

Freedom From the Spirit of the World

by Zac Poonen

The Christian life is a life of daily dependence on God's miracle-working power, living in separation from the world and facing opposition, but pleasing to God.

Scripture: James 1:27

Topics: "Separation From World", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the theme of separation from the world in the New Testament, highlighting Jesus' teaching that His disciples are not of this world and the challenges they would face living in it. The responsibility of disciples to remain unspotted from the world is stressed, as the church is sanctified by Christ. The concept of separation is not physical distance but a matter of the heart, freedom from the spirit of the world while living in it, as exemplified by Jesus. Believers are like fish out of water in this world, facing opposition and discomfort, but called to depend daily on God's power for existence.

Transcript

Separation from the world is a leading theme of the New Testament. Before He went to the cross Jesus told His disciples that they did not belong to the world. Jesus was Himself one apart - "not of this world." And He affirmed that His disciples were just as truly other-worldly. And because they did not belong to it, He told them, that they would find this world a difficult place to live in (John 15:19; 17:16).

It is the disciple's responsibility to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). For the church is Christ's bride, loved, won and sanctified, by Him (Eph. 5:25-27). This explains Paul's "godly jealousy" over the Corinthian believers. He desired, he said, to present them as a pure virgin to Christ, and he feared lest the Devil corrupt them (2 Cor. 11:2, 3).

This explains too the extremely strong words, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses," addressed by James to believers who showed themselves friendly with the spirit of the world (James 4:4). Yes, the Bible has much to say on separation.

But let us be clear in our minds that what the Bible speaks of is not a separation in terms of distance. It is not an outward, physical separation from the people of the world at all, but one of the heart. Many have thought that by dwelling as hermits in some lonely place where they have no contact with the people of the world, they could draw near to God. The monk who sequesters himself in a monastery, or the nun who retires within the walls of a convent, has not understood the meaning of separation as the Bible teaches it.

Neither does this separation mean the wearing of white or saffron-coloured clothes, or any other uniform. Jesus Himself never preached or practised any such means of outward distinction. What He taught and practised was a freedom from the spirit of this world, even while living in the midst of it.

We are beings in an alien element. A ship in mid-ocean is surrounded by water, and yet no sea-water penetrates inside the ship. When a believer lives like that, he is bound to face ridicule and opposition from the world sooner or later. The world will quickly become an uncomfortable place for him to live. Jesus warned His disciples in advance that this hostility would ensue as an inevitable consequence of following Him (John 16:33). If a Christian belongs to heaven, then earth is obviously not his natural sphere. He is a fish out of water, and need not be surprised if he finds it difficult to carry on his existence here. It would need a miracle to keep a fish alive on land, and it needs no less a miracle for the true church of Christ to exist on earth. But that is just what God intends the Christian life to be - a life of daily dependence on His miracle-working power.

God expects to see, between His people and the spirit of this world, a great gulf fixed, a gulf as deep and as wide as that which separates Paradise from Hell (Luke 16:26), a gulf never to be bridged or crossed. Freedom from the spirit of the world has always been God's desire for His own. Many a believer, unfortunately, has yet to learn this lesson, and until he does so remains powerless and frustrated.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/freedom-from-the-spirit-of-the-world/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net