

## How Different Must We Be?

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to present some thoughts in follow-up to what we discussed last week concerning our relationship with the world being that of “aliens/foreigners and strangers.”
2. I want to follow up on this because having to live our lives for Christ as foreigners and strangers means our lives are to be very different from most everyone else’s (Rom. 12:1-2 – “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”).
  - A. As foreigners, the worldly culture we must live within makes us very uncomfortable, just like Lot living in Sodom who according to 2 Peter 2:8 “felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds.”
  - B. As foreigners and strangers for Christ our way of life is going to be lived differently than that of those around us which will cause them to be “surprised” that we “do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they **malign** you” (1 Pet. 4:4).
3. Because of this reality, the question arises of “How different must we be?” Or, how different does God expect us to be? And that is the question I want to explore today.
4. To do that I want to examine three sets of verses that **address** and **challenge us** concerning the distinct nature of our lives in hopes of making sure we understand what this lifestyle demands of us.

### BODY:

#### **I. We are salt and light** (Matt. 5:13-16)

- A. Our lives are to be as **distinct as salt** (5:13 – “You are the **salt of the earth**; but **if the salt has become tasteless**, how can it be made salty again? **It is no longer good for anything**, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”).
  1. We know the value of salt is its distinct flavor.
    - a. We know its taste and the difference it makes in what it touches, or contacts.
    - b. This is why un-salty salt, or salt that has lost its distinct flavor, has no valuable purpose.
  2. Being *the salt of the earth* means God has made us **different** so we can affect change in the lives we touch.
  3. So, how distinct our lives are in purity, holiness, and love will determine how valuable our lives will be for God’s purposes.
    - a. For, as Jesus said, a tasteless salt, or a disciple that has lost his/her distinctiveness and, therefore, has little or no effect on others for Him, **will be cast out**.
    - b. So, we really need to take this seriously!
- B. We must be as **different as light** (5:14-16 – “**You are the light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup> nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> **Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**”).
  1. That we are to *the light of this world* means (5:14a):
    - a. God has **moved** us from the darkness of the world (Col. 1:13-14 – “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”).
    - b. We now **partake of God’s nature** through Christ:
      - i. God (1 Jn. 1:5 – “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”)
      - ii. Jesus (Jn. 8:12 – “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”).
    - c. That like salt, the value of our lives for God’s purposes is found in being **distinct, or different**, from the world around us.

- i. Light affects what it contacts, or touches, by being the opposite of the darkness that surrounds it.
  - ii. So, to be God's light in this world means a Christian's life must be distinct from, or in this case the very opposite of, the **darkness** of the world.
  - iii. Only a disciple whose life is visibly different, whose life shines for Christ, will have the proper effect on others!
2. The light of Christ in our life **cannot be hidden** (5:14b-15).
  - a. In other words, the distinctiveness of the light of Christ we shine will be *obvious* to others, like a city set on a hill.
  - b. This light must shine continually and openly for it to accomplish God's purposes.
    - i. So, to come to Christ while trying to live like the world is like putting a light under a basket. You can claim the light is on all you want, but it is useless.
    - ii. A secret disciple, or one that does not shine, or who dims Christ's light through worldliness and compromise, cannot fulfill God's purposes in their life!
3. Instead, my deeds must cause others to glorify God, which is no small things and something we should give much thought (5:16)!

## II. We must imitate God (Ephesians 5:1-13).

### A. Our lives are to be as **different as the God we follow** (5:1-4).

1. Because we are privileged to be his beloved children, we must **imitate God** by living in love (5:1-2 – “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; <sup>2</sup> and **walk in love**, just as **Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”).
  - a. This love (agape love) which must characterize our life is unique in that it is not so much about affection as it is about *seeking the good of others* through sacrificial action.
  - b. This definition came not from its usage among the Greeks, but from God's actions toward us (1 Jn. 4:8-10 – “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so **that we might live through Him**. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the **propitiation for our sins**.”).
2. God's sacrificial love demands that we live in stark contrast to the sinfully self-seeking ways of this world (5:3-4 – “But **immorality** or any **impurity** or **greed must not even be named among you**, as is proper among saints; <sup>4</sup> and there must be no **filthiness** and **silly talk**, or **coarse jesting**, which are not fitting, **but rather giving of thanks**.”). This means:
  - a. We must reject the immoral and impure desires of the flesh and eyes, seeing these should not even be named among us (5:3).
  - b. We do not talk like the world in its filthiness, shamelessness, and inappropriate silliness, but instead have thankfulness to God characterize our speech (5:4).
  - c. Again, is this easy? No! Not at all! It requires great attention and effort on our part to assure that as we *walk against the stream* we do not lose our footing!

### B. We live differently because we know the consequences of disobedience (5:5-13)

1. We know immorality, impurity, and covetousness will keep us out of heaven (5:5-6 – “For **this you know with certainty**, that **no immoral** or **impure** person or **covetous man**, who is an idolater, **has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the **wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**.”).
  - a. This is a matter of certainty. There is nothing to debate.
  - b. So, do not be deceived, for God's wrath comes on “the children of disobedience,” or those who live in disobedience to these demands!
2. We **cannot participate worldliness** (5:7-13 – “Therefore do not be partakers with them; <sup>8</sup> for you were **formerly darkness**, but now you are **Light** in the Lord; **walk as children of Light** <sup>9</sup> (for the **fruit of the Light** consists in all **goodness** and **righteousness** and **truth**), <sup>10</sup>

trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; <sup>12</sup> for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.”).

- a. Being children of light means not only that we cannot do what those in darkness do, but also that we must expose these evil deeds for what they are by our life and words (5:7-8, 11-13).
  - i. Our lives should show such holiness that the world is rebuked by it.
  - ii. And, we need to have the courage to speak up and point out the sinfulness of sin, doing so with the love of Christ, not the love of compromise.
- b. For, God expects His light in us to produce **goodness, righteousness, and truth** as we focus on **learning, or thinking of and discerning, what pleases God** (5:9-10)!
- c. Is this hard? Absolutely! It is hard to the point of being scary! Yet, that is how different we must be.

### III. We must be separate (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

A. We are as different from the world as **opposites** can be (6:14-16 – “Do not be bound [unequally yoked – ESV] together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **we are the temple of the living God**; just as God said, “I will  **dwell in them** and walk among them; and **I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**”).

1. Christians must not become “bound,” or “unequally yoked” to unbelievers (6:14a).
  - a. This concept comes from the problems with harnessing different kinds of animals in a double yoke for plowing, which God forbade (Deut. 22:10 – “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.”).
    - i. Such a yoking will cause one to control the other and the plow to go astray.
    - ii. In the same way, a Christian must not allow him/herself to get into a situation or an agreement with the worldly that gives them power to affect that Christian’s spiritual life and cause them to deviate from the path of righteousness.
  - b. In what sense does the context apply this restriction?
    - i. The context appears to address the relationship of Christians to their past lives in the pagan world and its practices.
    - ii. So, Christians are not to participate in pagan worship and its feasts (1 Cor. 10), which included the sexual immorality often associated with idolatry (1 Cor. 6), and not to compromise their faith if found in a marriage with an unbelieving mate (1 Cor. 7).
    - iii. So again, their faith required **distinction**, even when it meant that it separated them in most every way from their society and its workings!
      - 1) For, idolatry was a way of life in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, affecting one’s daily activities, job, etc.
      - 2) Thus, again, becoming a Christian meant choosing to live a difficult life!
2. The importance of this distinctiveness is backed up by five rhetorical questions (14-16).
  - a. Paul’s questions (6:14b-16a):
    - i. What partnership has righteousness (uprightness, doing what is right) with lawlessness (living without law or disobeying God’s law)?
    - ii. What fellowship has light with darkness? (A contrast we have seen repeatedly).
    - iii. What harmony/agreement has Christ with Belial (a name for Satan and means worthlessness)?
    - iv. What in common has a believer (one who trusts his/her life to Christ) with an unbeliever (one who refuses to trust in Christ)?
    - v. What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

- b. These questions and their application are very important because we are the temple of the living God who dwells with us (6:16b).
  - i. We are the place where God’s presence is manifested, and where He is worshipped.
  - ii. So, we need to ask ourselves just how rhetorical these questions are in our lives, how obvious their truth is seen in our lives.
- B. Because God *seeks to dwell in us*, we must *separate ourselves* from worldliness and uncleanness (6:16c-18 – “I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>17</sup> “Therefore, **come out from their midst and be separate,**” says the Lord. “And **do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you.** <sup>18</sup> “And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty.”).
  - 1. These are “generalized” quotes with no exact O.T. counterparts.
  - 2. They concern God’s conditions for leading Israel home from captivity which required the Levites to avoid unclean things that would defile them as they carried God’s holy vessels.
  - 3. In the same way, if we hope for God to have us as His children and welcome us into His heavenly home, we as God’s priests today (1 Pet. 2:9) must maintain a discreet distance, a continuous separation, from the contaminating effects of evil people and evil practices (1 Cor. 15:33 – “Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”).
- C. With these promises ever before us, we must dedicate ourselves to living holy lives (7:1 – “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**”).
  - 1. There is no room for compromise.
  - 2. We simply cannot allow any defilement of our flesh or our spirit, being sure that the things we do and think are holy in God’s sight!

CONCLUSION:

- 1. I hope I have given you a good idea of the distinctiveness required of us as we live in this world.
- 2. But I want you to know that as your life pursues and grows in the distinctiveness of Christ the world will take note of it and the challenge your life poses to them and will respond positively or negatively (John 15:18-21 – “If the world **hates** you, you know that **it has hated Me before it hated you.** <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but **because you are not of the world,** but I chose you out of the world, **because of this the world hates you.** <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;** if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup> But all these things **they will do to you for My name’s sake,** because they do not know the One who sent Me.”).
- 3. So, are you willing to be different—to walk a different path—to seek a different goal—to receive a very different reward at the end of your life? Christ offers this to you today.
  - A. If you are a Christians and have lost your distinctiveness, will you come today confessing your sin to God, repenting of your sin, and seeking God’s pardon by His grace?
  - B. If you are lost in your sins outside of Christ, will you choose to be different and trust Jesus and respond today in R-C-B-Lf?