

## **IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD**

The church has a glorious privilege and an awesome responsibility to shine forth the light of Christ in the world. It is through the church that God is glorified: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph.3:21). Knowing that God receives glory only through the church, it is incumbent upon those who are members of the church to bear fruit. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8). We bear fruit through godly living, and by bringing souls to Jesus. Though surrounded by a world that at times is hostile to the religion of Christ and to the standard by which we live, we must seek to reach out to good and honest hearts with the message of salvation (Rom.1:16).

Some have gone to extremes in an attempt to keep the church from sin while at the same time trying to win over those who are in the world. In an attempt to protect the church from the influences of the world around us, some have essentially sounded the retreat. In years gone by monasteries were erected and convents were established to provide a “safe-haven” from worldly influences. Some religious groups formed their own societies, establishing towns, school systems, etc., in order to isolate themselves from the outside world. God never intended for the church to be isolated from the world. We have an obligation to preserve a godly influence in an ungodly society: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matt.5:13). Jesus’ prayer for the church was, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). To isolate the church from the world is to rob the world of the only influence that can lead it out of darkness. It would be like having a boat that one was afraid to put into the water lest a leak be discovered or some other problem arise. This is an extreme that we must avoid.

The other extreme is just as detrimental to the influence of the church. Many churches have allowed themselves to be influenced all too much by the world. Divorce and remarriage for any cause is accepted. False worship is embraced under the guise of tolerance. Immodest apparel is welcomed or at the very least overlooked. Worldliness is so rampant in many churches that one has a hard time distinguishing them from most social/civic organizations. The church is much like a boat afloat on the watery world. So long as the boat is in the water, all is well. When the water starts getting into the boat, the boat is in danger of sinking unless the water is removed and the breaches are plugged. The church is in the world so that souls might be won to the Lord. The problem occurs when the world starts to get into the church. “I beseech ye therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”

(Rom.12:1-2). It is time for God's children to cast the world out of the church. We must not be pressed into its mold. We must persuade the world to be conformed to the image of Jesus! We must always remember—we are in the world, but not of the world!

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