

church of Christ at Greenwood

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Our Relationship With the World

We're surrounded! At workplaces, in schools, on city streets, at shopping malls, and in our neighborhoods — there is no place free from the influence of godlessness. Dishonesty, profanity, immodesty, drunkenness, sexual immorality, and materialism have become the norms in many cases. These behaviors and many others like them are accepted and even glorified. No place is given for the influence of God and His Word. Men have chosen to disregard the existence, power, and authority of the Creator and their lifestyles have degenerated accordingly (Romans 1.18-32).

Is it any wonder, then, that children of God are called upon to keep themselves “unstained by the world” (James 1.27), uncorrupted by the rampant spirit of rebellion against God Himself? But it's not easy. Sure, if we could completely isolate ourselves from every influence of godlessness and immorality, the kind of holiness expected by God would be simple. But we live in the world, with all of its influences (1 Corinthians 5.9-10), and at the same time we must live above those influences. That is our challenge — to follow the example of Christ, who lived in but not of the world (John 9.5; 17.16).

This is a matter of the heart. Jesus said plainly, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6.21). In other words, our devotion follows that upon which we place our greatest value. If the world, its standards, and its benefits receive our highest esteem, then

God, His will, and His blessings will fall from our favor. “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6.24). We must choose the focus of our hearts, to either love the world or to love God, and our devotion will be determined accordingly.

To Christians, John the apostle wrote, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2.15). Affection for the world and affection for God are mutually incompatible. There is no position of compromise for the child of God. One who seeks to divide his loyalty between the world and God has unwittingly made himself the opponent of God. And it matters not how cursory or how consuming, any love of the world is condemned. “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4.4). Such split devotion is tantamount to spiritual adultery, being unfaithful to the commitment made as a disciple of Christ.

In what or in whom should we place our confidence? Shall we depend upon that which is transitory and uncertain at best, or shall we trust the One who is eternal and almighty? “The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2.17).