

The World

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Last week in the morning worship, we saw that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. and friendship with the world is hatred toward God.

! The world and God are opposed to one another. The world is one of those three great enemies of the Christian. And so no discussion of practical religion would be complete without a discussion of the world.

And so that is the matter that we're going to talk about today. The world and worldliness and the Christians, what their stance should be towards the world.

And so as we get started, let me ask you, what is the world? What are we talking about when we say the world? Today's society.

Society. Okay. What else? Could be the philosophy, the world order. Okay.

[1:13] And the God of this world is Satan. The God who is here. Right. The society, the world order that exists today that's controlled by Satan.

That is the world. Another way of looking at the world is it's sinful human flesh and it's corporate reality.

When sinful human beings get together and they live like there is no God. That is the world. It's when men have sinful desires, as we saw last week, and they seek to get what they want.

And they seek it together. So, when one man who likes to drink gets together with other men that like to drink and they drink themselves drunk, that is the world in a very obvious form.

The flesh has a desire and several people come together and they meet that desire. And so, that is worldliness. Or, when one person doesn't like to think about God.

[2:24] And so, he gets together with another person. He meets other people along the way. They have that same desire to get rid of God. And they begin thinking together. And so, together, they throw God out of their intellectual world.

So, for example, there's the school of relativism that is so prevalent today. And one person says, you know, truth isn't something absolute that's out there.

Truth is what I decide it to be. Man is the determiner and the final arbitrator of what is true. God doesn't determine truth. I determine truth.

So, I get together with other people and we form this school of thought, this philosophy of relativism. And we get rid of God.

We stop thinking about God. And that's worldliness. When a group of students get together, and you see this in high school, when a group of students get together, and they start judging other students by the way they look, by how much money they have, and external things, then they ignore the heart.

[3:36] They ignore what God thinks about people. That is worldliness. And each of these groups build on each other. You have a small group. And a small group feeds on other small groups.

And then those small groups feed on larger groups and vice versa. The world is man's enmity, his hatred towards God at the corporate level.

It's the fallen and cursed system of this world that lives like the God of the Bible is not real. And that is what worldliness is.

So, the world begins in the heart. It begins in my heart with my desires. And then it reaches out, and it joins up with all of your hearts and your desires, as we're ruled by Satan, until it becomes a tangled, rotten, cursed mess.

And that is the world. So, that is the world. Now, the question is, what should my stance as a Christian, what should my stance or posture be towards the world?

[4:50] What's the Christian's basic stance towards the world to be? Turn with me in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 6. Ryle answers that question from this verse.

And this is going to sort of be the theme verse behind this whole lesson. 2 Corinthians 6, verse 17. 2 Corinthians 6, verse 17.

Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. So that is God's prescription for what our stance to the world should be.

Come out and be separate. God calls us to come out of the world and to be separate. So the basic Christian stance towards the world is separation.

[5:52] It's separation. We're to live lives apart. We're to be in the world, but not of the world. So we should be like that puzzle piece that you find in the puzzle box that it belongs to another puzzle.

It's in there with the box. It's in there with the other pieces, but it doesn't fit there. It doesn't belong there. And so we shouldn't fit right either. We shouldn't be interlocked, intermeshed with the world. We shouldn't fit in. We should be separate. So the first thing we want to talk about with the separation is what it's not. What is not the separation?

A lot of people have misunderstood what biblical separation should be about. And so they've substituted a counterfeit for the real thing. They have separated in the wrong way.

So now I want to ask you, what are some of the ways that people have tried to separate themselves from the world? And it wasn't biblical. It wasn't right.

[6:55] What are some of the wrong ways of separating from the world? Roger. Joining a monastery or seminary or seminary being sheltered in the world. Okay.

Joining a monastery. Very, not very common anymore, but used to be very common. What else? A bunch of man-made rules to follow.

So things of, I set up fences around my life. Things that I don't do and places I don't go. And I say, if I can make these rules, then I'm staying away from the world.

What else? Just. Okay.

Some people have decided that if I don't dress or look like the world, that means I'm really, truly separate from the world. We're going to talk about each of those things.

[8:04] One thing that Ryle brings up is that separation from the world is not giving up our worldly callings. So it's not becoming a monk.

It's not thinking that I have to be a pastor in order to be out of the world, to be separate. Some people have had those ideas, and they're not right.

Paul says, if a man will not work, neither will he eat. So God calls us to be workmen, to be workers in whatever he's called us to do.

And if we don't work, we don't eat. So God calls us to take our Christianity into our business. Separation from the world is not refusing to have any conversation or living with unconverted people.

Never having any dealings with unconverted people. So your only people that you should have any acquaintanceship with should not be people in our church.

[9:12] You should have other people out there that know you and that you have a relationship with. But Jesus lived like that, didn't he? He never said, don't have any dealings with the world.

Rather, he came from heaven to earth to be with sinners. And so that's the kind of people that we should be. Paul never said anything like that. And as a matter of fact, there was an issue in Corinth where people were wondering, can I go to feasts where unconverted people are?

And Paul never says, don't go to those feasts. Don't hang out with the unsaved. He merely says, this is the way you should act while you're there. So he's expecting us to have dealings with the unconverted.

Another idea that some people have about separation is that separation is a refusal to participate in earthly things like art and literature and music and politics.

So you say, those things are worldly. And I don't want to be of the world. And so I don't listen to the music. I don't read any of the same books.

[10:28] I don't participate in the political system. Anything like that. Things that are not directly spiritual. We don't come out of the world by not doing those things.

C.S. Lewis was once asked to speak to some students at a university in the middle of World War II about learning in wartime. Because some of the students were having a hard time buckling down

with their work.

Because they were thinking, is it right for me to be learning? Should I be learning when other people are going and dying and when the world is hanging in the balance?

Wasn't it like Nero fiddling when Rome burned? Wasn't it just being superficial? And listen to what C.S. Lewis said. Listen to what he said about Christianity and culture and see why we don't separate ourselves from the world by just refusing to participate in earthly, secular things.

This is what he says. If you attempted to suspend your whole intellectual and aesthetic activity, you would only succeed in substituting a worse cultural life for a better one.

[11:43] You are not, in fact, going to read nothing. If you don't read good books, you'll read bad ones. And if you don't go thinking rationally, you will think irrationally. And if you reject aesthetic satisfactions, you are going to fall into sensual satisfactions.

So do you see what he's saying? God has made us cultural creatures. And there's no way that we can stop being cultural creatures.

We have to live in a culture. And we're either going to experience good cultural experiences or we're going to substitute them with bad ones.

So if you don't enjoy beautiful art, you're going to enjoy ugly art. And if you don't read good books, you're going to read bad books. And so we don't leave the world by just not living a cultural life at all.

Because if we don't live any sort of cultural life, we're not a human at all. Because that is the way God has made us. We don't separate ourselves from the world by dressing or acting or speaking in a peculiar, eccentric manner.

[12:58] Ryle simply says, If your dress or manner instantly attracts attention, then you have made a big mistake. There's no evidence that Jesus, the Apostle Paul, ever dressed or spoke any differently than anyone else in this culture.

And so we're not talking about modesty and decorum. We're not talking about those things. That's one thing, and that's very important. And I'm not diminishing that at all. We're talking about eccentric clothing, where people instantly know what kind of person you are.

So there are some situations in which the way we dress and the way we speak is definitely going to be different. It's going to have to be different. Because the way the world is, is inherently evil.

But Ryle says, on the whole, most of the time, we should blend right in. People didn't look at Jesus and say, Oh, there he is. He's that guy that's dressed really weird.

They couldn't tell who he was. Because Judas had to kiss him in order for them to know who he was. So that's the things that worldliness and separating from the world is not.

[14:14] Now Ryle stops here and gives us two pieces of advice. And I think it's good to mention them. His first piece of advice is remember that the shortest path is not always the path of duty.

So what he means is, remember, sometimes separation from the world is going to look like one thing. But in reality, it's going to be something very different.

And he explains what he means. He says, It may not be to deny ourselves and adopt a very different course of action.

So we need to keep that in mind. As we're thinking about separating from the world, there's going to be things that we think, If I can just do this, if I just don't participate in these activities, then that's all I need to do.

And that will satisfy our consciences. And we'll be happy with those things. And Ryle says, That's not necessarily any kind of separation. That just might be laziness and selfishness.

[15:48] It might be an easy Christianity that God doesn't call this to. The second piece of advice is this. Watch against a sour, morose, gloomy, unpleasant, bearish demeanor.

Watch against a gloomy, morose, sour, unpleasant, bearish demeanor. And so he's saying, well, he's not saying that if you're just not naturally a happy, happy, joy, joy person all the time, then there's something wrong with you.

There are some people that were not the life of the party before they were converted. And after they were converted, there's still not the life of the party. And that is perfectly okay. There's some people's personalities, though, that give themselves to being rather morose and sour and harsh. And if we give too much rein to those things, and if we take those things too far, we have a real danger. There's a real danger of damaging our Christian testimony, especially when it comes time to separate from the world.

Because if we're acting like that, and if our personality is overly sour and harsh, then when the world sees us separating from them, they're going to think that we're just antisocial.

[17:13] They're not going to see that we're separating them from them for Christ's sake, but they're going to think that we're just bitter, mean people. And we don't want them to be offended at us because of our own sinfulness.

The world is going to be offended when we separate from them. But we need to make sure that the offense comes for the right reasons and not the wrong ones.

We need to make sure that the gospel in itself is offensive, and not us who are bringing it. So this is what Ryle says, Let us then strive to show unconverted people that our principles, whatever may be thought of them, make us cheerful, amiable, good-tempered, unselfish, considerate for others, and ready to take an interest in everything that is innocent and of good report.

And so, brothers and sisters, we need to remember Peter's advice to wives who had unconverted husbands. And his advice was basically that you should live a good life because there is such a thing as winning others over without words.

That our life and our speech should both be winsome. It shouldn't be just us saying things, but our life and the way that we live should be attractive to others.

[18:47] So what have we seen? That separation from the world is not quitting our jobs. It's not being sour and morose and hating everything the world hates.

It's not refusing to live in the world that God has made, the world of literature and culture and politics. If it's not any of those things, we have to ask, what is it?

What is true separation? So Ryle has two basic things of what separation is. First, true separation is not being conformed to the world and our thinking.

Romans 12.2 says this, Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So worldliness is a state of mind.

It's a way of thinking. And the way we separate from the world, then, is to refuse the way they're thinking and to be constantly renewed in the way that we think.

[19:50] So the world is constantly pushing on us. Maybe on purpose, or just by the sheer weight of how big the world is, it's pressing us to think like it thinks.

And true separation is a refusal to give into that pressure. And it's actually being transformed in the way that we think. So we're all on a continuum. We're all somewhere on a continuum.

We're either moving in the way that the world thinks, and we're moving in that direction, or we're moving in the way of renewal. We're moving in the direction where we appreciate what God appreciates, and we love what God loves, and we think God's thoughts after Him.

And so we have to ask, where are you on the continuum? Are you being renewed day by day? Or is it day by day, you're going more and more towards the world?

So separation is going the right direction. It's being renewed. It's an ongoing process. So that's the first thing.

[20:58] The second is this. Separation from the world is living in the light of who we are in Christ. Separation from the world is living in the light of who we are in Christ Jesus.

You have your Bibles up into 2 Corinthians 6. We read verse 16. Now we're going to put, or we've read verse 17.

We're going to put chapter 6, verse 17 in its context. I'm going to start reading at verse 14, and I want you to look at this question. Why are we not to be yoked with unbelievers?

So look for the answer. Verse 14. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?

Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? And what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?

[22:03] For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

So what reasons does Paul give why we should be separate from the world? Those who believe have nothing in common with the unbelievers.

Okay. We're believers. What do believers have in common with unbelievers? What else? Holiness. Right. We should be perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. So that's our aim. What else do we see? What are we in Christ Jesus?

[23 : 18] Temples of God. We're temples of the living God. And what does the temple of God have to do with idols? What else are believers compared to?

Light. We're compared to light. And what does the light have to do with the dark? What does the righteous have to do with the unrighteous?

What does it say about where does God live? He lives in us. He's promised to live with us. And because He has given us this promise, and since He's fulfilled it, since He's now living in us, we are to purify ourselves.

We're to separate ourselves. So separation from this world is living in the light of who we are in Christ Jesus. Paul doesn't just give us good reasons.

He doesn't tell us why we should do it. He tells us why we should do it. And the reason is, is because of what God has made us.

[24 : 29] That we are fundamentally different. And brothers and sisters, you are righteous in Christ Jesus. You are light. You are the temple of God. You are the people of God.

You are sons and daughters of God. And therefore, come out from them and be separate. You are different. And so you should live differently.

So doctrinally, this is what separation is. Separation from the world is living a life of constantly renewing our mind in recognition of who we are in Christ Jesus.

We are something fundamentally different than the world. And because of that, we should be constantly growing in our understanding of that life.

Now, Ryle then gives us a few directions on how to live a separate life. A few directions on how to live a separate life. The first direction is this. If we want to live a separate life, he says, watch out for these areas.

[25 : 34] The first direction is this. Refuse to be guided by the world's standards of right and wrong. Refuse to be guided by the world's standards of right and wrong.

So the mass of humanity is swimming in one direction. And they're saying these things are right and other things are wrong. And if we're going to live a separate life, we have to turn and go upstream. We have to live different lives and think differently. So there are sins embedded in our culture that our culture doesn't think is wrong at all.

They think it's right. So divorce, it's not a sin anymore. It used to be, but our world has changed its opinion on it. Homosexuality is not a sin.

It's a choice, or it's an orientation. Gluttony is not a sin. It's an eating problem. Premarital sex is not a sin. It's kids acting like kids will act.

[26 : 36] And so on and on we can go. The world is saying, these things are right, and these things are wrong. And if we are going to live separate lives, we have to refuse to live by that standard.

So what does the Christian do? He simply says, what does the scripture say is right? What does the word of God say? So it's the word of God, and not the world, that is every Christian's rule.

So the separated, the unworldly, Christian dad, will teach his son the difference between right and wrong. And how, this is the most important thing, and how he knows it from the scriptures.

He won't just say, don't do that. That's bad. Don't do that. He'll tell him why it's bad. Because the scripture says so right here. So, dads, we must show our children that we are men under authority. We're not making up our own rules. That's the way the world works. They make up their own rules, and then they live by the rules that they make up. We have to show them that we're not arbitrary rule makers.

[27 : 46] We don't bind their consciences out of our own free will. But we're men of God that live under the word of God. And so, we're not walking the same road as the world's walking.

We're not going the same way. We're not going to the same place. And we're not going to live the same way. We're consecrated. We're separated under God. And so, that's the first directive.

Refuse to live according to the world's standards of right and wrong. The second direction is this. Be careful how you spend your leisure time, your free time.

How you spend your free time when work isn't calling and there's not so much family responsibility is a great test of how really worldly you are.

See, your working time is really not your own for most of you. You do what the boss says, and you have to do what the boss says. So, you don't choose how you spend your time.

[28 : 48] And when you get home, you don't always have as much free time. You have certain family responsibilities that you have to take. But then you do. Everyone has some free time where it's up to them to decide how they're going to spend it.

So, how we spend our free time is like how we spend our money. It tells us what are the desires of our heart if my kingdom can come in this area. What does my kingdom look like?

So, how do you use your free time? So, here we have a Christian and we'll call him Sam. And Sam gets off work at about five. He comes home and he takes off his boots.

He sits down on the recliner in front of the TV and his kids run around and he watches sitcom reruns for an hour and then he watches an hour documentary on trash removal in New York City while he eats dinner and then I just made up something wild and you know what?

I'm sure it's been on TV at some point. So, Sam helps his kids get to take a bath then after that he sits down and he watches some reality TV and then he watches Law and Order and he goes to bed.

[30 : 05] Five days a week. That's how it works. Sam leads a frightfully normal Christian life. And Sam lives a frightfully worldly life.

So, where does God fit into Sam's life? Where does God fit into Sam's life? Well, Sam squeezes God in at the beginning of the day and then it's no more after that.

Where does Sam's wife fit into his life? I don't know. She's either right there with him or she is an angry, frustrated sister in Christ who's very disappointed with her husband.

Well, where do Sam's children fit into his life? Well, they're surely really somewhere behind the TV because he has this free time and he's spending it with the TV instead of with his children.

So, Sam wastes his life. He utterly wastes his life just like his godless neighbor down the street. So, it's a tragedy.

[31 : 15] And here's another Christian woman and we'll call her Sarah. And Sarah has three young children and between endless diapers and preparing meals and running errands, she has very little free time.

She has very little free time. And she can't ever find any time to sit down in front of the TV and just veg out. It just doesn't happen. Sarah's trying to teach her children the catechism and teach them to recite Psalm 23 in the midst of everything else that she has to do, the hustle and the bustle of her day.

And she herself is trying to memorize a book of the Bible and she has to read that book for the women's study group. So, at the end of the night she texts her children in with a song and a prayer and she goes in her room and crashes and reads a good book for a few minutes and then it's lights out.

And five days a week that's how it works. Sarah leads a frightfully unusual Christian life. She lives a very different life, a separated life.

And you might say, well, you didn't tell me what she did in her free time. And I did tell you because she was using her free time and she was investing it in her children.

[32 : 32] She was investing it in renewing her mind and renewing her family. And so she's building a life that is fundamentally different. And those building blocks that made up that life was what she did with her free time.

She lived a separate life because she used her free time in a very different way. So that's the second direction that Ryle says. Be careful how you use your free time.

If you want to live a separate life, be careful how you use your free time. Now the third direction is this. Be careful in your selection of friends and close relationships.

So we're talking about optional relationships here. You can't choose your family. You can't choose your spouse after you're done choosing your spouse. you can't choose your workmates, but you can choose your best friends.

And you can choose the people that you marry and the people that you go into business with. And if you want to live a separate life, be careful who you choose. Be careful of who you decide to share intimate relationships with.

[33 : 44] He who walks with the wise will be wise, but a companion of fools will be destroyed. God has made us.

God has made each one of us, so we're like chameleons. We start to take on the persona, the characteristics of the people that we love and spend time with.

And so we easily take on the color of our friends. So husbands and wives, we soon start talking like each other. And we soon can know what the other person wants even before they've said it.

And it's weird. It's uncanny. But that's how we have been made. So if we choose our best friends and our marriage partners with someone who is in love with the world, we are going to find that pretty soon our friends' values, our spouse's values, are going to be growing in us.

They're going to become a very part of who we are. And our friends' priorities, they're going to become our priorities. And what our friends think about God and about Christ will soon be the way we think and the way we feel about God.

[34 : 59] And that friendship will contaminate us. It will spoil us. So no one should be deceived. Don't be deceived and think that if I can get really close to this person, if I can marry them, then I can change who they are.

Because this is not going to happen. No one ever has been converted through marriage. No one has ever been saved through a friendship.

God has to save people. You can't save a person. And instead of you changing them, you're going to find out that they're changing you.

So be careful who you have intimate relationships with. The last thing that we want to talk about the last few minutes is this. What is the power for living a separate life?

What is the power for living a separate life? Because to be honest, there, I lived in the world a long time. That's sort of, that's part of me, that's where I belong.

[36 : 06] Part of me likes the world. Part of me loves the world. I want to be there. I want to think those things. It was the air I breathed. It was the food I ate.

I used to be a part of the world. I know God has separated me. He's brought me over here and He's consecrated me to Himself. And I want to live differently. But where can I get the power to do that? The world is so big. The world is so strong. How can I face the world and turn away from it? And that question is all important. Because I've given you lots of directions and lots of doctrine this morning.

Lots of things to do and to think about. But none of those things can give you any power to live a separated life. Because your heart is like my heart. It sticks like super glue to this world.

And there has to be something very strong to pull us away from the world. So where does that strength come from? Fill in the blank. This is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith.

[37 : 13] Even our faith. That passage goes on to say this. Who is it that overcomes the world?

Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. So our faith in Jesus the Son of God the all-powerful all-sufficient beautiful precious divine King of Kings Lord of Lords that is the power that can overcome the world.

Our faith in Jesus the Son of God and everything that he is has the ability to pull us away from the world to leave the world way behind to fade away because faith sees the beauty and the power and the sufficiency and the sweetness of Christ and the world when you turn away from Christ it looks like a pigsty and who wants a pigsty when you can have something so beautiful as Jesus and so faith is the eye that we see Christ with but faith is more than that it's more than the eyes to see faith is the channel that connects me and Christ together and so Christ's love for me flows along the channel of faith and my love for Christ flows along that channel so faith is the means it's the connection it's the relationship between Christ and myself so faith makes me see

Christ's worth and it makes me feel his worth and it makes me delight in his grace and so faith lays a hold of Christ and it won't let him go and we're not talking about just a detracted attachment we're talking about how two lovers won't let each other go so when we're drinking deep of Christ when we're satisfying ourselves in him and we're having real dealings with him the world is going to lie dead at our feet so if you're feeling the pull of this world and you're feeling like I don't have the strength to resist it anymore well go away and be with Jesus for a while and meditate on him have dealings with him and stir up your love for him and your delight in him and your desire for him sometimes husbands and wives have to leave the kids and go on a date where they forget everything else except for each other and so in the same way brothers and sisters we have to get

away and be with

Jesus when we're feeling the world's pull and the world's weight it's time to go and get alone with Jesus Christ it's time to say to everything else forget you you have to you're not as important as Jesus and so we have to go and we have to go get drunk on Jesus Christ and when we're completely intoxicated with him the world will fade away and the beauty will be gone and then we will have overcome the world so let's pray and ask that God would help us to do that our heavenly father thank you thank you for Jesus Christ thank you for everything that he is for us that he is our power and our strength he is our great reward and lord we want to drink more from him we want to be completely satiated with him and so will you help us we help us in the coming hour to drink deep from him and so find no satisfaction in the world no satisfaction in sin because he is all our delight we ask these things in Jesus name amen we're dismissed