

# BEYOND THE BASIC

## LESSON 5 - CONTAMINATED BY SELF AND THE WORLD

### **Worshipper's Present State**

If you ask individuals that attend church if they actually want to be what God has created them to be, most would probably answer yes, but they would not be really sure what that is. If you ask people that attend church if they really want to see signs and wonders in their lives, most would probably answer yes, but they don't truly expect to see any. The truth is that many people who call themselves Christians do not always act the same when they are apart from other Christians, and they follow a life style not markedly different from those of worldly people. The body of Christ, both corporately and individually, is supposed to be visibly different from the world (Romans 12:2). The church is to be undefiled, seek God, and do no iniquity (Psalm 119:1-3). We are not known by what we say we are, but by how we act (Matthew 12:33). We are called to purge the old self that conforms to the world (1 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Corinthians 7:1), and not develop close ties with worldly people (2 Corinthians 6:14, Ephesians 5:11). We should not give any impression of wrongdoing (1 Thessalonians 5:22). We are not to participate in the ways of the world (1 Timothy 5:22). Whoever is a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

The church is people, not denominations, organizations, or buildings. The modern church does not act very much like the church and can hardly be distinguished from the rest of world. When Jesus walked this earth He went about healing people, and His church continued that work (Acts 3:1-10, Acts 5:12-16). The story of the first century church is a story of divine healing in the name of Jesus, thereby revealing God's glory (Acts 9:32-35, Acts 14:8-10). Jesus was seen in and through His church. People of the world were not only convicted, but were attracted by the visible presence of the power of God. The effectiveness of the disciples was strengthened by the corporate prayers of the church, and by being in agreement with one another and with the Holy Spirit. Some clearly supernatural events occurred because of prayer (Acts 12:5-12). The Christians lived in community as one loving family (Acts 2:42-47), sharing all their material things and caring for one another. Outsiders were impressed by the love they had for one another because it was alien to worldly life.

One way or another, through the centuries the zeal that characterized the early church seems to have almost evaporated. Those first disciples could truthfully say that they literally thirsted after God (Psalm 42:2). God told the Jews that they were not doing very well with their loyalty to Him (Hosea 6:4-7), and He could just as well address the twenty first century church the same way. Though many people would say they love God first, the way they live proves that to not be true. Nothing else in the entire world can come before God (Matthew 10:37&38). Much of the strength of the early church stemmed from their constant prayers. The modern church does not pray enough corporately (Matthew 26:41). We prefer to waft about with our faith not expending much effort, but that is not God's way for us (Jude 3). Similar to the church in Ephesus, we have found other things to love more than God (Revelation 2:4). However, there is something that exists in the modern church that literally sickens God, and that is indifference toward Him and indifference toward the spiritual battle raging all around us (Revelation 3:15&16). The church has made God, and a personal relationship with God, to be just one more way to occupy our time rather than something vital to eternal existence.

### **The Problem of Self**

Our greatest obstacle to becoming who God made us to be is self. The reason self is such a formidable impediment is that we cannot get away from self. No matter where we are or what we are doing, self is always right there, saying "What about me? What about me?" Self always wants to be

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first, top dog, and in control. Many problems in society occur when two different selves clash trying to climb up on the same pedestal. The real problem is that no self belongs in command, Jesus does (Proverbs 3:5), and only Jesus belongs there (Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:9-11). If we allow self to rule, we are putting self before God, and that is idolatry, which God really does not like (Ephesians 5:5&6, Colossians 3:5&6). Self usually does not like to be inconvenienced. Participating in the assembly of the saints on Sunday morning is accepted, unless there is a ball game on, or a fishing trip, or a golf game at the same time. Gatherings at other times for praise, worship, or prayer is a lot of bother, not convenient, and besides, we have other plans for that time. For some people, God only gets the leftover time. The Jews tried giving God the leftovers, and He was not happy (Malachi 1:7&8, Malachi 1:12&13, Malachi 2:2&3). God calls us family (Ephesians 3:14&15, 2 Corinthians 6:17&18, Romans 8:29) and expects us to enjoy gathering together. If we let self isolate us from the family of God to participate in the activities of the world, we are in trouble (1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 1 John 1:6&7). Unless there is impending danger of getting caught and being penalized, self sometimes refuses to submit to any authority, civil or ecclesiastic. Still, God said we should submit to all authority (Romans 13:1, Hebrews 13:17) except when it directs us to violate God's will (Acts 5:29). There are two major problems that self has to contend with, and self often losses the struggle to some degree: pride and selfishness.

Pride is the original sin of Satan, and declares:

- I know better than God does what is needed in this case. I am going to do it my way because I don't trust God to do it right. But, God said to trust Him (Psalm 4:5, Psalm 37:3, Proverbs 3:5&6, John 14:1). Only a fool trusts in self (Proverbs 28:26).
- I am better than all these hypocrites. I deserve respect and honor because I am so good. But, God said not to think of yourself as better than others (Proverbs 16:5, Proverbs 16:18, Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:3&4).
- I have arrived. I know so much about being a Christian it is a waste of time to listen to others. I certainly will not be disciplined by anyone who knows less than I do. But, God said we are to teach one another (Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 13:18, Proverbs 16:25, Proverbs 19:20, Matthew 28:20).
- I have been ill used by one who should have known better. I really resent what was done and will have nothing more to do with that person until he realizes his terrible deed and begs for forgiveness. Even after that I will never ever trust him again or let him get into a position where that can happen again. But God said we have to forgive (Colossians 3:13), and if we do not we cannot be forgiven (Matthew 6:14&15, Luke 6:37). Forgiving is not saying the words, it is restoring the lost relationship and forgetting the incident (Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12). If fellowship has not been restored to the condition before the offence, true forgiveness has not happened.

Selfishness is caring only about you:

- I want everything for myself. If others are stupid enough to allow me to get what they have by lying, cheating, and stealing, they deserve to lose. But, God said He hates that attitude (Proverbs 6:16-19, Proverbs 11:1, Proverbs 21:6, Isaiah 61:8).
- I barely have enough for myself, and there is no way I could give anything to widows, or orphans, or missionaries. It's enough that I give my loose pocket change to the church. But, God said that we are to take care of others, the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7&8, Proverbs 17:5, Proverbs 21:13, Proverbs 22:22&23), brothers and sisters in Christ (James 2:15&16, 1 John

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3:17&18), and particularly our own flesh and blood families (1 Timothy 5:8). God has told us that we cannot out give Him (Proverbs 19:17, Proverbs 28:27, Luke 6:38).

Left alone, self would return to our old fallen nature. We need to constantly be in control of self (Proverbs 25:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Titus 2:11-14, 1 Peter 1:13). Left alone, self would be totally devoid of any semblance of the image and likeness of God He created us to have.

### **The Problem of the World**

The world being discussed is not the physical earth, but rather the social environment in which we live. Similar to self, we cannot get away from the world, because the world is our home while we are in our earthly bodies. Jesus said that we are in the world, but should not be part of it (2 Corinthians 6:17). We should not be influenced by the world (Romans 12:2), and need to keep ourselves unspotted by it (James 1:27). Jesus also said that the devil is the prince of the world (John 12:31). He is also called the god of this world (2Corinthians 4:4) and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). He is the governing influence in world affairs, and that fact alone should alert us to great caution. The world is determined that all people trust in the world's ways rather than God's ways. It used to be that the major influence on our lives and our values originated in the communities in which we lived. It has now expanded to national boundaries and beyond. There used to be pockets of influence centered in various nations all over the planet, but they are rapidly polarizing, preparing for the one world government of the anti-Christ. Major influences recently established in today's world include radical Muslim governments, the European Union, and the remnants of communism. Each is striving to set the values and standards by which we live and to control our daily behavior. For the most part they strive for power and are materially oriented. Friendship with the world is spiritually fatal (James 4:4). The world's premises are based on false assumptions and twisted logic. Each power center decides how it intends things to be, and then state their objective as an unsubstantiated fundamental reality. All future decisions and actions are then based upon their distorted logic. The people of God are sometimes bewildered, wondering how other people can accept ways so foreign to God's ways. If we do not keep ourselves immersed in the Word of God we will be in danger of becoming so insensitive to the world's demands that we will accept them as a satisfactory alternative value system.

One of the world's current confusing ways is something called being politically correct. It is impossible to get an acceptable definition of what political correctness really is. It seems to center around words that the world does not like, such as "sin" and "guilt". If a word is apt to make anyone feel uncomfortable, for whatever reason, it is called politically incorrect. Any given word may or may not be acceptable depending on who is present. The sad state of affairs is that many Christians buy into political correctness and then are disobedient to God. We have a God given duty to admonish and correct others when we see they are in error and they obviously don't recognize their problem (Ezekiel 3:18-21, Galatians 6:1, 1 John 5:16&17). We should be as concerned for the salvation of others as God is. We also need to refuse to participate in things of the world that are wrong, even when it offends worldly people (Romans 6:12&13). Otherwise we may be giving an impression of our acceptance and approval (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The partner of political correctness is the demand for tolerance. Tolerance itself can be either good or bad, depending upon the motive for tolerance and the identity of what is being tolerated. Usually those who accuse Christians of being intolerant do so because we do not approve of some of their favorite sinful activities. At the same time they have absolutely no tolerance for Christian values. They accuse us of being bigots and say we need to have an open mind. When your mind reaches the point of being so open that you brain falls out you have

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gone too far. God said that we should not tolerate some things (Psalm 1:1, Proverbs 4:14&15, Colossians 3:5-8, 2 Timothy 2:22&23).

The world is amoral, and has no hard and fast standards. Almost anything a perverted person desires to do is acceptable to the world. If some of the things people want are illegal someone will go to court to challenge the law, and in today's world often win. One by one the standards that have kept our nation strong are being whittled away. Marriage used to be sacred and divorce a scandal. Now marriage is considered an option and divorce is considered an acceptable way out if you decide you are tired of your spouse. But God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). Homosexuality used to be a crime called sodomy, but now is called an acceptable alternative life style. If a Christian calls it a sin, that Christian is accused of hate crimes, the first amendment notwithstanding. God calls it an abomination (Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13). God did not single out homosexuality for condemnation. It is just one of many other actions the world is willing to accept that God has also labeled as abominations. Even some people who call themselves Christians think a number of these actions are morally acceptable. The list includes graven images (Deuteronomy 7:25); cross dressers (Deuteronomy 22:5); whores and sodomites (Deuteronomy 23:17&18); a man who tires of his wife, divorces her, then later remarries her (Deuteronomy 24:1-4); a froward (unruly, contrary, uncontrollable) person (Proverbs 3:32); a proud look, a lying tongue, shedding of innocent blood, making wicked plans, running to evil, a false witness, one who causes discord among the brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19); cheating (Proverbs 11:1); the sacrifices of the wicked (Proverbs 15:8&9); the thoughts of the wicked (Proverbs 15:26); those who justify the wicked and condemn the just (Proverbs 17:15); false weights and measures (Proverbs 20:10); and the prayer of a sinner (Proverbs 28:9). Abominations all. Sexual relations between adults and children are acceptable in many parts of the world, but God has some dire warnings for those who lead children astray (Matthew 18:6). The world glorifies violence and vengeance in both the media and in video games. Honesty is considered to be acceptable when it doesn't cost anything. Sexual promiscuity, cheating, and being untrustworthy are the themes of most shows called comedies. Getting away with something is considered being clever. What the world offers for entertainment and amusement are the very things that put the stripes on the back of Jesus, the crown of thorns on His head, and the nails in His hands and feet. Yet many people who call themselves Christians sit and watch them, and even worse, allow their children to watch them. Over time our sensitivity to evil is dulled to indifference, and what should be abhorrent is accepted as ordinary life. God approves of the gentle (Titus 3:2, James 3:17, 1 Peter 3:4), the peace-makers (Matthew 5:9, 1 Corinthians 7:15), and the pure of heart (Matthew 5:8, 2 Timothy 2:22&23, 1 John 3:3). Scriptures admonish us to focus on what is good and wholesome (Philippians 4:8).

We have already identified some problems associated with self. The world enjoys aiding and abetting self on its journey to destruction. Just observe the commercials on television. They encourage you to get into debt and get more stuff. You should have bigger and better stuff that costs more. Indulge your every whim. Buy that more expensive car and fancier bigger home. Spend your life on leisure cruises and self-indulgent vacations. Get in debt until there is no hope of getting out. The reason you should do that is because **"You deserve it!"** However, no one ever identifies what great and wonderful deeds you accomplished that you deserve it. They never identify what sterling qualities of character you have that you deserve it. They just appeal to your ego and attempt to transfer your wealth from your wallet to their wallet. The world really wants you to get entangled in its decadent life style. It will prod and entice, and even make false accusations for you to defend against,

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trying to cause embarrassment for being different and claiming you should really care what the world might think when you do not join in their sinful life. Christians should care only about what God would think of them if they do give in (Jeremiah 7:23, Acts 5:29, Galatians 1:10). The world specializes in catering to the flesh and to the ego.