

Why is Separation from the World Important?

Ephesians 4:17-24

¹ Why is separation from the world important?

Our scripture today will tell us why. ² From Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 17 through 24, **So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ¹**

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You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of

¹ Ephesians 4:17-19.

your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. ²

Jews were different from Gentiles, non-Jews. Jews called non-Jewish people “the nations”; the other guys. Jews were superior to them as a group spiritually and morally because they obeyed God’s Law; the Law of Moses.

In this scripture passage we, the church, are considered like the Jews. The world, those who live like your former lives, are considered like the Gentiles; the non-Jews. ⁴

So, why is separation from the world so important? Because you are in Christ. You are a different creature than before! You must not conduct yourself like the world and this is why. ⁵

Verses 17 through 19 show us . . .

² Ephesians 4:20-24.

I. What the World Really Looks Like from God's Perspective - v17-19

What the world really looks like from God's perspective. ⁶

Verse 18 tells us that **the world's understanding is darkened**. It says, **They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God . . .** ⁷

In verse 17, **the futility of their thinking** literally means "their brains were empty"! You may focus so much on this life that you don't focus much on the next one. When the Lord comes again your focus on things like money, status and world relationships lose their position of importance! ⁸ The Lord wants you to **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** ^{3 9}

Verse 18 continues, **the world's lives are separated from the life of God. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God**

³ Matthew 6:33.

because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 10

Do you have a willful **ignorance**; you just don't want to know the Lord?

Do you use intellectual calisthenics as a smokescreen to justify why you can't believe? Do you search for "scientific explanations" or "logical arguments" as your excuse for not believing?

Maybe you feel that if you considered a close relationship with God as a possibility you would have to give up too much. You don't give up things when you receive the Lord, you just trade them in! 11

Maybe you hesitate to surrender to Him because you are too ashamed of your past. John, chapter 3, verses 19 and 20 puts it this way, **This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Is that you?** 12

Maybe, according to verse 18, you just have a **hardening of your heart!** ⁴ Just like the Pharaoh of Egypt, his heart was hardened when the plagues were removed!

How is your heart hardened? Is it by hardship in your life? Maybe it's because of personal tragedy. Maybe it's because of riches and the easy life! ¹³

Verse 19 tells us that **the world's consciences have lost all sensitivity.** **Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.** ¹⁴

The word **sensitivity** in the original language, ⁵ literally means "to cease to feel pain for". It means to be callous or petrified. ¹⁵

⁴ Ephesians 4:18 - They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

⁵ ἀπαλγέω.

I remember visiting a petrified forest when I was a kid. Wood from trees had become hard stone. When you lose all sensitivity your heart becomes that way. ¹⁶

Verse 19 continues; you **give yourself over to sensuality**. ⁶ This means you have become shameless!

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This is the result of **the Law of Sin** described in Romans, chapter 7, verses 14 and 15, **We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.**

The Law of Sin is this. The more you do it, the more addicted you become to it. The more addicted you become the more it takes to give you the same kicks! ¹⁸ With drugs, you start in secret but eventually cry out publicly for it. ¹⁹ With alcohol, you become so enslaved you eventually don't care who sees you.

⁶ Ephesians 4:19 - Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

So, that's the world God sees. ²⁰ But . . .

II. God Expects His Redeemed Children to be Different - v20-24

God expects His redeemed children to be different! ²¹

Because **you did not come to know Christ that way!** ⁷

²² The way of the world is diametrically opposed to the ways of God! ²³

In the Lord **we have respect for human life.** The Lord created it so we should not abort it or euthanize it for our convenience or financial profit. ²⁴

In the Lord **we have respect for human dignity.** The Lord created us as one; not in different classes or levels of dignity! ²⁵

Notice how the Lord treated people. He cared for people by eating with them, healing them and rescuing them from sin. ²⁶ God's word tells us that

⁷ Ephesians 4:20.

your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . .⁸ ₂₇

God also wants His children to be different from the world because **being in Him involves a change of conduct!** ₂₈

Verse 22 emphasizes that **your former way of life** (your old self) **must be laid aside**. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires. Romans, chapter 6, verses 1 and 2 puts it this way, **Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?** ₂₉

Verse 24 shows us how to do that. Your **new self** must be **put on**; like a change of clothes. Galatians, chapter 3, verse 27, puts it this way, . . . **all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with**

⁸ Philippians 2:5.

Christ. ³⁰ In the original language, **put on** and **clothe yourselves** are the same word in both scriptures. ⁹ ³¹

This is accomplished, in verse 23, **by renewing the attitude of your minds!** ³² That's why Romans, chapter 12, verse 2 would say, **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

So this scripture shows us as Christians why separation from the world is important. Verses 17 through 19 gave us an understanding of what the world really looks like from God's perspective and verses 20 through 24 tells us what to do about it! ³³

If you are aware that your life has not changed much since you gave your heart to the Lord, it's time to get with it! It's the changed life that becomes the abundant life God promised you, ¹⁰ not the life of the world!

⁹ ἐνδύω.

¹⁰ John 10:10 - I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. - King James Version.

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