

The Christian in This World

by Vance Havner

The Christian's position in the world is one of being saved out of the world system, living in the world but not of it, and ministering in the world while keeping oneself unspotted from the world.

Duration: 30:28

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 17:6, John 18:36, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Philippians 3:20, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Holy Character"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experience of attending an old-fashioned Methodist camp meeting where they were singing and praising God. He highlights the importance of gravitating towards what truly lures us and where we belong in our hearts. The speaker explains the difference between the world that God loves, which refers to lost souls, and the world that we are warned not to love, which refers to the sinful aspects of the world. He emphasizes that as Christians, we have been saved out of the world to go back into the world and win people over to Christ. The main message is that our purpose in this world is to be a light in the darkness and to tell the world goodbye, leaving behind everything that is wrong.

Transcript

And I want to read to you from John 17, which is the high priestly prayer of our Lord. This is really the Lord's Prayer. He prayed it.

He gave us one we call the Lord's Prayer, which he didn't need to pray, because he didn't have any sins to confess. I have manifested thy name unto the man which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word.

Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are thee. 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. I pray for them.

I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. For they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. 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. 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.

And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. We have a new word for it now, we used to call it whirliness, we call it secularism. Big word, means the same thing.

Just as a rose by any other name smells just as sweet, so whirliness by any other name is just as baffling. There are two extremes on this matter of whirliness. There are some people who have separated from so many things until they become super-separators, can't even get along with themselves, eventually.

There are others who fear the Lord and serve their own gods. I wouldn't think you could do that if I hadn't read it in the Bible, but you can. You can fear the Lord on Sunday morning at 11 to 12, you know, and in so many of these meetings that start at 11 sharp and end at 12 dull, you can fear the Lord and then go right out and all week serve your own god.

And it's being done. There are so many who claim to be the Lord's sheep, but feel more at home among the devil's goats. We call them worldly Christians, which is a misnomer to start with.

The Bible says whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Somebody asked me some time ago, how can a Christian be God's enemy? Well, I didn't write it. There it is.

A friend of the world is the enemy of God. I'm convinced that a large percentage of people that we call worldly Christians, or perhaps not Christians to begin with, and that may be the trouble, a sheep may fall into a mud hole, but is not content to stay there. A Christian may fall into sin, but is not satisfied to live there.

When you see a person who is satisfied to live in sin, he's never been saved. The Bible says he that is born of God does not practice sin. Sinning is not his business.

A farmer is a man who farms, and a sinner is a man who habitually sins. That's his business. Now, a man may fall into sin.

This was spoken of false teachers when our Lord spoke of those who go back to their old ways, and he didn't talk about sheep either. He spoke of hogs and of dogs. Peter did.

Now, we need to get our Bible zoology straightened out. The Bible compares us to a number of animals, and just between you and me, some of the comparisons are not very complimentary. The Bible says, for instance, don't be like a mule.

Did you know that is in the Bible? It is. The trouble with a mule is the mule is backward about going forward. We have a lot of people like that in the service of the Lord.

Well, a sheep may fall into a mud hole, but won't stay there. There is an animal that is at home in a mud hole. Not a sheep.

And that's the one that Peter was writing about. After all, the Lord is raising sheep. He's not whitewashing swine.

That's not the Lord's business. We're not to judge people. You say, I know that.

I know the Bible says the Lord knoweth them that are his. I'm glad he does, otherwise some of them would be pretty hard to identify. Then it goes on to say, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

The best evidence that you belong to the Lord is that you hate sin, and you're not satisfied with living. When I see a bird that looks like a dove, quacks like a dove, has webbed feet like a dove, paddles around in the water like a dove, keeps the company of doves, it's hard for me to resist the conclusion, must be a dove. And when I see a professing Christian who'd rather be in the theater than at prayer meetings, who'd rather be reading the price of this world than the things of God, who'd rather be listening to rock and roll than the music of the saints, I'm driven to certain conclusions.

You are more or less identified by the company you keep, birds of a feather flock together, and where you feel most at home is your native habitat. The Bible says we know we pass from death unto life because we love the brethren. Now, I suppose you don't love the brethren.

I suppose you'd rather be with the other crowd. Well, probably that's where you belong. When Peter and John were let go, the Bible says, in being let go, they went into their own company.

Where do you go when you are let go? I'd hate to track down a lot of church members when they get a couple hundred miles away from home. Where do we go when we're let go? When Peter got out of jail, he headed for a prayer meeting right away. We gravitate to what lures us most, and eventually we show up where at heart we belong.

Now, why does the Bible say in one place God so loved the world, and again it says love not the world? Well, of course the world that God so loved that he gave his Son is the world of lost souls. And we ought to love lost souls. Indeed, it was a great English preacher, Dr. Candliss, who said, if we'd love the world the way God loves it, we'd never love it the way we shouldn't love it.

That's a wonderful way to put it. If people would only love it the way God loves it, they'd never love it the way they shouldn't love it. But when we say love not the world, when we read that verse, we should understand that this present age and set-up which politically, and economically, and socially, and religiously is under the devil, the God of this age, the prince of the power of the air, the prince of this world, the whole world lies in the wicked one.

Our Lord came to deliver us from this present evil world, Galatians 3, 4. Ephesians 2, verse 2 says that before we were saved, we walked according to the course of this world. Well, then we're supposed to walk some other direction after that. I want you to notice four things out of the verses that I read from John 17.

And if you had no other verses in the New Testament, there are plenty of them, but if you had no others, these would be enough to locate you with regard to this world. In verse 6, our Lord says, I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. A Christian's been saved out of the world.

The Greek word for church in the New Testament means the out-called ones. God's not out to save civilization today. Civilization's not going to be saved.

Civilization's a goner. God's not saving civilization. God is calling out a people for his need.

We've been saved out of this world system. We've been given a new position with Christ in the heavenlies, our citizenships in heaven. Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world.

Sometimes we hear it said of swing music that it takes you out of this world. Well, it takes you into one infinitely worse, but I'm thinking of an experience that does take you out of this world. When you got saved, you were taken out of this world, and you were made a citizen of another realm, and your position up there and your condition down here, and your standing up there and your state down here ought to correspond.

The Bible says we're pilgrims and strangers, we're exiles and aliens. Old Matthew Henry said, this world is our passage and not our portion. The Bible says this world is not your rest.

Here have we no continuing city. The next time this world offers you some of its attractions, just say, no thank you, I'm a stranger here. That's a good answer.

I don't belong. I'm just passing through. I'm not a citizen of this world trying to get to heaven.

I'm a citizen of heaven making my way through this world. It makes a lot of difference how you look at it. The biographer of Dr. Campbell Morgan says of the noted expositor's father that he lived with a Bible in his hand and his face toward a better world.

That's a good way to live. Some time ago I got in an old-fashioned Methodist camp meeting. They're pretty hard to find, but I located one.

They were having a great time that evening. They were singing, and they... When I got there, they were singing one that isn't very high-class music, but a lot of good doctrine in it. I feel like traveling on.

Well, they must have, because they sang about ten verses. Then they sat down, and an old lady got up again, and they all stood up and sang some more. I said, this crowd's going someplace tonight.

They really want to travel. Then I got to thinking about that, and I said we ought to feel like traveling on because we're strangers and we're pilgrims. We're headed somewhere else.

My dear friend, you were made for a better world, and you'll never be satisfied in this one. The reason why a dog is happy down here and satisfied, this is the only world a dog will ever have. But you're made for another one, and you just can't make yourself at home in this world.

They're trying it everywhere. You know how they do. They get their set up, get their split-level house out in suburbia.

They cook out in the backyard, get a boat, get all kind of paraphernalia. Still, they're not happy because you just can't settle down in this world. If that's all you've got, you can't be happy in this world.

You were made for another one. You're a transient. You're not a permanent.

And we've been saved out of it. Now look at verse 11. We're still in it.

And now I'm no more in the world, but these are in the world. I thought I just got through saying we'd been saved out of it. We have.

But we still have to live here, physically. We live in its houses and ride on its trains and planes and trade in its stores and go to its schools and mix with its people. And that's well and good.

That's what Christians are supposed to do. You're no good isolated out somewhere and all be yourself. The old mystics back in the Middle Ages thought they made themselves holier by hiding in a hole in the ground.

But you don't become holier by hiding in a hole somewhere. That doesn't make people holier. I think some of these mystics were really mistakes.

The Bible says we're not to accompany with fornicators, yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world. We've been saved to minister in this world, indeed. But the secret of it is found in verse 15, where our Lord prayed, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Now, he means there. I'm not asking you to take them home to heaven, but to take them through. I'm sure that you parents have prayed something like that for your children many a time, if you're the right kind of parent.

Lord, don't take them out, take them through. And he can, and he will. I think my old father must have prayed that prayer for me many a time.

We used to hear Dad pray in the night. He seemed to pray all hours of the night. I used to wonder when he slept.

And he was praying for us. And I think the burden of his prayer many a time must have been, Lord, don't take them out, take them through. And he can.

Now, my Lord was in this world. He was not a recluse or a hermit. He went to the weddings.

He mixed Republicans and sinners out there across the crowded ways of man. He found the Lord. He was criticized with the Pharisees, those folks who were separated from sinners, but not from sin.

Our Lord associated with the world, but he never had fellowship with it. All right. We've been saved out of it.

We're still in it, but look at verses 14 and 16, and they're repeated. Our Lord repeats it there. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Verse 16, they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. When the boat's in the water, that's one thing, but when the water's in the boat, that's something else again. We're not to be conformed to this world.

We're to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We're to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. 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, for all that is in the world. Now, this is what the Bible calls worldliness. The less of the flesh, and the less of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the less thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. John had so much to say. John quotes our Lord so much, too, with reference to this world.

This is 1 John, that I just read. But whether the gospel or the epistles, John has a lot to say about this world. Now, beloved, there's a lot of confusion today in this preaching on worldliness.

I have heard some preachers who got going on it, and they confine their remarks to well, card playing, dancing, theater going, smoking, two or three other things. You got the idea that that was worldliness, and when you had covered that territory, you had exhausted the subject. Oh, my soul, there's a lot of worldliness that doesn't get in a thousand miles of that.

What is worldliness? It includes that, but what is worldliness? Well, my Lord said, as it was in the days of Noah, and as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be when I come back. Well, how was it then? They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving and marrying, buying and selling, planting and building. Now, there's nothing wrong with those things in themselves, but when it's all that you do, or when you do it to the neglect of God and your own soul, then it's being occupied with this age.

That is worldliness. I am thinking of a farmer who raises hogs. That's all he does, giving his life for raising hogs.

Terrible thing to live for, but I've heard of folks going to the dogs. He's going to the hogs. I don't think he ever danced or played cards, but he's just as worldly as some young blade on the dance floor at two in the morning, because that's all he lives for.

There's no time for God. Did you ever stand on the street corner and just listen to people talk and determine what they're talking about? I'll guarantee you that nine out of ten of them will be talking about some form of eating and drinking, marrying and giving and marrying, buying and selling, planting and building. Now, you just try it out sometimes, because that's what people live for.

And when it's all that you live for, it's worldliness, whether you ever do any of these things that we rant about a great deal or not. And so the Bible says we're to deny all godliness and the lusts of this age. And some of this worldliness may be very refined.

It may even be religious. But righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness. Life has no communion with darkness.

He that believeth hath no part with an infidel. And the temple of God hath no agreement with idols. And Christ has no symphony with Belial.

Concord it is in your King James, and that's the Latin-ish form. But the original word is the word from which you get a musical term, symphony. I've heard of the unfinished symphony.

This is the impossible symphony. What symphony, what harmony, what concord has Christ with Belial? We're hearing some strange things today in evangelical circles. We're reading in religious magazines that we ought to hobnob with Sodom and Gomorrah and get chummy with this age in order to reach it, that the

end justifies the means.

It's all right, they say, for a converted nightclub singer to stay on in the nightclub as long as she winds up the program singing I'd Rather Have Jesus. At that rate, I expect one of these days to meet a Christian pickpocket. And when I ask him, how do you do it, he says, well, while I pick one pocket, I put a gospel tract in the other pocket.

Now, you say that's ridiculous? It's no more foolish than the rest of this procedure. And Alexander McLaren said, the measure of our discord with the world is the measure of our accord with the Savior. And Gypsy Smith said, if you're in with God, you're at odds with this world.

You notice the contrast here in verse 14, I've given them thy word, and the world hated them. It's the word or the world. And they're at odds.

One day Jesus' brother said to him in John 7, why don't you go up to Jerusalem and perform? Get out of the backwoods. Nobody will ever see you out here. Get up there before the people.

Jesus said, the world can't hate you because you belong to it. But me it hates because I testify that its deeds are evil. And I tell you, any preacher today that preaches against worldliness and testifies against it will find himself the object of the hatred of this world.

Jesus said it can't hate you, but it does hate me. And then he said in John 15, and here's some more world, if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own.

But because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Now that forever goes to smithereen some of these new notions that have crept into evangelical Christianity today about worldliness. You are hated of this age if you take your stand with Jesus Christ.

I don't mean that you can't be respected. I don't mean that you can't be looked up to with regard by many. But you can't be hail fellow well-met and popular with this age if you stand up for God.

First John 3, 1, the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. There's the world again. We Baptists are supposed to believe in the separation of church and state where we may, and we all, but really I don't think a revival would ever start over separation of church and state, but I can tell you what would start one if Southern Baptists would wake up the separation of the church and the world.

Now that might start something, and I wish some of our Southern Baptists could get as excited over the separation of the church and the world as they have over separation of church and state. Both are worthy, to be sure, and I don't perceive much agitation lately over the second. They say you have to compromise with the world in order to influence it.

I heard of a preacher who had taken a new pastor and they wanted him to join all the clubs in town and he didn't feel inclined to do it. One day, one rainy day, he was driving along on the highway and passed by where the car of one of his deacons had skidded off into the mud. And the preacher said, I'll back down in there and pull you out.

And the deacon said, Oh, no. You stay up there. If you get down here, we'll both be stuck in the mud.

And that's just what the preacher was waiting for. He said, Now that's what you've been wanting me to do spiritually ever since I came to this town. You've been wanting me to leave the king's highway and back open to every mud puddle of this world on the pretext of pulling somebody else out.

He said, What would happen would be another preacher stuck in the mud. Now, it's all right to throw out a tow chain, but you stay on the king's highway. Finally, my Lord says here in verse 18, Now get the connection, beloved.

We've been saved out of the world. We're still in the world. We're not of the world, but we've been saved out of the world.

Look at verse 18, As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. We have been saved out of this world to go right back into the world to win people out of this world, and that's the only business we have in this world. That's the Christian's business here.

We're not here to aid it. We're not here to be conformed to it. We're not here to sit in judgment on it and lick down our noses in pharisaic super sanctity.

We're not here to boast of our self-righteousness because we don't do this and we don't do that. I've known these super saints in some churches who wrap the rags of their self-righteousness around them just because they don't dance or smoke or play cards. They glory in that, and they say, Well, I don't do these things, and I feel like saying neither does a gate post.

What are you doing? What are you doing to the glory of God? Is it not just a matter of what you don't do? What are you doing to the glory of God? It's possible not to do this and not to do that and be covetous and be a tattler, be a backbiter, be jealous, and take God's name in vain and follow a dozen evil practices of the disposition that are just as loathsome in the sight of God. That doesn't make the other things any better, you understand. But the real issue is this.

It's not a matter of quitting this and quitting that. It's a matter of telling this old world goodbye, once and for all, and when you've done it, that includes everything that's wrong, whatever it may be, whatever your particular trouble may be. The Lord saved us to send us right back out into this world to be a light in a dark place.

They don't need a light in a light place. They need a light in a dark place. And then in verse 19 he says here, For their sakes I set myself apart.

I sanctify myself. Suppose you went into an operating room and the surgeons and the nurses were dressed in dirty garments. Their hands had not been washed.

The instruments hadn't been sterilized. And suppose they'd say, Well, the only thing that matters is your position. Your condition doesn't matter.

Just your position. We're surgeons and nurses. See our diplomas? That's not enough.

And there are Christians today who say, Well, I'm a Christian. I've been saved. But I don't worry too much about how I live every day.

Your condition doesn't matter so much. Yes, it does. Be ye holy, for I am holy.

We ought to be holy for God's sake. Years ago I was in a meeting in a Georgia town. About the second night of the meeting the young pastor of the church got under conviction about something he was doing.

It wasn't terrible. Plenty of preachers do that. But he came to me after the service and he said, I feel convicted about this matter.

He said, I have confessed it. I have put it away. But do you think I ought to say anything to my people tomorrow night about it? Well, I said, Now, we're not running an Oxford group meeting.

But if the Lord leads you to make any public statement like you do whatever the Spirit guides you to do, he got up next night and made a forthright statement. He's now one of our foremost missionaries in South America and has been there for a long time. I remember hearing him say in a Bible conference while he was on furlough some years ago, it was when Brother Havener was with me in a meeting, the Lord spoke to me a phrase.

Oh, he'd already yielded his life to the Lord in the past, but there was one little trouble and that was the focal point. And when he got loose from that, everything else came along in line. He said, What really was the verse that blessed him was the word of our Lord, Come out from among them and be ye separate.

And I'll be your Father and you, saith the Lord. And so this young preacher said, Aye, that's the verse. And look what God had for this man in South America, a field of service even to this day.

And it all hinged, really, dust in his doors turned on small hinges. Hinged on one problem. Maybe somebody like that here did not.

And when he said, It was a good-bye world. To go all the way with the Lord, it was a long way, and it led to the mission field. I don't know where to lead with you.

But you can't walk two roads at the same time. We have a song that we've sung all our days. It's another of these songs where everybody knows the first verse and nobody knows much about the last one.

But it's that last verse of so many songs that really puts us on the spot. All my life I've heard this one, I must need to go home by the way of the cross. There's no other way but this.

I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light if the way of the cross I miss. Well, I think I could get a hundred percent vote on that tonight. But oh, that last verse.

If you want to throw a chill over the meeting, you can get a church full of church members and get down to that last verse. Then I bid farewell to the way of the world. To walk in it nevermore.

How many are ready to sing that? I want to ask you tonight, beloved, have you ever told this world goodbye?

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