

On Separation From the World

by Thomas Reade

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of separating from worldly influences to live a true Christian life focused on faith and contentment in God.

Scripture: Joshua 24:15, Matthew 10:32, John 17:16, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Philippians 4:11, Hebrews 13:5, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Separation From World", "Christian Sanctification"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the importance of separation from the world for true believers, emphasizing the clear commands in Scripture to be distinct from worldly ways and to seek first the kingdom of God. He highlights the encouragement and contentment found in faith in Jesus, contrasting the pursuit of worldly riches with the eternal gain of godliness and divine contentment. Reade urges Christians to be consistent, singular, and unashamed in their faith, willing to face reproach and maintain a marked distinction between the church and the world.

Transcript

41. ON SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

How little is the genuine nature of Christianity considered by the generality of professing Christians! The declaration of our Savior, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and the character of his followers, "you are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," seem to be words of no import with thousands who call themselves Christians. Immersed in all the businesses and pleasures of life, they act as though no such declaration had been made, or any such character been drawn by the Savior of mankind.

The commands of Scripture are most striking and clear on the duty of separation from the world. "Arise you and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted; it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides forever." "Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, he is the enemy of God."

To a soul happily delivered from this present evil world, through faith in Jesus, the exhortations of Scripture are most encouraging. They breathe that holy resignation to the divine will, and that cheerful contentment with the divine disposals, which, when obeyed, must cause the believer to rejoice at all times, and in everything to give thanks. He is assured by the voice of infallible Wisdom, that "A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses."

Hence he is warned to "take heed and beware of covetousness." While carnal minds are panting after worldly riches, the believer is thus admonished by the lowly Savior: "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on." "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them: how much are you better than the birds!" "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"If then, God so clothe the grass which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, Oh you of little faith!" "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Paul, who once possessed what the world admires, knowledge and influence, counted them but loss for Christ.

His knowledge, imbibed at the feet of Gamaliel; and his influence, derived from the authority of the High Priest, were renounced without reserve when Jesus revealed himself to his soul. Separated from a world which lies in wickedness, he could say, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

From this sweet experience of true religion, and this knowledge of the emptiness of all earthly things, he declared to Timothy, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."

Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." The Hebrew converts he exhorted to the duty of divine contentment: "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

These interesting portions from the word of God show what are the character and spirit of true believers. They are a peculiar people, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Their citizenship is in heaven. They are pilgrims and strangers upon earth; the temples of the Holy Spirit; the lights of the world; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. On earth they bear the holy image of their Savior; and in heaven they shall shine as the sun, with everlasting glory. The world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world.

Its fascinating charms have passed away; and they themselves are no longer the delight of carnal company. Their holy walk and speech is now the subject of derision. The holy image of Jesus is beheld

with aversion. They have become to their once admiring associates as a crucified body, loathsome and disgusting. All this discordancy springs from that unalterable distinction which must ever exist between the people of God and the people of the world. This distinction is so plain, that he who runs may read the living characters.

The one are born from above; the other from beneath. The one are quickened by grace; the other are dead in trespasses and sins. The one are governed by the Spirit of God; the other are under the dominion of Satan. The one consult the glory of God, and cheerfully forsake all for Christ; the other make self the center round which they move. The one, in seasons of general defection, can say with Nehemiah, "So did not I, because of the fear of God;" the other, like Pharaoh, when called to bow to the scepter of Jehovah exclaiming, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?"

No wonder, then, if such a disagreement render a separation necessary; for what concord has light with darkness; what agreement has Christ with Belial? If Christians would be safe, they must separate from the world. To enforce this truth, the Bible is full of cautions, both historical and preceptive. Before the flood we beheld the dreadful consequences which ensued from the sons of God being captivated by the daughters of men, (how strikingly the 'distinction' is here preserved!) and taking unto themselves wives of all whom they chose, without any regard either to principle or practice.

From these unnatural alliances sprung giants in wickedness as well as in stature, until the flood came and swept them all away. The history of the Israelites teaches us, by examples the most awful, the danger of sinful connections. The following may serve as a specimen of the whole. "So Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and they intermarried with them. Israelite sons married their daughters, and Israelite daughters were given in marriage to their sons.

And the Israelites worshiped their gods. The Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight. They forgot about the Lord their God, and they worshiped the images of Baal and the Asherah poles. Then the Lord burned with anger against Israel." Judges 3:5-8. Let us then, beware of compromising our principles. Let us beware of conceding to the practices of the world, from a mistaken notion of conciliating the prejudices, or winning over the ungodly to religion. Such conduct will only excite the contempt of the world and provoke the Almighty to hide his face from us.

No--we must be singular if we would be holy; we must be consistent if we would be useful. If we are faithful, we must indeed expect reproach; if we boldly confess Christ before men, and steadily maintain that marked distinction which forms the line of separation between the church and the world, we must submit to have our names cast out as evil. But true Christians ought never to shrink from the cross. Like Caleb, they should follow the Lord fully, when all others forsake him; and like Joshua, they should declare, with humility and integrity of heart, in the face of a sneering world, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We must let men see the foundation of our practice, and why we cannot do as others do. We must make them acquainted with our principles, and let them know what are those secret springs of action, which cause us to move in a direction so opposed to theirs. This frank and ingenuous conduct may open the minds and touch the hearts of some, who, through grace, may be led to say, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you." At all events; such upright dealing will bring comfort into our own souls, and preserve us from falling into those snares which Satan lays to catch the fearful and double-minded professor.

But if we are habitually afraid of being decided; if we endeavor to keep a good reputation with the world; if we want to live on the borders between the two kingdoms of light and darkness, maintaining a sort of friendly communion with the inhabitants on either side of the line; if we are ashamed of avowing our principles before men, when duty and the honor of Christ call for such an avowal; then we may be assured, on the truth of the Gospel, that we have no scriptural evidence of being the children of God: for thus says our divine Savior, "Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

"If we deny him, he will also deny us." "Blessed Lord! keep me from the snares and fascinations of a world which lies in wickedness. May all my affections wing their way towards you, and be ever fixed upon you. Oh, be the center on which I rest, and to which all my desires tend. Let my whole life be devoted to your service, which is perfect freedom. In all things may I seek your glory; and from the sweet constraining principle of faith and love, delight in every relative and personal duty, to the glory of your name.

What is earth and all its treasures, Dazzling bright to mortal eyes? When compared with heavenly glories, Deep within the shade it lies. Earth is but the land of shadows, Faintly lit with glowworm light; Where the prince of darkness reigns, Presage of eternal night. Oh! you Sun of glorious splendor, Shine with healing in your wing; Chase away these shades of darkness; Holy light and comfort bring. Let the heralds of salvation Round the earth with joy proclaim, Death and hell are spoiled and vanquished Through the great Emanuel's name. Take your power Almighty Savior, Claim the nations for your own; Reign, oh Lord of life and glory, Until each heart become your throne.

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