

We Cannot Love Both Christ and This World

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness (influence), how shall it be made salty?” (Matt. 5:13-16).

Throughout history, Christians have vacillated between two extremes: compromising with the culture or removing themselves from it (isolation). Neither extreme is healthy. But the focus of this article is on carnality—being so ingrained in the culture that we no longer preserve those things that are noble and good. Although we definitely want to relate to others, our lifestyle should reflect God’s heart rather than the world’s influence. The world will know that we are Christians by our love for one another and by our obedience, not by how well we imitate the world around us. Oswald Chambers once noted that a sinner, who is now saved by grace, “proves he is forgiven by being the opposite of who he was.” He no longer resembles the sinful world that use to govern his heart.

Carnal Christians give God “His due” (a few hours on Sunday), but they forget His call to “come out from among them (the world) and be separate.” Is the world influencing you? What does your mental media diet consist of? Who do you hang out with? What, and who, do you listen to? Is your heart set toward the things of God or the world’s influence? A quick peruse of your friends, LIKES, and posts on Facebook will reveal a great deal.

Compromise also deceives. James 1:22 reminds us that if we listen to God’s word without doing it, we are fooling ourselves ... we are deceived. The power of God’s word lies in the application. In addition to non-Christians, it is Christians who are moving sexually explicit and violent movies to the Top 10 by not applying purity to their lives. It is

Christians who are addicted to porn and supplying the revenue to fuel the industry.

I often remind our congregation that we can either make our homes a holy sanctuary that honors Christ, or a breeding ground for Satan. That's a hard statement but it's true: we cannot love both Christ and this world. Carnality has a cost. In times past, the hero was the father, not Edward (from Twilight). The greatest influence was the mother, not Bella. Kids once quoted Scriptures; now they are casting spells.

Don't get me wrong: We are to examine our own lives and motives first, and then we are to be moved primarily by love for God and others before critiquing. Jesus said in Matthew 7:5 that we must first remove the plank from our own eye, and then we will see clearly to remove the speck from our brother's eye. Avoiding compromise is a struggle for all of us. We are constantly swimming upstream against the cultural tide. The fact that there is a struggle demonstrates the importance of victory.

Are you being infected by the world? Being infected is the ultimate cost of carnality! Like any infection, it can destroy the body, and, in this case, the soul. When we are infected, we infect others. Parents, what influences are you allowing into your home ... into the minds of your children? Things that are pure, noble, and true, or dark, demonic, and false?

Carnality destroys our relationship with Christ and genuine fellowship with other believers. It destroys our prayer life as well. A carnal Christian does not pray, really pray and seek the heart of God. A deep prayer life exposes facades and crushes hypocrisy. Carnality also destroys spiritual power and hinders the infilling of the Spirit. In short, everything that God calls us to be is compromised.

When Jesus said that we are "the salt and light of the earth," He was saying that we should have a preserving and cleansing

effect on the culture ... we should bring a purifying aspect to all areas of life. Light dispels darkness; it does not cater to it. The person who lives a compromised life is not drawn to holiness and purity ... these terms are repulsive to them. Does this article anger and upset? The old adage rings true, "When a rock is thrown into a pile of dogs the one who yelps was struck." If this upsets, it applies. But the purpose isn't to upset; ultimately, it's to foster repentance and a deeper walk with God. There's nothing more important than a life set ablaze for God.

On a closing note, carnality not only affects the pew, but the pulpit as well. A carnal pastor still offers motivating sermons, but he will lose unction, boldness, and spiritual insight. The world, and carnal Christians, will love him, but Spirit-filled believers will leave the service starving for more of God. Pastors, if we would make it our goal to know Christ more personally we would preach Christ more powerfully. Are we calling people out of the cultural mindset or are we encouraging it by our silence?

At this point you may think, "Why try? This is hopeless! I've drifted too far." Let me reassure you: God doesn't let our relationship with Him hinge on "measuring up," or on "following rules." He wants us to come as we are, recognize our need for a Savior, and commit our life completely to Him. Simply repent of this destructive lifestyle, and begin making choices that promote holiness and purity. Change is God's job, but obedience is ours.

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