

Love not the world

“Love not the world nor the things that are in the world, if any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.” 1 John 2:15

The contrast of the kingdom of God and the world

The Bible makes a very clear distinction between a person whose life is worldly and one whose is godly. The fruits of faith are very different from the fruits of unbelief. A person's life is either one that follows the way of unbelief; the flesh, the world, or false righteousness, or it follows the way of faith; the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God, and righteousness in Christ Jesus. The Bible makes another very clear distinction between these two ways “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matt. 7:13,14. The Bible also makes yet another very clear distinction one contrasting those who hear God's word and do it and those who hear it and do it not. In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks of the wise and foolish builders, one built on a rock, the other on sand, and the stability of their respective houses is well known. The time in which we live amplifies the great contrasts presented in God's word. There are today, the same clear distinctions between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world that the Bible so vividly portrays. We live in a time of intense worldliness, trials, and temptations, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of time, no, nor shall ever be. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.” Matt. 24:21,22. Life for every one of us includes temptation, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.” 1 Pet. 4:12. Giving in to temptation is sin, “then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” James 1:15.

Faithful Christian living, in other words, living according to the word of God, promises everlasting life but living in sin brings destruction and death. “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. 6:22,23. Believers don't live in sin but attempt to live their lives holding faith and a good conscience. God's word gives clear instruction and advice on how we should live and behave, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Titus 2:11,12.

We are in the world but not of the world. This has two parts; as Christians, we need to interact with others, including unbelievers. We should extend friendship, participate in society, and do our part as citizens and neighbors. We are the light of the world, how can we be a light if we seclude ourselves? We have an obligation and a responsibility to contribute positively to our society. But, we do not join in the sin and evil or false spiritualities of the world.

What I have mentioned so far, in consideration of the current conditions in which we live and because of the love of the Holy Spirit for undying souls, prompts us to speak very openly and frankly about the dangers of our time, particularly the love of the world.

Sing SZ 121 v. 5,6

Love of the world reveals itself in many ways.

Love of the world is born of a lack of sobriety in personal faith and a permissiveness or leniency toward sin. In this condition, one loses the fear of sin and may actually seek it out. The soberness of faith and its significance and importance are lost and one becomes not only numb to sin but accustomed to it. The priority of life, either secretly or openly, is no longer to put sin away and follow the bloody footsteps of the Lord Jesus but rather, to follow the flesh and to find ways to satisfy its insatiable lusts and desires. Perhaps instead of listening to the comforting, peaceful words and music of the songs of Zion, or maybe relaxing to some respectable and ennobling classical music, the heart and ear may strain to the booming beat of rock or pop, or to the melancholy moans of country. The wayward soul, no longer content in the light and love of Jesus, may even sink to the depths of dark, violent, and sinister music of doom, sex, drugs, homicide, suicide, and even Satan! The sin of worldly music has drawn more than one former believer into the world, driving away the Holy Spirit and the hope of eternal life, in the process.

Our present culture has bred a hedonistic or pleasure-seeking society. The standard of living is high, disposable income is high, and the imagination of man has a huge playground. Sensuality and ways of exciting and pleasing the flesh have sunk to almost unbelievable depths of filth and corruption. In our society there exists an unbridled fascination with sex and sexuality. Age honored attitudes in which marriage was understood to be the correct and appropriate institution for a sexual relationship have yielded to utter immorality in the guise of personal freedom and individual choice. As believers, we must be quite straightforward and frank in our discussions when we consider this matter. Fornication, which is sexual relations before marriage, and adultery, which is sexual relations outside of marriage, are sin! along with all the fleshly acts associated with them. It is important that we not be deceived into permissiveness and leniency, “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Rom. 13:14. Believing courtship should not take on the manner, behavior, or even communication of this world. Believing courtships are beautiful and godly, and should be considered and spoken of as such. For example, worldly references like sexy lady, hot body, and that sort of nonsense, are of the flesh, worldly, offensive, lacking in Christian sobriety, and should be avoided. I also want to touch on the dynamics of male/female relationships. We see in society a strong emergence of provocative feminine aggressiveness in relationships. When this manifests itself in God's kingdom, it causes unrest due to its conflict with God's established order for such relationships, “for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.” Although misunderstood by the

world, this is not oppressive or demeaning in the least, but rather relates how in admiration, love, mutual honor and respect, a man cares for and cherishes the woman of his life. We have sometimes, with alarm, seen distasteful, physically provocative, and unwholesome aggressiveness of Christian young women towards courtship and have seen the same from young men. Crass and vulgar attitudes and comments have no place in Christianity. It is good for young people to be sober, polite, and respectful towards one another, “to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.” Acts 24:16. Hopefully, the natural and healthy timidity and shyness in approaching the opposite sex will prevail.

Sing SZ 120 v. 5

Another worldly custom which we have seen with increasing alarm appear among God's children is the young age at which children, yes children, begin to show more than a shy and distant attraction to one another. It is quite common for worldly kids to begin dating, to use the common term, as young teenagers. For them, it is simply to have a boy or girlfriend and often to satisfy the lusts of the flesh; the intention is far from finding a marriage partner. Even if someone that age, believer or not, would indicate future marriage intentions as the motivation for starting such a relationship, we know they are far too young, far too immature, far too irresponsible to even consider marriage even remotely realistically. They do not have the practical tools or experience, the emotional maturity, or psychological development—in other words, they are totally unprepared to deal with such a commitment and relationship. “To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Eccl 3:1. Courtship is a serious thing, it's not just dating, like in the world, as the apostle writes, “and be not conformed to this world.” Rom 12:2. Do not put yourself in the way of temptation, nor grieve your parents and the elders.

It remains well understood among us that alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs are poisons to the body but even greater poisons to the undying soul. The seriousness of these sins cannot be overstated. Alcoholic and drug induced intoxications remove faith, and if one should die in that condition, the testimony would be sorrowful as only everlasting destruction awaits.

Today's technology is awesome, yet it can be both a blessing and a curse. The child of God must rely on the Holy Spirit guided conscience when making decisions regarding the use of the internet and related media. We have before us, at the click of a mouse, both good and evil. Today's and tomorrow's technology can be our servant for good or our slave-master for evil. God's word has guided believers through all phases and developments in civilizations since the dawn of humanity. We truly marvel at its timeless relevance and application. “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; ... therefore choose life.” Deut. 30:15,19. Dear young believers, make your choices and decisions according to God's word and good conscience. It is easy to imagine that we operate 'on-line' complete anonymity. However, God is quite technologically literate. We have always said that God sees and knows all things, now we say that His vision completely spans cyberspace, as well. May our visits to internet sites and our electronic communication, that which we cast our eyes upon and lend an ear to, be in harmony with good conscience and Christian values. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” Eph. 4:29. As our introductory verse related, “the lust of the eyes...is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Sing SZ 114 v. 4,5

Being our brother's keeper

The enemy of souls can cause one to not only neglect the role of being his/her brother's keeper but can influence one to even lie and deceive in an effort to cover up the faults of another, thinking it to be a display of friendship. That is anything but friendly. It is akin to putting a filthy, smelly, bacteria-laced and maggot-ridden rag on a wound instead of a clean, sterile dressing and bandage. Improper cleansing and covering up does not help but harms. The result is pain and sickness. The attempt to cover up sin with sin results in spiritual sickness, sorrow, and pain, the which, if uncared for, could lead to death. Don't cover up sins, yours or anyone else's, lay aside every weight, and burden and the sin which doth so easily beset! Heb. 12:1 True cleansing happens through the blood of Christ.

Our source of strength; the gospel

Love of the world in all its forms is sin, it is sickness which could lead to death. Let us battle against this and all sin through the power of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins in the name and blood of Jesus. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. Rom. 1:16. Believe sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus!

Sing SZ 119

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