

How Close Can I Get

by Steve Mays

The sermon emphasizes the importance of separation from the world and maintaining a pure relationship with God to avoid compromise and its consequences.

Duration: 33:15

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:14

Topics: "Sin"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Steve discusses the importance of separating oneself from worldly living. He begins by emphasizing the significance of having a strong foundation in God within the family unit. He then delves into the book of Revelation, specifically chapter 17, which describes the final days before the destruction of the earth. Pastor Steve highlights the seven vials or bowls that represent the judgment that will befall the world. He concludes by urging listeners to live in the presence of God and to resist the temptations of sin, using the analogy of visitors at a volcano park asking how close they can get to the lava, symbolizing our tendency to get too close to sin without considering the consequences.

Transcript

It's the 2012 Summer of Sermons with Steve Mays. He pulled me out of the world that he might put me back into the world. He brought me out of the world that I might now be a witness in the world.

So what I used to do, I don't do. But now I can make a greater impact in the world in which I live. Today, Pastor Steve Mays shares good reasons to separate ourselves from worldly living.

So I want to be in the world, but I don't want to be messed up. I want to have some friends, but I don't want to do what they're doing all the time. You hold your ground and God will hold on to you.

Hope shines in darkness, so follow the light of the word. Shining forth the light of Jesus, this is Light of the Word. Featuring the Bible teaching of Pastor Steve Mays.

Author and Senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel South Bay in Gardena, California. So follow the light of the word. Visitors at the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park quite often ask this question.

How close can I get to the lava? And while the thought of falling into red hot lava makes us feel quite uncomfortable, we usually don't think twice about getting close to sin. Do we really think that we won't get burned? Today, Pastor Steve shares three great reasons to separate yourself from worldly living. The

lesson is called, How Close Can I Get? Here's Pastor Steve now to begin today's lesson.

So we turn this morning to Revelation chapter 17. Revelation chapter 17. And I'm going to have you there.

And one other passage I want you to put your fingers in. 2 Corinthians chapter 6. 2 Corinthians chapter 6. Revelation chapter 17 and 2 Corinthians chapter 6. There are two great little stories I want to tell you before we jump into the Bible study today. If you're taking notes, you can jot down, How Close Can I Get? In other words, how close can I get to the world without being burnt or falling inside? One of the unique things about the children of Israel is because of their idolatry, God took them into captivity, you remember, into Babylon for 70 years.

And it was to teach them, to discipline them, that they were not to allow idols to be part of their life. And God did a tremendous work. In other words, they really turned from that.

But while they're in Babylon, they were agriculturally brilliant. They came to a point to understand business. And when it was time for them to leave Babylon, Ezra and Nehemiah said, We need to go.

And very few returned. And the reason why was because Babylon got into them. And there's nothing wrong with you being in Babylon or you being in the world.

But there is everything wrong with the world, Egypt, Babylon being inside of you. And the real key is getting through this life without your boat sinking in this world. And so I want to try to teach you the importance of really what it means to be separate or sanctified.

And today, it's not a popular term. We don't even say words like consecration, sanctification, or separation because we think, Man, we're out of here. We need to use better terms like commitment.

And we don't talk about that any longer. But I want to share with you really what the Word of God has to say. And the reason why in Revelation, it talks about coming out of Babylon.

Two little stories that really are kind of cool. One was way back in the days of horses and cowboys. And this cowboy came to this saloon that he loved to drink and tied up his horse, went inside, and got plastered, constantly drinking and a drunk in the town.

Well, one day, this evangelist came through in a wagon and began to preach in the street. And lo and behold, the guy got saved. I mean, really, really saved.

And so he started fellowshiping at church, started getting involved. But he kept his horse tied in front of the saloon. I don't know if he felt like he had a good parking spot.

I just don't know. And so he kept preaching and having a great time. And as the church got bigger, he was more involved.

He became a deacon, real involved, active. And then one day, one of the older men who was an elder came and said, You know, I'm having a little bit of a problem with you. He says, What's that? He says, I see what God's doing in your life, but I don't understand why you're parking so close to where you got in.

Why don't you move the horse and get the horse away from the saloon? And he just kind of laughed. The horse isn't going to drink. And he was trying to make a point.

Well, about a month later, he was really offended in the church. Copped an attitude, slammed the door, walked out, went to his horse, and saw the saloon door, walked in and got drunk. He stayed too close to where he got in.

Second story, very simple, true story about a woman wanting to go down and see where her husband worked in a mine. And she had a white, gorgeous dress on. And so she said to the guy, Is it okay that I wear a white dress, long white dress? He said, Sure, you can wear a long white dress, no problem.

But it will not come up white when you come up. And the story, very simply, is you're going to get marred and marked if you hang out in the world. So there's nothing wrong with you enjoying things or possessing things or making money or having things.

There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, Jesus said that if you're right with Him, He's going to help you. But there's everything wrong when the priorities are messed up, when guys are seeking to live above what God wants them to live, or when they're violating their families, trying to live a certain type of a lifestyle, or they're forsaking their commitment to God, seeking to try to prove to the world how successful they are.

And that will never happen. You're going to be sucked in and you're going to be hurt because you're blindsided because you've forsaken the Lord and you need to keep God first. And that's the key of life.

If you desire to have a great marriage, that marriage is going to be based upon your relationship with God. And when a man has a great relationship with God and he hears from God, that woman is going to feel very secure and safe. Even when you make mistakes, she's going to know you're going to make things right.

But if the guy begins to compromise and begins to skip out of church and begins to skip out of his Bible reading, then she's going to get nervous. And usually when a woman gets nervous, they get angry. And when they get angry, then there's problems in the home.

And what she's really saying is, I've lost total security because you're not right with God and you're going to bring us down. And so the greatest thing that can happen inside a family is the wife is in love with God, the husband is in love with God, and the kids are going to see it and they're going to make great commitments for the Lord. So let's turn to Revelation chapter 17 in verse 1, 2, and 5. And it says here, John now is writing, these are the very final days before the destruction of the earth.

We have gone through the seven seals and the seven trumpets and these now are the seven vials or bowls. And there came one of the seven angels which had seven bowls and talked with me saying, Come up hither and I will show you the judgment of the great horror that sets upon the many waters. Now, don't get weird.

The great horror would be the religious system of this world and the many waters would be once again the multitude of people and languages and kings and so on with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. They've compromised and the inhabitants of the earth have made drunk with the wine of her fornication. And upon her head, verse 5, was a name written, Mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots and the abomination of the earth.

Now turn with me to chapter 18, verse 4 and 5. 18, verse 4 and 5. John now says, And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not her plagues. For her sin has reached into heaven and God has remembered her iniquity. And

then on the screen is 1 John 2.15. 1 John 2.15. And John goes on to say, 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. Very powerful statement. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life is not of the Father but of this world.

So every day, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. Verse 17, The world passes away and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God is going to abide. And two more, James tells us in chapter 4, verse 4, Ye adulterers and adulterers, Know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God.

Now why? Why is James so harsh? Because after Easter and after all that Christ has done and how Christ has come into our heart, what he's saying is the religious system. The love of the religious things and the love of material things that choke out the word of God. And one last one, Matthew 13, verse 22.

And I think this really has to do with so many of us. He receives the seed among the thorns. You remember the parable? Some he threw and fell among the stones.

Some he fell among the thorns. Some he fell among the good soil. And they begin to grow.

Here in verse 22, He received the seed among the thorns. He that hears the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches have choked the word and become unfruitful. Now what he's saying in a very powerful way is that he does not want you not to be blessed.

And I have no desire to say to you, Listen, you need to give things up or give it to the church. That is not my heart's desire. I want you to be blessed and I want you to get it God's way and I want you to be good stewards of it.

And I believe with all my heart God wants to use you to bless other people. But when you violate and when you now come to a point in our lives that we compromise our position or we violate a certain principle and we begin to do things under the table and we were so ethical and moral and right and we had God's name and God's honor in our heart and now we've become a little bit bigger, a little bit richer, a little bit more famous and we think we have the right to begin to go down a road and not bring God into your everyday life. Then you're going to be dealt with.

And I want to try to help you not to go down that road. Keep your relationship with God pure. And I believe if you do that then God's going to lay more upon you and God's going to give you the ability to handle more.

And the Bible says much is given, much is required. And if you're faithful in the small things God's going to make your rulers over many things. So I want to try to help you keep what you have and teach you how to be a blessing never to violate your relationship with God.

And so first of all this word sanctification it's a word that means to be separate. And what John is saying is come out. Get out of the world.

Now you're in it and you need to be part of it. You should be in it. You should make a stand for politics.

You should make a stand for pastors. You should be a stand for business. Doesn't make a difference what you do.

But what you do is you do not compromise and do what other people are doing. So you have to live your Christian witness in the political world, in the ministry, in business. That's just the way it is.

And you can't compromise that. If you do then people are not going to be blessed. God made you the way you are and some of you God has really blessed.

And the reason why is because God has blessed you. And God wants you to know that He wants to continue to do that. But here the word separate means in the Greek lexicon it means to be pure.

Or it means to be clean or free from stain. So I need to learn to maintain my life in purity. And to maintain without being stained.

Like going down to that mine shaft and being stained with the darkness of the coal. So I want to be in the world but I don't want to be messed up by it. I want to have some friends but I don't want to do what they're doing all the time.

I want to hear some funny things but I don't want to listen to their crude jokes. And I do not want that to defile my life or my relationship with my wife. In the Young's Concordance it means to separate or set apart.

And I understand that. I was in the gutter with a bullet through my leg on LSD and God took me and He set me apart. And He put me back together and He healed my mind, healed my heart and so He set me apart.

He pulled me out of the world and He brought me to God. And then the Webster Dictionary defines it to set apart for a holy use. And that's true also.

He pulled me out of the world that He might put me back into the world. He brought me out of the world that I might now be a witness in the world. So what I used to do I don't do.

But now I can make a greater impact in the world in which I live. You say then why do pastors fall or why do politicians fall? Because they compromise. They let the darkness back in.

They begin to think that they're above the law or above God. And God once again says no. You are underneath and I gave this to you and you have a responsibility.

And so I want to share with you some things that might really make a difference. I think when I share these three things it means to be cleansed. And it also means to be separate.

And it means to be dedicated. And if I'm in fellowship with God then God's cleansing my heart. He that is in God's word wherefore shall a young man go and cleanse his way by taking heed to thy word.

Thy word have I hidden my heart that I would not sin against thee. So I'm in God's word and God's cleansing my heart. When I'm in God's word I'm going to once again be separate.

I'm going to see the difference between the light and darkness. I'm going to see an attitude. He's going to cut between the joint and the marrow.

He's going to go down deep and show me maybe a motive. I thought I was right. I was really wrong.

He's going to help me correct it before anybody else knows about it. And I love that about God. And third, I'm going to be dedicated.

The more I read, the more I study, the more I grow. I'm dedicated to the one I love and that's Jesus Christ. So yes, I'm in this world.

Yes, it's okay to eat Republicans and sinners but you need to shine for the glory of God. You need to be there and when they begin to use the Lord's name in vain and begin to tell jokes that are not godly or things that are offensive, there's nothing wrong with saying, excuse me, I need to dismiss myself. They're going to come back and say, why did you leave? And you can say right to their face, I used to do that but I don't need to do it now.

I have no problem meeting with you, have no problem fellowshiping with you but that's not part of my life. But business guys will say, no, you have to do that. No, you don't.

And when you do that, it is a test between you and God and that man. You hold your ground and God will hold on to you and that guy might come to Christ. You compromise there, where do you stop? Where in the world do you stop? You tell a little lie, where do you stop when you start lying about your wife or going out on her? If you don't stop it here, you're going to justify it over here and the Bible says that the lie is from Satan.

I need to gain the word of God. I want to give you three things to really think about and the reason why I think separation is so important and very simply, number one, because our Lord demands it. Look with me at 2 Corinthians 6. 2 Corinthians 6 talks about this and verse 14 and 15 and 16.

He says, we belong to God and let me just remind you that there was a time in our lives that we asked Christ into our heart and Christ came in. And if you notice in verse 16, ye are the temple of the living God. So remember when you asked Christ into your heart, He came into your heart.

So now God demands that you are a temple inside this wicked world like Daniel or Jeremiah or Esther or whatever it might be. He says here in verse 14, be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Of what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? What concord, in verse 15, has Christ with the devil? And what part has he that believes with an infidel? And verse 16, what argument has the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God.

As God has said, I will dwell in them, walk in them, I will be their God and they shall be my people. Now go back to verse 14 and underline what twice in chapter 6, verse 14. And then in verse 15, underline what twice again.

What concord? Or once again, what part? And then verse 16, what argument? Five different times, all of a sudden, we begin to see Paul ministering the contrast. You can't say righteousness and unrighteousness. You can't be the light and be hanging out in darkness.

You can't have communion with God and have communion with the devil. You cannot be the temple of God and be worshiping idols. And what Christianity does, it tries to blend the two, but the Scriptures won't let you do it.

It's either, I'm going to warm myself by the baptism of the Holy Spirit or I'm going to warm myself at the fire of the enemy, what Peter did. And when Peter warmed himself at the camp of the enemy, this is what happened. I never knew the man.

Curse it be the man. When he came back to the fire of the Holy Spirit, Christ fed him and said, Feed my sheep. There's only two fires and there's only two ways and there's not this middle ground.

And this is how we do it. Well, you know, I'm going to go win my girlfriend to Christ. She doesn't know Christ.

Well, number one, you're already violating the Scripture. The Bible says don't even take her out, but she is so cute. Man, she has the heart of Lucifer if she doesn't know God.

How can you say that? Because until that heart is regenerated, you don't know what you have. And so you say, Well, I'm going to win her. Like you are this great torch.

You've already violated God. You've lost the torch and now you have a little flicker. And so you walk up to her and she smiles and winks and it's gone.

And she just hooks you and takes you right to bed. Wow, what happened? Well, you've just taken Christ to bed with you. That's what you have to understand.

You don't go into pornography and say, Jesus, would you get out of my body and stay right here? You take him right in with him because he's inside your heart. You don't like that. Oh, man, that really bums me out now.

Well, just remember, all of a sudden, well, you know, I'm going to kind of marry this gal and I think I can get her saved. Well, be careful. What about a guy that is almost ready to get saved and he isn't? He raises his hand.

He gets saved before the marriage. I wouldn't marry him. Well, how can you say that? I'm a guy.

If that's what it's going to take to get you to bed, I'll raise my hand, accept Jesus Christ in my heart, and take you to bed after I'm married. Now, go get me a beer and shut up. In other words, we're so brilliant, but when it comes to Christianity, we throw our lives away and we just go motion, motion.

God gave you a mind. God gave you a heart. When you violate the conviction of your heart, you're going to pay the price.

Now, in your heart, you're a temple. And in that temple, just think of a temple. There's the outer court.

The inner court. And the holy of holies. The outer court is where I'm to serve.

Listen very carefully. I am to be a blessing. I'm to serve my wife, serve my children, serve my country, serve my community.

That's what I'm to do. God's going to help me restore that, but I'm to be a servant. Secondly, in the holy place, I am to sacrifice.

So I'm willing to sacrifice, die to who I am, be a blessing, take the hit, whatever it might be. And thirdly, the holy of holies is a place of worship. So I can be in this world, serving and giving and worshiping, even in a board meeting, because God is alive in my heart.

Number one, Christ demands it, that there's a separation, that Christ is in your heart, and that you and I need to know that. So when a husband and wife have it, the children see it, and God does a wonderful

work. Secondly, we come to a point, because our influence depends upon it.

Because our influence depends upon it. Notice in verse 17, Wherefore, come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord. Same thing that we read in John's account.

Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. This is my testimony. Now let me tell you how it works.

If I'm going to have a great testimony, then I need to come out of it, so I can see it. So here I am as a guy, going into work. I'm going to be a blessing.

Why? Because God is going to give me the strength. Let me give you an example. Samson, who was called by God, to be a Nazarene.

His mom and dad were able to receive the vision from the angel. And there they consecrated their life, and she even took on the form of a Nazarene, to make sure that she would not violate this child who was ordained by God. Samson was born.

He was incredibly strong. So strong, the Bible says, he took the gates off the city, and drug him up a hill. The guy was incredibly strong.

Killed a thousand men at a time. And then you remember, caught the foxes and tied their tails together. What's wrong with the story? He was ordained by God, to deliver the children of Israel.

He was called by God, to stand for the kingdom of God, and to bring restoration and redemption to the nation of Israel. What did he do with his power? He used the anointing and the power to go down to the Philistines. And there he lusted after their women.

He coveted their women. He didn't like these Christian women. He went after these worldly women, because he knew they could do so much more in the areas of lust and everything else.

His own parents said, listen, you need to get away from that. And he said, listen, leave me alone. Secondly, he was going to marry one of them.

And it was God who intervened, and the whole family had to be wiped out to save this man to be the judge of all of Israel. And if that wasn't enough, he's in the vineyard. What's a guy who makes an incredible vow, the Nazarene vow, not to touch wine or anything dead, or cut his hair? He's in the vineyard, like flirting around, like, oh, look at those grapes.

And secondly, there's a dead lion in there with honey. He reaches in. He violates.

He touches a dead lion, and he violates that commitment. It doesn't stop there. He picks up this dead donkey jaw, and he smites a thousand men.

And people say, wow, he killed a thousand Philistines. But he violated the very thing he was not to touch. He could have killed them with his bare hands, but he needed this.

Finally, his eyes were plucked out, because he cut his hair. And he was grinding and binding, and his life was destroyed. And he finally had one last choice.

And he looked to God, and the Bible says what he did at the very end was more than he did in his whole lifetime. So here I am with a tremendous witness, God in my heart, and I wasted my life. I can work with

somebody for 30 years, they don't even know I'm a Christian.

I can walk into a room, and I have the answer, but I'm afraid to share it, because my life is not strong. Because I've been playing with the vineyard, I've been touching the dead things, I haven't really come clean. I've been parking my car next to the bar.

I've been staying too close to where I got in, and so how close can I get? What a question. I mean, I'm in. How deep can I go? No, I just want to go to heaven, but I'd sure like to have a lot of fun before I go.

You mean adultery, and sex, and murder, and corruption, and lies, Listen, tell me what the world has given you. It's broken your heart, everything out there, tell me what God's given you. Everything.

And lastly, and this is the best, because the power depends on it, because my power depends on it. Notice, he says in chapter 6, verse 16, 17, and 18, he says, What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. Now, underline, God has said, I will dwell in them, I will walk in them, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Unbelievable statement. Verse 17, Wherefore, come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. Underline, I will receive you.

Verse 18, I will be a father unto you, those daughters and sons that have not had fathers, I'll be your father, and ye will be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord. And then in chapter 7, verse 1, Having therefore, therefore points back to what's been said, these promises, what promises, that God is going to dwell. I want to give you five things to think about.

Number one, God said, I'm going to bless you. I'm going to bless you, number one, because I have spoken to you what I desire, that you would stay pure and separate. You're in it.

I want you to do a great job like Daniel. Rise above everybody. Be top of your area.

Be a Christian that has no want. Let people see how good you really are. Excel.

It just drives me crazy when Christians work and they just don't throw their heart into it. I mean, there's a job and there's a way. If you're going to flip hamburgers at In-N-Out, do it for the glory of God.

If you're going to pick up trash, do it for the glory of God. If you're going to raise a family, then do it better than anybody else. This thing going around today, well, I'm here.

I'm pushing the broom. If you are a janitor and you work for a company, well, I'm just waiting my five or ten hours. You ought to be fired.

That's how I feel. Forgive me. I feel like we're redeemed and sanctified.

God's changed our hearts. And so I don't cop an attitude pushing the broom. I don't cop an attitude when all of a sudden you know, well, I've got to take the trash.

I take it out and don't cause such a scene at home. In other words, God, get a hold of my heart. I'm different.

I used to shoot people. Shoot at people. You know, I used to, on drugs, LSD, chase my mother down the street.

Now at least I got a Bible. Aren't you thankful? I mean, I could go crazy. You know, I just... But here's how I think.

And maybe I'm wrong. I think if I kind of cheat on this broom, I'm going to cheat on my wife. That's how I think.

And I think if I'm going to cheat on this message, then I'm going to cheat on you. And that means I'm lying to myself. I can't do it.

So the toilet paper has to be there. The bathrooms have to be clean. Because it's not my home.

It's God's house, you know. And so the only thing that has ever happened in my whole life is that God sanctified me and He's inside my heart. And I can feel Him.

So I'm going to shine. And then here's what happens in my life. And this is what you've seen probably in the last year.

Is that He dwells inside of me. And so you don't walk around, where's God? I don't feel God. I don't sense God.

I hope God's here. I hope our marriage has God. You know God's here.

He'll never leave you. Or what? Forsake you. His love is irreversible.

And secondly, it says I'll walk with you. I'm afraid to step out. I'm afraid to go in that boardroom.

He's going to be in that boardroom. He's going to be with you when you have to fire somebody. He's going to be with you when you have to restore somebody.

He's going to be with you when you have to speak before thousands. He's going to be with you when you cut an album. He's never going to leave you.

He's never going to forsake you. And when you go wrong, He's going to correct you. Why? Because you have maintained a relationship that honors God.

You're going steady. You're not walking down the mall checking all the women out with your wife. And then you guys think that you can get away with it.

You put your sunglasses on. You're walking down. You're head straight, but your body's twitching all the time.

You know, your wife, what are you doing? You know, I just can't go to the mall. Then tell your wife, I can't go to the mall. And I can't go to the beach.

Why? Because I just lust. Keep me in my house. Or put blinders on my eyes.

Help me. But I'd rather have you do that than to break a relationship. And here's the thing.

If I'm really in love with her, this woman has my heart. But when I lose a passion for her, I have to go out. Or when I'm looking through a window at this woman, it's because something's wrong in the bed.

Fix it. A little tiny lie takes you away. And Jesus is saying the same thing.

I saved you. I'm going to marry you. You're going steady with me.

I'll satisfy you. You can enjoy these things, but don't fall in love with Him. And then He said, I'll be your God.

And then in verse 17, I'll receive you. People won't receive you, I'll receive you. But notice the last one.

I'll be your Father. And when Hezekiah had this horrible father Ahab, he jumped over Ahab and went right to God. And I think that today doesn't make a difference what dad you had or what mother you had.

You can jump to God and be loved by a great father. So when I look at this, it's a great passage. Pastor Steve Mays, sharing good reasons to separate ourselves from worldly living.

It's good to have you with us today on Light of the Word. You know all too often people think of salvation in Christ as a kind of retirement plan for the future. And so it is.

But what about our earthly existence? Are there ways we can enjoy these great benefits today? Pastor Steve Mays says, absolutely. Throughout his series on Revelation, he shares the importance of tapping into the power of Christ for today. It's tremendous encouragement that will help you navigate the valleys of life.

This new look at the book of Revelation is where Pastor Steve reveals not only insight concerning the last days, but practical instruction that we can use as we wait for the Lord to return. By the way, today's message is part of this extensive set. And we'll be glad to tell you how you can get your collection on Revelation.

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