

(The Last Days & the Lord's Coming) a Pure Virgin for Christ

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding worldliness and the need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in order to live a life that condemns the world.

Duration: 54:23

Scripture: Matthew 7:1, John 7:24, Romans 1:30, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Galatians 1:4, 1 Timothy 6:10, 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Topics: "Separation From World", "End Time Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the distinction between the church and the world. He uses a metaphor of a handsome man and a bride walking down the road to illustrate how the church and the world used to be far apart. The preacher emphasizes that the church should not align itself with the ways of the world, as they lead to eternal death. He also highlights the importance of living in a way that condemns the world, just as Noah did. Additionally, the preacher warns against being consumed by worldly pleasures, money, and self, as these distractions can prevent us from being ready for the coming of the Lord.

Transcript

In our last study, we were looking at the fact that the last days were going to be like the days of Noah and that Noah condemned the world by the way he lived, by the things he lived for, and that is our calling too. The Bible says in Galatians 1, that Jesus died not only for our sins, now many know that he gave himself for our sins, Galatians 1 verse 4, he gave himself for our sins, but also that he might deliver us out of this present evil world. Now what does it mean to deliver us out of this present evil world? If you read the last prayer of Jesus in John 17, many times he talks about the disciples being in the world but not of the world.

Just keep them in the world. So we need to understand not only what sin is, which our conscience will tell us, but there are influences of the world, which our conscience will not tell us, because they are more subtle. It's a whole system, which the Bible calls the world.

You never read of it in the Old Testament, because that light was not so clear. It's only when the Holy Spirit came that the God of this world became more clear to God's people. For example, you don't find in the Old Testament the expression where the devil is called the God of this world.

That means the ruler of this world, the one who controls this whole world system. And when it says that Noah condemned the world, that was by his way of life, he proved that what God had said to him was more important than everything this world could offer. So I believe that in the last days God wants people who are like that, whose way of life demonstrates that the things of heaven are more real to them than the things of this earth.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 13, 1 Timothy 6, 13, he said, I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate. What was the good confession that Jesus confessed before Pontius Pilate, which Paul is telling Timothy about? See, if you read the context, he's talking about the love of money and learning to, it says in verse 7, verse 6, never making a gain out of Christianity for ourselves. And we brought nothing into the world.

We must take nothing out. We must be satisfied with food and clothing. But if you want to get rich, verse 9, you're going to fall into a lot of temptations.

Verse 10, the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. Some who long for it have wandered away from the faith. But you, man of God, flee from these things.

Run away from this whole spirit in the world of pursuing after more money than we need to live on. We certainly need to work and earn our living. And if you're not earning enough, of course, you need to seek for that.

But I'm talking about a pursuit of wealth way beyond our needs. And they're going to face all types of problems. They fall away from the faith as well.

It says in verse 10, wander away from the faith. It's not a sudden falling away. You know how you sort of gradually miss that road and it's not falling over a cliff.

Wander away means, I find it's like that. Many believers who were humble and God-fearing started out well. And then somehow the pursuit of something in the world caught their mind.

And they slowly drifted, slowly drifted away. And that's the thing you've got to be careful about. You've got to be careful.

Flee from these things and fight the good fight of faith, verse 12. And then he says in verse 13, I charge you with this confession that Jesus made before Pontius Pilate. And that confession is what we have seen before in John chapter 18 and verse 36.

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight. The mark of those whose kingdom is of this world is that they fight for earthly things, for earthly honor, for earthly position.

It could be even in the church to fight for honor. And there are so many churches that fight for their buildings and their property and fight for positions and go to court to decide who's going to be the next bishop and all types of things. But Jesus said my kingdom is not of this world.

I'm not interested in all this. If it belonged to this world, I'd be fighting and my servants would be fighting too. So when you fight for something of this world, that proves that your kingdom is of this world.

Now, we saw this in connection with what we read in Luke's gospel chapter 21 in relation to the last days, where he said in verse 34, be on guard that your hearts are not weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life and that they come on you suddenly like a trap. So he's talking about our allowing our mind and our heart. Drunk means so taken up with earthly things that suddenly that day comes and we're not ready.

We read in John's gospel chapter 12 that when Jesus died, he took the judgment for our sin. And not only the judgment for our sin, we read in John 12 verse 31. Now, judgment is upon this world, this whole world system.

It's more sophisticated today than it was 20 centuries ago. But it's a very subtle force that seeks to influence our mind and draw it away from God. And God passed his judgment on this world system when Jesus died on the cross.

And when he died on the cross, he says, now the ruler of this world will be cast out. There is no need. Now, Satan is the ruler of this world, and he was defeated on the cross.

And there's no need for him to have any no way in which he needs to influence our mind towards worldliness from now, because he's been defeated on the cross. And I, verse 32, if I get up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. The way Jesus is going to draw us away from the world is by drawing us to himself, to him who hung upon the cross.

I, if I be lifted up, will draw men to myself away from the world. Now, there are many people who want to be drawn up to Jesus when he returns away from this earth, who don't want to be drawn up to Jesus now away from this earth. Think about that.

When Christ comes, do you want to go up with him or be in this world? I think we all say we want to go up. Well, what about right now? Do we want to be drawn up to him now away from the spirit of this world now, or do we want to have everything in this world and then be taken when he comes? It's like that. I think I mentioned the story here about that Sunday school class that was told the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

How the rich man went to hell and Lazarus went to heaven. And then the Sunday school teacher asked the students, who do you want to be like? The rich man or Lazarus? And one clever boy said, I want to be like the rich man on earth and like Lazarus after I die. Wasn't that clever? But that is so true of many, many believers.

They want to be drawn up to Jesus when he comes again. They don't want to be drawn up to Jesus now away from the spirit of this world. Now, each of us, you know, this is an area where we cannot judge one another.

Through the years, Christians have judged other Christians by and called them worldly because they wore red shirts or, you know, purple or silk. There are so many ways in which people judge whether somebody is worldly or if they are too rich or if their house has got one more bedroom than ours has, they are worldly. There are all types of ways in which people have judged others as being worldly.

Usually, most Christians feel my standard is the right standard. Anybody who's got more than me is worldly and anybody who's got less than me is just being unnecessarily ascetic. This is a deception.

Worldliness is not got anything to do with your salary or any wealth you inherited or your house or your clothes or the length of your hair or any of these things. Christians have, through the years, I wish it were so easy to deliver people from worldliness. No, it's in the mind and it's the heart that can be drunk with the spirit of this world.

So, I believe in the last days as we approach the end of time, the battle is going to be for your mind more than anything else. It's your mind that determines what type of clothes you wear. It's not your clothes that are worldly, far from it.

I've seen people who wear very modest dresses and white clothes and are some of the most worldly people I've ever seen. Pharisaical, etc., because it's in the mind. So, it says in Romans 12 and verse 2, Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

So, if I were to expand that sentence, what it means is, don't be conformed to this world in your mind, but be transformed in your mind. So, worldliness is in our mind. There's a wonderful verse that Jesus spoke, which I've often said is one of the most disobeyed commands of Jesus.

Tell me if I'm right or wrong. One of the most disobeyed commands of Jesus, which believers disobey. So, you examine yourself by the light of this verse and see whether you have disobeyed it or not.

And if you have, determine that from today, you're not going to disobey it. Okay, it's from John chapter 7 and verse 24. John chapter 7, verse 24.

Do not judge according to the appearance. Do you judge people according to what they look like? You know, the way they appear to you? That's the very thing Jesus said we should never do. And I've discovered through the years that Christians in every denomination, particularly the more holiness and legalistic types, as soon as they see a person dressed a bit different or slightly different, they immediately pass a judgment.

They won't say that necessarily with their lips, but they say it because they think that person is worldly. Now, he may be worldly, quite possible. But the person who's judging him thinks the worldliness is only in the person's appearance.

That's the sad part. I'm not saying that person is not worldly, he may be. But what I'm saying, what I'm trying to point out here is, it's not his appearance that makes him worldly.

It's not his clothes. Because the person who judges him may be much more worldly in another area. For example, you find a person dressing in what you think is a very worldly way.

And you love money like anything, but dress very simply. You judge him for being worldly and you are a million times more worldly than that person because you're a lover of money. But you don't think of that as worldliness because that love of money is not seen in your clothes or the way you live.

So that's what I say. We need to see that worldliness is in our mind. And Jesus came to deliver us from that.

So now we understand what Paul said to Timothy. Remember the confession that Jesus made. And he also told Timothy in 2nd Timothy 3 about the last days.

Realize this, chapter 3, 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verse 1. Realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. And the Living Bible paraphrases that as saying, it's going to be very difficult to be a Christian in the last days. And I mentioned before, this is not because of persecution, but because men in the church, remember all these people described in verse 2, 3 and 4 are, verse 5, people who hold to a form of godliness.

So here are religious people who come to church regularly, who dress properly, and who dress in what they think is a very unworldly way. But they love themselves. They love money.

They are beautiful. They are arrogant. They are disobedient to parents.

They revile God. They are unthankful. Do you know the number of unthankful people who sit among Christians? It's a mark of pride.

I have seen this through the years. That the more proud a person is, the more unthankful he is. And the more humble a person is, the more grateful he is to God and to man.

You can pretty much test your humility by how much you thank God and thank other people for their goodness to you. If you are arrogant, people do something to you, you just take it for granted. Of course, I am a big man, they are supposed to do that for me.

So, arrogance and unthankfulness go together. Unloving, irreconcilable, that means, you know what that means. Treacherous, reckless, verse 4, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

There are four types of lovers mentioned here. Lovers of pleasure, lovers of self and lovers of money in verse 2. And lovers of pleasure and lovers of God in verse 4. So, it's pleasure, money and self that's going to be the thing that's going to occupy people's hearts in the last days. Which they do not recognize as worldliness.

Because the Bible says the God of this world has blinded people's eyes. One way he blinds our eyes is by not allowing us to see what is true worldliness. If he makes us concentrate on a drunken man as a worldly man or a drug addict as a worldly man or a girl who wears jeans as a worldly woman, it's so easy.

Or, you know, a girl who cuts her hair short or a man who wears his hair long. These are the worldly people. As long as this is our understanding of worldliness, the God of the world has blinded our eyes.

And just think of yourself, whether the God of the world has blinded your eyes. Because then you don't see what real worldliness is. Real worldliness is the love of yourself.

It's the love of money you have in your heart. It's the love of pleasure and comfort. Which you have.

That is real worldliness. The God of the world blinds your eyes to that and makes you say, I thank God I don't do all those things so I'm not worldly. Don't you think he has succeeded in making you remain worldly and think you're not worldly? You think that fellow who listens to that worldly music is worldly, but I don't listen to worldly music.

I just love money and love myself and love pleasure. You are more worldly than that person. It's in the mind.

Never forget this. That's why Jesus said, don't judge other people by their appearance. What do you know? Judge yourself.

So, here are people who hold to a form of godliness, but they have denied its power. Avoid such people. Avoid people who are going in that direction.

And it speaks further in 1 John and chapter 2. You know the contrast between the world, those who love the world and those who love God. Listen to this. 1 John 2.15 Do not love the world, nor the things in the world.

Now what does that mean? Is it talking about you shouldn't love good food or shouldn't love decent clothes? No, it's a spirit. It's a value system that this world has. Don't be occupied with that.

Because if you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. It's such a clear statement that if a person says he loves God and he loves the world, he's a liar. Now many Christians know another thing that John said in the last verse of chapter 4, that if you say you love God and you don't love your brother, you're a liar.

Everybody knows that statement. If you say you love God, 1 John 4.21, and you don't love your brother, you're a liar. But how many know this other statement in 1 John 2.15? If you say you love God and you love this world, you're also a liar.

So it's very important for us to know what is meant by this world. I'm living in this world, I'm using money, I enjoy good food. Jesus enjoyed good food too, by the way.

In fact, people saw it and they said, this guy is a gluttonous man. So worldliness is obviously not there. It's in a spirit, a value system in my mind, which makes the things which the world considers valuable, as valuable for me too.

And which the world considers not valuable, as not valuable for me. I'll give you an example, I mentioned it the other day. Everybody in the world, you know, I think of that phrase which Jesus used once, to try and define this.

When Jesus spoke about, seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. A very well known verse among Christians, in Matthew 6.33. There's a verse he said before that. All these things the Gentiles earnestly seek after, eagerly seek.

When I read that verse, the Gentiles are the people of the world. So, there are things that the people of the world eagerly seek. Okay.

In contrast to that, Jesus said, you seek the kingdom of God. There's a kingdom of this world, and there's a kingdom of God. And the people of the world are eagerly seeking certain things.

And, I tried to make a list. Lord, you can make this list too, because you can easily make it. What are the things, which the people of the world are eagerly seeking? I think number one would be money.

And then, a very comfortable life. And pleasure, even if it's a little sinful, so long as they don't get caught. Or they seek for physical health and healing.

And they seek for honor and position. What are the things they don't seek? You don't find people in the world eagerly seeking to have a pure thought life. They're not really bothered about that.

They may seek to control their external behavior, people in the world, because they like to be seen as respectable people, who don't lose their temper. They can be very worldly people, who control their temper, because otherwise they lose their testimony. But they don't eagerly seek after inward purity.

They don't eagerly seek after being 100% truthful. They don't eagerly seek after being free from habits that destroy our body. They don't mind habits like that.

Like, you know, drinking and smoking and things like that. Now, if I'm seeking also for the things that people in the world eagerly seek. For example, if I'm more interested in healing from cancer, then overcoming anger.

Okay, let's take just one contrast. You got cancer, you got anger, which you want to be free from first. You ask a worldly person, every worldly person will say, I want to be free from cancer.

Anger can wait. And if you are also more eager to be free from cancer than anger, what's the difference? That guy sits and watches television Sunday morning, you come to the church on Sunday morning. Otherwise, there's not much difference, because both of you are eagerly seeking the same thing.

Physical health is more important to you than freedom from sin. And you know, by that one stroke, you discover how many so-called believers are worldly. Are they ready for the coming of Christ? Be careful that your hearts don't get weighted down.

Now, is it wrong to seek God to freedom from cancer? Not at all. I use this example. If you got a dog that you love very much at home, and there are many people who got really loving pet dogs, and one day your son is sick and your dog is sick, which one will you take to the hospital first? You want to pray and fast about that and think and get an answer? I'm not saying don't take your dog to the veterinary hospital.

I'm saying which one will you take first? Do you realize that the contrast there between your sick son and your sick dog is the contrast between your anger and your cancer? Cancer has never sent anybody to hell till today. I'll tell you it has sent a lot of people to heaven. I had an aunt who died of cancer, but her cancer drove her to Christ and she was born again before she died.

I don't think she would have been born again if she didn't get cancer. You'll meet many people in heaven who got there because they got cancer. You'll never see anybody in hell who went there because they got cancer.

But you'll see many people in hell who went there because of their anger. Sure. Lots of people.

Now tell me, which do you think is more serious? Do you see how the world system has influenced our thinking and blinded our eyes so that we think somebody who dresses in a particular way or the length of his hair makes a person worldly? It's blinded us. It's blinded us so much that no matter how much we hear about it, we still are blind. Oh, the devil's a master at never allowing us to see the worldliness in our own thinking.

And we're judging which believer is holy and which believer is not. If we ask God to give us light and open our eyes so that we are not fooled by the devil anymore, I would suggest one course of action for you. If

you're really serious, it's something I have followed myself.

In my early days as a Christian, I never had anybody like a spiritual father to guide me. I wish I had. I think I could have been saved from many stupid legalistic ways I went in.

But I would share this with you. If you really want to be free from worldliness, from this day, decide this, that you're never going to decide whether somebody else is worldly or not by looking at the person. You're only going to decide whether you yourself are worldly or not by looking into your mind and seeing what are the things you value.

See, I'm not excited when a hundred thousand people gather in a Christian meeting to be healed of their sicknesses. It doesn't excite me. Everybody in the world is eager to be healed of their sicknesses.

I'd be excited if a hundred people gathered together for a meeting where we are being taught how to be free from anger. When I see a hundred, I'll be excited. I'm not excited when a hundred thousand people go for a healing meeting.

Every worldly person will go to that. And we have a type of preaching today which has very subtly shifted the emphasis away from sin to sickness. Away from freedom from sin to be healed of our sicknesses.

And there's religious language there. Jesus healed the sick. We should trust God for that.

I agree. But the Bible says Jesus came to save us from our sin. What about that? So that's what I mean.

That the spirit of the world What is the world? Let's look again at 1 John 2.16. 1 John 2.16 defines the world like this. This is the world Jesus came to save us from. All that is in the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father.

And this world is passing away. It's just like Noah's time. He knew the world he saw around him was passing away.

But because Noah did the will of God he remained true when that world passed away. And so can we. In the Bible, in the New Testament the world is pictured like a man who is seeking to draw us, the bride of Christ away from our engaged and the bridegroom we are engaged to.

That's the picture. The world is another very handsome, rich man trying to draw the bride of Christ away from an absent bridegroom. It's like here's a girl who is engaged to a man who has gone to a distant country and they have exchanged rings and promised to marry each other.

And he has said, I'll come back, wait for me. And they speak to each other now and then on the telephone. That means we pray and read the Bible.

But all along there's another person in this town you're living in who's always trying to attract you. And he's got so many things to offer you. This absent groom is so far away but this one is here and attracts you with so many gifts and so many things he can offer.

That's the picture in Scripture. And Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 he says in verse 2, the middle of that verse I betrothed you to one husband that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. He says when Jesus comes back I want you to be a virgin.

Because you got engaged to him as a virgin. Keep yourself as a virgin, a spiritual virgin. That's what he means for him.

A lot of us in India our Indian culture teaches us to value virginity in a girl. Rightly so. You wouldn't want your daughter to lose her virginity.

No mother would ever want that. You'd want her to keep her virginity for her husband. But that's exactly how the Holy Spirit is.

He wants to keep us as a pure virgin spiritually for Christ. And here is this other man called the world who is always trying to attract us and with craft. It says in verse 3, like the devil deceived Ebi's craftiness I'm afraid that you're mine.

You see there again it's the mind. It's not your clothes. No, it's not whether you wear skirts or pants or whether your hair is this long or that.

It's your mind. The devil tries to draw you away and lead you astray from that simple pure devotion to Christ. That's where the worldliness comes in.

In the mind. And you know at the end of scripture you read about this bride who became a harlot. She lost her virginity.

In Revelation chapter 17 it speaks about a Christian church that lost its virginity and became a harlot. And the multitudes of churches that there are in the world today all becoming harlots. It says here in Revelation 17.5 Babylon the great, the mother of harlots multitudes of harlots spiritual harlots.

It's not talking about physical adultery at all. There are a lot of people who have never committed physical adultery who are in spiritual adultery constantly. That means a relationship with the world which betrays their relationship with Christ.

Internet pornography is just one of them. It could be many other ways in which we relate to the world but we claim to be engaged to Christ. Do you know an unconverted person can never be a harlot? No unconverted person who is not born again can never be a harlot.

Because he doesn't claim to be engaged to Christ. He says my husband is the world. If your husband is the world and you give yourself to the world are you a harlot? No.

You are loyal to your husband. You are a very faithful wife. So an unconverted person is a very faithful wife to her husband the world.

That unconverted person can never be a harlot. That's why I say the harlot here cannot speak about worldly people. How can they be harlots? They are loyal and true to their husband.

It's talking about the church which is supposed to be a virgin that's become a harlot. I read a piece of poetry some time ago. It's a very long one but I'll just read you a few lines in it which shows how once upon a time the church and the world walked far apart and how cleverly the church attracted the world.

Now picture this of a handsome man and a bride who is engaged to a distant bridegroom walking down the road. The church and the world walked far apart on the changing shore of time. The world was singing a giddy song and the church a hymn sublime.

Come give me your hand said the merry world. Walk with me this way. But the good church hid her snowy hand and solemnly answered nay.

I will not give you my hand at all and I will not walk with you. Your way is the way of eternal death and your words are all untrue. That's how it started.

Nay said the world walk with me but a little space with a kindly air. The road I walk is a pleasant road and the sun shines always there. Your way is narrow and thorny and rough while mine is flowery and smooth.

Your lot is sad with reproach and toil but in rounds of joy I move. The sky to me is always blue no want no toil I know. The sky above you is always dark.

Your lot is a lot of woe. My way you can see is broad fair one and my gate is high and wide. There's room enough for you and me and we'll travel side by side.

Half shyly the church approached the world and gave him her hand of snow and the false world grasped it and walked along and whispered in accents low. It's a very slow process. Your dress is too simple to please my taste.

I have gold and pearls to wear rich velvets and silks for your graceful form and diamonds to deck your hair and the church looked down at her plain white robes and then at the dazzling world and blushed as she saw his handsome lip with a smile contemptuous curled. Okay, I will change my dress for a costlier one said the church with a smile of grace and then her pure white garment drifted away and the world gave in their place beautiful satins and fashionable silks and roses and gems and pearls and over her forehead her bright hair fell and waved in a thousand curls. Your meeting hall is too simple said the proud world.

Let us build you one like mine with kitchen for feasting and rooms for play and furniture never so fine. So he built her a costly and beautiful hall splendid it was to behold. Her sons and daughters met frequently there shining in purple and gold.

Rich fairs and shows in the hall were held and the world and his children were there laughter and music and feasts were heard in the place that was meant for prayer. There were cushioned seats for the rich and the gay to sit in their pomp and their pride but the poor who were clad in shabby array were made to sit meekly outside. Your preachers are all too old and plain said the gay world with a sneer.

They frighten my children with dreadful tales which I don't like them to hear. They talk of judgment and fire and hell and the doom of darkest night. They warn of a place that should not be thus spoken to ears polite.

I will send you some of a better stamp more brilliant and gay and fast who will show you how men may live as they like and go to heaven at last. The Father is merciful the world said great and good loving and tender and kind. You think he'd take one child to heaven and leave another behind? So the church called for pleasing and gay preachers deemed gifted and great and learned and the plain old men that preached the cross were out of her pulpits turned.

Then mammon came in and supported the church and rented a prominent pew and preaching and singing and floral display soon proclaimed the gospel new. You give too much to the poor said the world far more than you ought to do though the poor need shelter, food and clothes. Why should that trouble you? Go take your money and buy rich robes and horses and carriages fine and pearls and jewels and dainty food the rarest and costliest wine.

My children they dote on all such things and if you their love would win you must do as they do and walk in the way the flowery way they are in. And so the church her purse strings tightly held and willingly lowered her head and simpered I've given too much away, that's right I'll do sir as you have said. So the poor were turned away from the door in scorn she did not hear the orphans cry.

She drew her beautiful robes aside as the poor widows went weeping by and they of the church and they of the world journeyed closely hand and heart and no one in earth or in heaven or hell could discern the two apart. Then the church sat down at ease and said I am rich and in goods increased I have need of nothing and not to do but to laugh and dance and feast and the sly world heard her and laughed inside and mockingly set aside the church has fallen the beautiful church her shame is her boast and pride. You know even worldly people recognize that.

You know and the voice came down from the hush of heaven from him who sat on the throne I know thy works and what thou hast said but alas thou hast not known thou art poor and naked and blind with pride and ruin enthralled the expectant bride of a heavenly groom is the harlot of the world you have ceased to watch for that blessed hope you have fallen from zeal and grace so now alas I must also cast you out and block your name from its place but this is the best part of it out from the side of this harlot church while she slept in indolent shame came out a remnant who keep God's word and honor his holy name by the word of their testimony and the blood of the lamb they overcame the world and they prayed for the day when the devil their enemy would be into the abyss hurled for those who keep

their garments clean shall walk with Jesus in white in the day when he comes to claim his own to make them his jewels bright are you going to be there when he comes? it's so important you know it's a very slow process by which as you saw in that hymn slowly the world says you've got to change this it's not a radical change it's just a little bit and a little bit there and a little bit more and always the reasoning is we shouldn't be so legalistic oh we shouldn't be full of rules the world says that's right you shouldn't be so legalistic you shouldn't be so bound by rules and what is the result? the result is the spirit of the world has come right in and the things that the Gentiles eagerly seek after the church has begun to seek after till as we read in that hymn no one in heaven or earth

can say which is the church and which is the world you see we're living in such days all around us and that spirit comes into any church as it grows in size and that is why you've often heard me say there are people in this church whose example you must not follow because if you do you'll backslide yourself not everyone in this church is wholehearted and radical for Christ not everyone in this church is keeping themselves as a pure virgin for Christ you've got to watch your own heart and you have to look unto Jesus see what Paul said in Philippians in chapter 3 he talks of two types of people in verse 17 Philippians 3, 17 he says brethren follow my example and not only my example I'm not the only one observe, that means look carefully at those who walk according to this pattern that you

have in us Paul says you've seen me you've seen Timothy you've seen a few people like this who are really seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus look carefully at such examples and follow them because there are many others of whom I've often told you and now tell you even weeping the enemies of the cross of Christ they don't reject Christ but they reject the way of the cross that's the point see on that cross Jesus condemned the world Paul said I'm crucified with Christ the world is crucified to me I'm crucified to the world but many are enemies of that cross they love Jesus but they don't love his cross they don't love that cross that brought a separation between the things of heaven and the things of this earth he says these people their end is destruction their God is their appetite

their appetite for earthly things and their glory is in their shame they set their mind there again you find it's the mind they set their mind on earthly things people who set their mind on earthly things what are they called here in verse 18 enemies of the cross of Christ you know this is where our Christianity is really tested and this is where I believe we need to be careful when Jesus spoke about take heed that your heart is not weighted down and drunk in the last days with the cares of this world and being occupied with all the wonderful things the world has to offer it's not in our use of earthly things because Jesus used earthly things it is where our mind is set on earthly things you've heard me use this illustration before to speak on this verse where it says in Colossians 3

verse 2 set your mind you know so much the New Testament speaks about the mind I've already showed you a number of verses and I want to say to you my brothers and sisters please listen to me in the last days the great battle is going to be for your mind who's going to get your mind is it Jesus or is it the world and the world is constantly bombarding our mind with all that we read in the newspapers advertisements the billboards the television and now the internet our mind is being bombarded we've got to be very careful as to what we allow inside we put mosquito netting on our windows to prevent a small little mosquito from coming inside what about our mind? you filter the things that come through your mind to your mind how careful we are to filter food that we eat you know we don't eat

the wheat that you get in the ration shop you sift it and throw the chaff and the stones away it's the mind which is more important set your mind on the things above on the things on the earth and you've heard me use this illustration we have to think about earthly things for 8 hours a day with our work and then many more hours a day with our family responsibilities we've got to buy food if you've got children you've got to clothe them you've got to educate them you've got to arrange for school for them as they grow up you've got to arrange college for them I've gone through all this myself so I'm telling you as one who's gone through all this I know you've got to save money for their education all these things our mind has if you don't take your responsibility as a parent you're not a

good Christian so all this is important but I've used this picture of a rubber band if this is heavenly things and this is earthly things the rubber band must be fixed here at the heavenly and you can stretch it to the earthly things for 8 hours for your work and maybe another 4 or 5 hours for other things but once it's all over when all those earthly things you're occupied with are over it must be released it goes back to the heavenly but with many Christians the rubber band is fixed down here on the earth stretched on Sunday morning for a few hours to think about heavenly things stretched occasionally once during the day to heavenly things when it's released back to the earthly things that's the difference and the difference between the two so I want to say to you brothers and sisters

as we approach the end of time God is looking for people who will be a pure virgin for Christ because if he finds you like that he can use you to draw many people to himself your life must be a living demonstration to other people that though I live in this world I don't belong to this world that's how Jesus lived so I want to encourage you in the light of all that we heard today to take this matter very seriously to think of the very slow way in which the world tries to get a hold of us with various values and different things if he makes you if you are influenced by what you see in worldly people in their styles of living etc and it takes you away from God then you need to ask yourself whether you are ready for the coming of the Lord has your heart been drawn away from that simplicity

of devotion to Christ will you be ashamed when he comes one last verse 1 John chapter 2 it says here verse 28 little children abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink away

from him in shame at his coming there are going to be people who are ashamed when he comes because of because they are not virgins he who has ears to hear let him hear let's bow our heads for a moment of prayer if you can make one decision today Lord I never again want to judge another person it's not my business I don't want to judge another believer I want to judge myself I'm not here to decide who in the world is worldly and who is not I want to see if I'm worldly protect me Lord preserve me I want to be ready for your coming thank you Father for your word help us to live in the

light of it we pray in Jesus name Amen

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