Christian and an unbeliever will bring only discord and dishonor to the cause of Christ. Their natures are opposed; their masters are opposed; their motives are opposed; their destinies are opposed; and their actions are opposed. Indeed, what agreement is there between them? **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”**

3. The believer is clearly challenged as to his Christian duty, verses 17-18. The admonition to be not unequally yoked with unbelievers means the people of God “come out,” “keep themselves separate,” and “touch not the

unclean.” An excellent paraphrase of the Lord’s challenge is, “Come away from among them and stay away; touch not their evil things and I will welcome you, and will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters.” This is no more than reason demands. This is what God calls for. The Christian's first allegiance is to God. A Christian husband or wife who is married to an unbelieving partner should remain with them. If the unbeliever is not content to live with a believer who is loyal to Jesus, let him depart. A Christian brother or sister owes first allegiance to God, I Corinthians 7:12-16. **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”**

II. THE BELIEVER'S LIFE FROM THE WORLD, Galatians 2:19-21.

1. It is a God-related life, verse 19. After a long struggle to attain righteousness by deeds of the flesh, Paul concluded that no man can possibly be saved by obedience to any kind of law, Romans 3:20. Therefore, following the leading of the law, which was as a “schoolmaster” to bring men to Christ (Galatians 3:24), Paul found justification to be by faith. Instead of righteousness being by the deeds of men, it was by the gracious provision of God and was received by faith. Therefore, those who live the new life in Christ truly “live unto God” because their new life has its source in Him, John 1:4. Therefore, the new life is to be devoted to God’s service. Paul expresses it exactly in these words: **“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again,”** II Corinthians 5:14-15. The believer finds the source, sustenance, purpose and goal of his life in Jesus Christ who is his Saviour and Lord.

2. It is a life which is Christ, verse 20. Paul writes of “Christ, who is our life,” Colossians 3:4. This is literally true. The one who is saved can testify, “I do not really live any more. The life in my flesh is the life of Christ Jesus who is living in me.” This is the answer to every failure and all fretting at not measuring up in Christian service. Claim the in-living of the ever-present Christ as your victory. There is no need for the saints of God to be up and down spiritually, to gain victory over temptation one day and fall before the same temptation the next. The truth of the indwelling Christ, who dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17), brings something better.

Since the believer's life is Christ, let him claim the victory which Christ has. Each morning the believer should offer himself to God as His agent

through the day. Do whatever comes to hand to do in Jesus' name and fret not about what God does not offer. On the other hand, let him claim the victory over temptation which Jesus gained. Think on this: if Christ does indeed live within the believer, there is no need for him to live a half-productive, defeated life. Claiming the power of the indwelling Christ, he can always have the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, I Corinthians 15:57; II Corinthians 2:14.

3. It is a life of righteousness, verse 21. The great need of depraved man is to be made righteous and thus acceptable before God. There are two ways by which one may seek righteousness: works which man performs or acceptance of the free gift of God. The Law was given in the Old Testament to reveal to men what it would take in order for man to be saved. It set out God's standard of righteousness that men might be driven to confession of sin and acceptance of righteousness from God as a free gift. Many Jews and Gentiles, not understanding the limitations of human flesh nor the grace of God, tried to keep the law so as to be saved. But, Paul said, righteousness does not come by the law.

Romans 4:1-25 teaches righteousness is received by faith just as Abraham believed God and his faith was counted unto him for righteousness. He who attempts to work his way unto righteousness will be like a man paying an impossible debt. But he who works not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness! (See Romans 4:4-5.) Is this glorious truth a living reality for you?

III. THE BELIEVER'S DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD, Philippians 3:20-21.

The future of the material creation is destruction in flames of God's judgment, II Peter 3:10-12. This is not the destiny of the redeemed, however. Before that dreadful day comes, they will be delivered from the world into the presence and glory of God.

1. The believer's deliverance is based on a heavenly citizenship, verse 20a. Kenneth S. Wuest translates this part of the verse, "For the commonwealth of which we are citizens has its fixed location in heaven out from which we . . . are eagerly waiting to welcome the Saviour." Christians are citizens of two worlds but the heavenly citizenship so far surpasses the earthly that he is as if he were a pilgrim and stranger here. This verse means more than merely "Our manner of speech is heavenly." or "Our habit of life is like that of heaven." The word for "conversation" means "commonwealth, citizenship" and refers to that heavenly kingdom called "the general

assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,” Hebrews 12:23. No person can expect deliverance from the world unless he is a citizen in the kingdom which is not of this world.

2. The believer's deliverance is related to the second coming of Jesus Christ, verse 20b. Jesus, as the Forerunner of each believer, has already entered into heaven, Hebrews 6:20. This same Jesus shall come again in like manner as He went into heaven, Acts 1:11. Meanwhile, the believer looks for His return in an attitude of expectant waiting always standing in readiness to receive Him. The promise of God to ransom from the power of the grave and to redeem from death (Hosea 13:14) will find its fulfillment then. Believers who live today are not waiting for death. They are waiting for Jesus who will redeem them from death. **“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,”** I John 3:2.

3. The believer's deliverance is accomplished by the change of the resurrection, verse 21. The events relating to the resurrection of the saved are: Jesus comes with the shout and trumpet of victory, the dead saints are resurrected in glorified bodies, the living saints are changed into glorified bodies, they are caught up into the air together. See I Thessalonians 4:13-17. Paul goes into great detail describing the resurrection in I Corinthians 15. In verses 42-44 he describes the change which comes to the physical body. It is changed from corruptible to incorruptible, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to power, from natural to spiritual. This change is so that **“we shall be like Him (Jesus),”** I John 3:2. **“As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,”** I Corinthians 15:49. No wonder the Psalmist joyously exclaimed, **“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness,”** Psalm 17:15.

Just as at conversion the penitent believer was saved from the guilt of sin, and as in sanctification he is saved from the dominion of sin, so at the second coming of Jesus (with its related events) he will be saved from the very presence of sin! Yes, the believer's deliverance from the world is based on a heavenly citizenship as God's child, related to the second coming of Jesus, and accomplished by the change of the resurrection.

Here is what Paul is saying if it were put into modern English: “We are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore,

my friends, beloved friends for whom I long, my joy, my crown, stand thus firm in the Lord!”

CONCLUSION — When a man exercises faith in Jesus as his own Saviour, he becomes a marked person. Everyone expects something different and better of him than before. Since he belongs to God, his life is to honor God. Most of the world has had no experience with Jesus and desperately needs the witness of one truly born again. God uses such testimony to lead others to Himself. This is why it is so important for every believer to give a consistent testimony in an ungodly world. This has always been the mission of God's people—to share the knowledge of Him with others. The next thirteen lessons will study the message and ministry of some faithful men of God who lived 941-750 B.C. Their lives will inspire to better service. Study diligently. Attend your class faithfully. Pray regularly. Serve unceasingly.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should believers be servants of God?
2. What is meant by “the world” in today's lesson?
3. Why should the believer be separate from the world?
4. In what sense is Christ our life?
5. What is “righteousness”? How do we get it and how do we live it?
6. What is the believer's heavenly “citizenship”?
7. What change will come for believers at the resurrection?
8. Who is the “old man” and the “new man”?