

# Holiness and the World

## A Problem Every Christian Must Face

Kenneth Bedwell

The relationship of the sanctified soul to the world is an urgent and inescapable problem. We are in the world, bound to it by birth, and compelled to touch it at every moment throughout our earthly life. What then must be our attitude as Spirit-filled believers towards the world? Furthermore, what is the world's attitude towards the sanctified? The word of God leaves us in doubt upon this question. So then let us consider carefully what it has to say.

### 1. Hated by the World

**"If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me, before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19-20).**

These are the words of Jesus given in warning to His disciples, just before He went to the Cross, so that they might be prepared for the antagonism and persecution which they were to receive at the hands of the world. Again in His prayer to the Father in John 17 He declared, "the world hated them." The very holiness of Jesus was the disturbing factor which aroused the active hatred of His enemies. He was different. Their hypocrisies, their religious and racial pride, their narrow bigotry, their air of superiority, He could not endure. His whole life was a standing rebuke to men and women who were living in sin. They could not stand Him, so they crucified Him.

Jesus warned us that the servant is not above his master (John 15:20). For the very same reasons they will persecute the followers of Jesus. The more like Jesus we are, the more likely is the world to want to crucify us! Methods change, but the spirit of the world is the same.

It is remarkable that whenever God's children have been truly filled with the Holy Ghost, and revivals have swept over the land, then persecution has arisen, bitter and fierce in proportion to the measure of the revival. The devil hates holiness, and so he inspires his minions to hate and persecute holy people. The revival in Jerusalem following Pentecost was immediately followed by the persecution which began with the imprisonment of the disciples, the stoning of Stephen, and ended with the scattering of the Christians from the Holy City. It was not long before Rome, too, became incensed, and thousands of Christians perished in the amphitheatre. It has continued so down through the centuries. The early Methodist preachers were pelted with mud and stones by the mob and thrown into prison by the authorities. They recognized that holy men and women were a threat to all that they stood for, and so they tried to silence them. Persecution in our day has taken on the more subtle form of intellectual scepticism, and superior contempt, combined with a callous indifference. Make no mistake about it—the world hates Jesus Christ, and with Him all who are Christ-like.

### 2. Separate from the World

**"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).**

The very reason why the world hates the sanctified, is because in spirit and life they

are separate from and different from the world. Society demands conformity, and where it is not given it persecutes. The Christian becomes a speckled bird. The sanctified soul is in the world, but not of the world.

The revolution wrought in the heart by the cleansing of the Blood of Christ brings in new ideals, a new outlook, new principles, new sources of pleasure and a new vision. Instead of being conformed to the world, the mind is transformed by a complete renewal of the disposition. The Spirit-filled soul and the world are like paraffin and water, they may be thrown together, but they cannot and will not mix. A worldly Christian is a freak—a contradiction in terms—and a traitor to His Lord.

James declares that friendship with the world is on a par with adultery. It is in fact spiritual adultery, for it is an unlawful, a demoralizing alliance. In strong terms the apostle affirms "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself the enemy of God."

John exhorts God's people, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). One love is a rival of the other for the affections of the soul. We cannot love God without reserve and love the world at the same time. It is spiritually and morally impossible. This applies to worldliness in dress, in pleasure, in business, in society, and in the home. A heart experience of holiness results in the re-alignment of every department of human living. You cannot be sanctified and worldly at the same time.

### 3. Victor Over the World

**"This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith" (1 John 5:4).**

Thank God we need not succumb to the pernicious and persistent influences of the world. We can be "Overcomers." In the minority—yes, but overwhelmed—no! The tribulation that comes by our refusal to hobnob with the world throws us into the best society in the universe—that of Jesus Christ.

He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." The world rejected Him, mocked Him, misunderstood Him, and crucified Him—but they could not defeat Him. He came through it all "More than conqueror." Praise God, He overcame the world!

Because He overcame, we may overcome. His victory becomes our victory. He overcame by meeting and defeating the prince of this world. He could say triumphantly, "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out" (John 12:31). So completely did Jesus defeat him that he could say, "The prince of this world hath been judged." The secret of separation from the world and victory over the world lies in the appropriation of that which Jesus has accomplished.

To be born again from above means that a new life—an unworldly life has begun. To be sanctified wholly means that the old life has been crucified. If the new birth takes us out of the world, spiritually, then the blessing of sanctification takes the world out of us. We need both experiences to be masters of the

world. When He resides within in undisputed possession, then it is true that "Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world" (I John 4:4). The victory has been won for us, and it becomes ours when we exercise faith in the Victor. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH!

### 4. Sent Into the World

**"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world" (John 17:15). "As thou didst send me into the world even so sent I them into the world" (John 17:18).**

God does not propose to protect us from the cruel blasts of the world, or to remove us to a place where the world cannot touch us. He sends us back into the cold, uncongenial, and antagonistic world, to win from its clutches the precious souls of men. The world has been defined as "Organized society in opposition to God." But Jesus never forgot that within that organized society, blinded and deceived there were men and women who could be won back to light and life and love and holiness.

He was crucified by the world, but He died to save it. He was hated by the world, but He loved the souls of men, and bore their sin in His own body on the cross.

Our task is to go back into the world from which God has delivered us, and from which He has separated us, to snatch men as brands from the burning. We are not to be so "Heavenly minded that we are to be no earthly use." This other-worldliness does not become pre-occupied with its own sanctity, while souls are perishing. No, it takes off its coat, and rolls up its sleeves, and goes down to the very gates of hell, until it can feel the very scorching of the fire, in order to rescue poor deluded and wrecked humanity. The doctor sterilizes himself and his instruments, not that he might avoid the responsibilities of his calling, but that he might be able to operate without endangering the lives of others. He is separate that he may save.

You cannot reach out a helping hand to save the drowning man, if you yourself are being sucked down by the treacherous current.

Deliverance from the world is a pre-requisite for being made a blessing in the world. Worldly Christians are never successful soul-winners. When I want to find those who have a burning zeal for souls and who have skill in winning men to God, I do not go to the selfish worldly crowd, but to those who have been separated and sanctified and baptized with the fire of the Holy Ghost, and fitted for the Master's use.

Yes, this is the divine order—Hated by the world, separate from the world, victor over the world, sent into the world.—Africa Calling.

### Youth Camp Testimonies (From Page 2, Column 3)

from many things, to be injured, etc., and I let Him come into my heart forever. Amen."

Gilbert Mavuso, 14 years old, writes:

"I believe that God has saved me from all my sin . . . Then I go with my father to the Transvaal (from Swaziland). From there I find many bad things and learned to smoke and every bad thing. But one day I find Mfundisi Goodman. Well, Umfundisi was teaching the name of God, and I go to the meeting. Today I find myself happy. I thank God for helping me that today I am among Christians and today I still ask God that I must not go with those things again."