

The World (Part 2)

Avoiding the Ways of the World

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I am going to continue the sermon that I gave last week. This is part two. We going to begin by giving just a bit of a review of the things that I said in last week's sermon. You will recall that last week we saw in Genesis 10 and 11 that Israel's roots are in the world, but that Genesis 11 also shows that the world became alienated from God and is under a curse, and that curse was that they were scattered all over the face of the earth. The implication being that they were not close to where God was, they did not have access to Him. So we find the world under a curse.

However, in Genesis the 12th chapter Abraham is called and he is given the opportunity to become a blessing to all nations.

And so we began to see patterns established very early in the Bible of God's relationship with the world and His relationship with a family that He separates away from the world. This family will be the family of Abraham and of course this include his descendants.

Now we find that Abraham was faithful to the covenant that God made with him. And so we find a repetition of that earlier pattern that God established in Abraham, established in his descendants. That is, in Israel, because Israel was derived from Abraham through Isaac on to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, and they are called out of Egypt, called out of the world. They are separated from the world and God makes a covenant with them at Mount Sinai.

So now we find a whole nation that becomes God's people. And we see then the world clearly divided into two sections: Those who are God's by making a covenant with God and those who have not made a covenant with Him. Then the covenant was made and their responsibility, like Abraham, was to be faithful to the covenant. The idea was that they were to become a model for the other nations to follow and then the pattern that had been established

in Abraham would be repeated in the other nations. That God would separate somebody from those nations, just like He had separated Abraham, and then through him or through his descendants God would make a covenant with those who were descended from that one that He originally separated.

There is a principle we saw that is established very clearly in Amos the second chapter that is very important in regard to the story flow that goes through the rest of the Bible. God says, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth." God established no other covenants with any other nation. Under the New Covenant in the New Testament, that principle is repeated with the church being called in Galatians 6:16, the Israel of God.

God has not given His name or His direct involvement with any other institution. There is one church, there is one spiritual Body. Israel was not faithful and God followed through with the curse. And what was the curse? They went back to the world. They became absorbed. They lost their identity and at least ostensibly nobody knows who they are. The only part of Israel that is visible is the remnant people, Judah.

When Jesus was born, we found in the New Testament the pattern was again formed. God's Son, the Servant of all of mankind, was called out of Egypt. He was called out of the world. We then found later when He became a man, that His preaching actually began in the world in Galilee of the Samaritans. In the New Testament though, the world is much more clearly seen as the enemy of God. We also see that even the remnant people, Judah, is also part of the world, and together Judah and the Gentiles persecuted and killed Jesus. And then when the church was established, they followed through with persecution and martyrdom of the members of the church.

Now, Israel was supposed to drive out or destroy the people living in the land that God gave to Israel. They were to destroy all the implements, that is, all of the buildings, the groves, the statuary, the idols, that the Gentiles used to worship their god. In the New Testament though, we find that the church is not configured like Israel. We are going to begin this sermon at least by going to a familiar scripture in II Corinthians 6.

II Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I

will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

II Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The church is not established on any one area of the earth and has no civil power, no military authority, nothing of that nature. Our citizenship is even established not on earth, but in heaven according to Philippians 3. Now, we find that the whole world, of which Satan is the head, that Satan has deceived. We find in I John 5 that the whole world is under the sway of Satan, that it is at war with God, and that the Christian is viewed as an alien and a pilgrim.

Rather than forcing the people of the land out as did Israel, the Christian is required to come out, as II Corinthians 6:17 says, "Come out from among them, My people, and be separate." So the Christian is to come out from amongst the world even while being surrounded by it. The coming out is a ceasing of thinking, acting, and having the same attitudes as the world. We can make a simple analogy here that God, like any concerned parent, wants His children to have as little contact with the world as possible.

I used that illustration last week. How do we as parents sometimes instruct our children? "I don't want you to play with so-and-so. I don't want them in my house. I want you to have as little contact with them as possible." "Why mommy? Why daddy?" "Because they're a bad influence. They're going to get you into trouble." God does the same thing with His children. He says, "Come out from among them and be you separate." He does not want us to be influenced by the world. Why? Because He is afraid the world is going to pull us down. We do not have enough spiritual strength to resist the influences of the world.

God gives us an alternative.

Deuteronomy 12:1-5 "These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on

the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things. But [here is the alternative] you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go."

We are instructed to seek God. That becomes the focus of our life. We come out of the world. We seek God. We seek the place where He has placed His name. Now under the Old Covenant the place that He had placed His name eventually became Jerusalem. And the specific area within the Holy of Holies, right in the Temple. In the New Testament, where the configuration is different, even though the responsibilities are in principle exactly the same, we find instead that God dwells in His people and that His people are the temple.

I Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple [please connect this with the principle that is given in II Corinthians 6, where He says, do not even touch the unclean, do not become defiled, come out of the world], God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Another factor makes the church's situation a little bit more difficult. And that is, the concern in the New Testament is not for statues of wood, metal, or of stone, it is not for a particular building, not for anything that is physical, having that kind of nature, but rather it is in regard to attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are being funneled, I guess you would say, spread amongst the people of the world by what Paul called "gods many and lords many."

I Corinthians 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords) . . .

This is an admission that they are there.

So, the problem for the New Testament church, for the Christians, is living spiritual entities whose influences are seen in people, the people of the world, the people who are under the sway of the evil one. Now, this is in contrast to someone like Nehemiah. Nehemiah's worldview was flowing from his fear of God. That is so plainly stated. He did what he did because of his fear of God. And so he conducted his life, he conducted his office, he conducted himself in relation to the other people around him because of his fear of God. That gave him his perspective. And he is held up as an example of the way someone in his circumstances should have acted.

God wants His people to conduct their lives, to have their worldview, the way they look at things, their perspective, to come from the same source as Nehemiah's did and not from the world. The people in the world get their worldview, they get the things, the ideas, the perspective that they have from these gods many and these lords many.

Now, where does it show up? It shows up in the institutions of this world. It shows up in government. It shows up in the way that they conduct the governmental entity. It shows up in education, the underlying influence in education. It shows up in religion, the kinds of religion that they have, the attitude towards religion that they have. It shows up in business practices, it shows up in social programs, their attitudes towards money, marriage, family, child rearing, entertainment, television.

There was a time, in regard to entertainment or practically anything that we might consider to be evil, when you had to leave your house in order to find it, to go out to the street, to go to some place. Now with television the world and all of its attitudes comes flowing right into the house, we invite it in electronically. We can be influenced in that regard. It shows up in fashion. It shows up in regard to cures and healings, we might say. It shows up in regard to eating, the eating practices, everything from the amounts to what people eat. Do people of the world pay any attention to the Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14? Very few. How about in the attitude towards alcohol and the consumption, the amount, and other drugs.

Well, any of us ought to be able to see that rarely are any of those things in harmony with the laws of God. It all stems from the relationship that the world has with the unseen spiritual entities that are shooting their attitudes out through the people of this world.

I want you to notice two instructions in the New Testament in regard to the world. Turn first to the book of James, the fourth chapter. Think of this in terms of whom this is written to. It is written to the church.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? [is the world an enemy?] Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Any of you want to be an enemy of God? You do not want to be an enemy of God, you do not want to be fighting God!

James 4:8 Draw near to God [remember this is instruction for the church, to the brethren] and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners [hands usually being a symbol of work, the way we do things]; and purify your hearts [the attitude], you double-minded.

Who is he talking to? He was talking to Christians who were coming close to the world. They were friends of the world. Their hearts needed to be purified because it was picking up the attitudes of the world. Their worldview was changing from God's perspective to the world's perspective. What was happening? They were becoming worldly, they were going back to what they were, what they had come out of, and that is why he was calling them adulterers and adulteresses. It was a spiritual adultery that they were involved in.

Would you not admit, just from looking at these verses, that God has not changed His attitude towards the world from what it was in the Old Testament? What did He tell Israel? He said, I want you to go in there and I want you to destroy those people. I want you to drive them out. I do not want you to make covenants with them. Push them out of the land, He said. Well,

why? For the same reason we are talking about here, but this time under the New Covenant He is focusing on the root cause of the problem, and the root cause of the problem is the spiritual influences supporting this world's approaches to life. The world assesses things from a human point of view even though it may use the Word of God.

Now, I want you to think of the "Christian" churches. I want you to think of the Presbyterian Church, the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, all of those churches. I want you to think of them. I am going to give you two obvious examples that shows you the difference between the way the world looks at the Bible and God's instructions and the way you do.

The sixth commandment says, "You shall not kill." The Christian churches of this world support the war efforts of their political unit, do they not? They support the war efforts of their governments. They send their ministers to become chaplains in the armed service, in the military. They lift up prayers to God so that our side, whatever that "our" happens to be, [unclear] more on the other side than we lose ourselves. And so we end up with screwball situations where Lutherans in Germany pray supposedly to the same Christian God, "Kill those Americans, kill those British! Kill those Norwegians, kill those Swedes, kill those French people!" And we have the Lutherans in America praying that somehow God will enable us to win. And the only way you win, you see, is to kill more of the other side.

That is the way this world looks God's Word, at God's instruction. Maybe you think that I have made that look brutal. That is the way it is. That is the reality.

A second one. How about the fourth commandment? Do the Christian churches of this world keep the fourth commandment and all that it entails? Not just the weekly Sabbath, but the holy days as well. Do they do that? You know very well they do not. They come up with all kinds of arguments to say that this commandment is done away with. Christmas and Easter, which are really attached to keeping or the breaking of the fourth commandment, brethren, the same kind of thinking extends into the every commandment, every area of life, so that all of life in the world is skewed away from God, even though they are doing lip service.

It all comes from the perspective. It all comes to whether or not people really fear God, whether they have faith in that God, whether they believe Him. If they really believed Him, they would not be sending their sons and daughters to kill somebody else because God's commandment says, "You shall do no murder," you shall not kill.

The world looks at the Bible and concludes that it is written to them—though it is not written to the world! The Bible is written to those who have made the covenant with God. To whom are the Old Testament books addressed to? They are addressed to Israel. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth." And to whom are the New Testament books written to? They are written to the [faithful? disciples?] who have made the covenant with God. Man lives by every Word of God. And so the Old Testament and the New Testament is written to the saints. It is not to the world. They may get some good out of it, but it is written to the saints. And they are the only ones who understand it because they are the ones to whom the Spirit of God has been given.

I Corinthians the second chapter says that God has given us His Spirit in order that we might understand it! He revealed it. And so the true Christian's perspective of the things in the Bible and the things in the world are going to be entirely different from what the world sees in the Book.

The world has a spirit and they are going to look at the Bible and they are going to understand certain things that they see in this. They will grasp some of the spiritual principles but I guarantee you that when it comes to putting them together and reaching the right conclusion, they do not put the puzzle together right. If they put the puzzle together right they would not be sending their sons to war. They would not be sending their preachers to pray that we kill more of the other side than our people get killed. They would be keeping the Sabbath. The world is God's enemy (still on that subject).

Many of the people in the world think that God is already in them, from birth! They have that little bit of God, they call it, that little spark of God that is in them. No, God has given them a spirit and as a result of that spirit, the human spirit as Mr. Armstrong called it, they are able to make a certain relationship with the Bible but they never quite come up with the correct answers. Now, here is a very interesting comment that I found in the

Expositor's Bible commentary, volume 12, page 193. This is in regards to James 4:4,

To have a warm, familiar attitude towards this evil world is to be on good terms with God's enemy. It is to adopt the world's set of values and want what the world wants, instead of choosing according to the divine standards. The person who deliberately chooses to be a friend of the world by that choice becomes an enemy of God.

I am sure you do not want to be an enemy of God. If you do not want to be an enemy of God, you are going to be very careful about the world and influences that it might have on us.

Now, this is a major danger that those remaining on the inside of our former church association are facing. The Worldwide Church of God slides further and further back into the world. Those remaining within it waiting for God to do something are getting further away from the truth of God. Brethren, no man can serve two masters. The Bible's rule is that we are to follow truth, not a corporation, and their inaction is evidence of how weak they have become and how far away they have drifted. Christ is knocking so hard at the door, He is practically knocking it down because He has already said in His Word what He is going to do. It is called the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. It is already written.

Those loving the world are warned in I John 2:17 that it is passing away. It is a sinking ship. It is the Titanic that has been struck by the iceberg and they are sinking with it. We are living in the time prophesied. We see the factors coming together that spell the doom for this world.

Now, let us turn to Ephesians the sixth chapter,

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take

up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Let me tell you, brethren, we are in the evil day and our warfare, as I told you before, is not against people. It is against the spiritual wickedness. God is getting right to the root of the problem this time. The spiritual influences that shows up in the attitude, the perspective that the world has toward things and of course, then, the resultant conduct, behavior, that follows right on the heels of the attitude. God shows clearly in the prophecies that the world is so infected with these things that the only things that even He can do is what? Destroy it. The world is passing away.

Interesting that John was the one who wrote I John 2:17 and also the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation details the passing away of the world. Passing away is a euphemism for destruction. [unclear] God is going to destroy it and He is going to use Jesus Christ and the saints to do what He told Israel to do when Israel took over the land but failed to do, And because Israel failed to do it, they were destroyed. The world swallowed them up. They did not take God's advice, they did not take His counsel. They did not drive the people out and they succumbed to the influences of the gods of the land.

Did I not tell you earlier that the patterns that are established in the Old Testament are going to be repeated in the New Testament, only this time, God is going to do it through His children. Now, that is a major part of what we are preparing for. So what is our responsibility to the world and to God in light of this situation that we find ourselves in? It is very interesting because the Bible arranges the elements of our lives into priorities that begin to emerge into view once we begin to understand a few principles. These principles are quite clear.

The first principle is the great commandment of the law: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind. This is the first priority in life. There is nothing greater you and I can do with our time, with our energy, with our talent, with our skill. In Matthew the sixth chapter, Jesus, right at the beginning of His ministry, laid down the foundation principle of the church of God, of the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. . .

Why? Because it is too time consuming. It is going to keep you from your first priority and because it is going to pass away anyway. We have to work, we have to eat, we have to do those things, so a certain amount of time has to be given over to that. But the first priority was already laid down for us by God, the Great Commandment.

Matthew 6:20-21 ". . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart will be also."

That is where the feelings, the attitudes are going to be pointed in.

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and and mammon."

Is that clear? God comes first.

Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

That is so clear. That is the first priority.

This leads directly to a second one, a second consideration, and that is, we learn that the world *cannot* be changed. Remember, God is going to destroy it. So what is the world in relationship to time and energy spent on it by us? It is a lost cause. Vain and futile are the efforts extended trying to change it. So surely God has shown in both Testaments His instructions to Israel in His command for them to destroy the people of the land. And then in the prophetic books, showing what He is going to do to this world when His Son returns. It is very clear. Any effort in that direction is a lost cause.

There is a reason why the world cannot be changed. It is because its individual parts, the people, cannot be changed because (please get this) it is not yet God's time to change them. What is it that is going to change people?

It is going to take a change of heart on the individual part in order to change and effect the whole. Only God can make that change. You ought to know that from the prophecies. When God brings Israel back what does He say He is going to do? He says, a new heart and a new spirit I will give you. Then, He says, you will know that I am the Lord. No man can come to Christ unless the Spirit of the Father calls him. If the individual parts are not changed, the world will never change.

So God is being very selective in those to whom He is calling and giving His Spirit. So the change, the growth, the overcoming the saints accomplish occurs because of their relationship with God. It is less because of our relationship with other people. God is the potter, we are the clay. He does the changing, He does the shaping. Try to apply this to your worldview.

The world has these social programs it has designed and some of the programs are even drawn from the Bible. What do these social programs hope to accomplish? They hope to change people. But these programs are the world's program designed and inspired by people whose minds God has not yet opened by His Spirit. And though they may work to a limited degree, they cannot affect change where change really needs to be made and that is in the personal spirit because God is in those institutions. The church is the only institution the Bible reveals that God is working in and through. This thing is really extensive and I will not go into it.

You can mark down in your notes there Matthew 8:22. Jesus said to a man, Let the dead bury the dead. Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. What is He telling us? He is telling him, do not spend time with them. It is a lost cause. In Matthew 26:11, He says, the poor you always have with you, but Me you only have a short time. What is He saying? He is setting a priority. He is saying you are never going to run out of poor people to work on and do not let them become the priority in your life. I am the priority in your life.

He said to Peter, Do you love Me more than these? When we get baptized, we go over that scripture in Luke 14:26 which we ask the question, Do you love Christ more than brother, sister, father, mother, or anybody else? Christ

is setting a priority as to where our time and attention goes. It is to Him, His programs. And the reason is because He is the potter, we are the clay. He wants us to become totally indoctrinated in His program.

A third principle needs to be considered and this one is very interesting. The second of the two great commandments, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Who is your neighbor? Let us go to the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

If we were to study into this, spend a whole sermon on it, we would go into the background of these kinds of people. This was a man who spent his time studying the Old Testament, especially the first five books. People came to him for advice on understanding, discerning, and interpreting the law of God. This is a man who knew a great deal because that is why he said he was testing to see whether or not Jesus was going to give him the right answer.

Now, when he asked, "What shall I do to have eternal life?" Jesus' answer shows that He understood the man's question, not in terms of life without end, but rather in terms of quality of life. That is important to understand. It is not super important to understanding the whole parable but Jesus' answer showed that He does not have life without end in mind in His answer. He has, "How can I have the very best kind of lifestyle right now?"

And then Jesus came right back with the question,

Luke 10:26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

The lawyer says,

Luke 10:27-28 So he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . ." [and then he gets the second one], "Your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

Having quality of life.

Now there is another way I know that He was not talking about eternal life and that is that nobody is saved by law keeping. Eternal life is a gift of God. So if there is going to be good quality of life, it has to do with the keeping of these commands.

Luke 10:29 But he, wanted to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

The rest of the parable concerns itself with that.

This man knew the words of the Old Testament fairly well. And we will see later that he understood the point that Jesus made in the illustration of using the good Samaritan. He understood what Jesus was teaching. The question remained as to whether he was able to accept what Jesus said. Because to do so might rearrange one's priorities, even to a considerable extent.

There are three possible answers to this question, "Who is my neighbor?"

The first is this: My neighbor is my brother and all of mankind. Now from this perspective neighbor and brother are equal terms. That is, they are synonymous with each other and may be applied to all human beings. Thus, all men are my neighbors. Is everybody your neighbor? That is the question we are posing.

The second possibility is that my neighbor is somebody who is near to you, like your neighbor, somebody in your neighborhood, and that brother means only Christians. From this point of view the neighbor and the brother are different. The neighbor is anybody who is near geographically, while brother only applies to a fellow Christian.

The third perspective is that my neighbor is my brother and he is also a fellow Christian. In this view, neighbor and brother mean the same thing and thus they apply only to fellow Christians. My neighbor is my brother in Christ and nobody else.

Let us go back Leviticus the 19th chapter. We are going to show you the Bible's perspective on this. We have to go there because that is where "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" is quoted from. So we will look at it right in its context.

Leviticus 19:16-18 "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people [To whom was this written? It is written to Israel. It is written to the covenant people. Who is your people? The covenant people.]; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor. [Neighbor and your people are used synonymously right in this verse, but they are both covenant people.] You shall not hate your brother [another word injected here] in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. [in the context here brother and neighbors are used synonymously, brother, neighbor, and covenant people are one and the same] You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."

The pairings there are very interesting. We have your people/neighbor; brother/neighbor; children of your people/your neighbor; neighbor, brother, children of your people are all used synonymously and it is all written to those who have made the covenant with God. So right in the context, the command is given to the people of God, those who were fellow covenant makers and were obeying the laws of God.

Listen to these quotes I am going to give you from the world's own books. The first is from the *New Bible Dictionary* and it is going to define brotherly love, Philadelphia. "It means not figurative brother-like love, but the love of those united in the Christian brotherhood. In the Old Testament, brother-like neighbor meant fellow Israelites."

From *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, under the title "Neighbor," "Five Hebrew words are rendered neighbor in the authorized version of the Old Testament, the principal one being *rea*. In the Old Testament, one's neighbor is clearly a fellow Israelite as indicated by the statement, "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you

shall love your neighbor as yourself." A little bit later, "The parallelism of this verse identified neighbor with the sons of your people. A different code of conduct was prescribed towards the foreigner in contrast to one fellow countryman."

Did you hear that last line? "A different code of conduct was prescribed towards the foreigner [the world] in contrast to one fellow countryman."

Someone might ask, What about the stranger that dwelt among the people, those who have made the covenant? Let us go to Leviticus 25, verse 39. This is a show the differences in the code of conduct between an Israelite and a non-Israelite.

Leviticus 25:39-45 'And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the year of Jubilee. And then he shall depart from you—he and his children with him—and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers.

For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; and they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God. And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have—from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves. Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property."

We could chase this out in a number of places. You can look at Deuteronomy 15:1-3, Deuteronomy 23:19-20, Deuteronomy 13:21, I Corinthians 6:1-10 (just to show you that this reaches right into the New Testament). You will find there in those scriptures the differentiation made by God between the Israelites and the stranger.

Now to the Israelites, a fellow Israelite was not allowed to charge him interest on monies that were given, loans that were made, but he was allowed

to charge interest to the stranger. We just read here in Deuteronomy he was allowed to make a slave of a foreigner. He was not to compel an Israelite become a slave, and he was to treat him like he was a hired hand working for himself; a distinction made in regard to the stranger that was there.

We also find in Deuteronomy 14:21 that no Israelite was allowed to eat anything that died of itself. But something that died of itself was allowed to be given to the strangers. God says the reason is because you are holy and they are not. In I Corinthians the 6th chapter, you were allowed to go to law against those who are of the world, but you did not take to law those who were covenant makers.

You see, God differentiates pretty specifically between the neighbor and the brother and the non-Israelite who has not made the covenant.

What you are going to find, though, as you begin to search around, you are going to find places where God says treat the stranger who is among you in such and such a way. He says there is one law for the stranger as for the Israelites. Is there any problem with that? Any contradiction? No, because you find in Exodus the 12th chapter that if the stranger makes the covenant, then they become as one who is born in the land. Ah ha! The stranger is now your brother because he made the covenant. And then we find the privileges extended to the stranger as if he was one who was born in the land.

You will find in Leviticus 18:26, if you want to write these down, that the same requirements are then made, Exodus 12:48-49, because this opened up to them all the privileges of the Old Covenant. They were allowed, then, to take the Passover. Leviticus 16, they were allowed to participate in the eating of sacrificial meals. Leviticus 17:8, they were allowed, then, to make sacrifices on the altar. They were invited, in Deuteronomy 16, to keep the feast with the Israelites. And in Leviticus 25:6, they were to share in the Sabbath and the rest of the Sabbaths as well.

So then it becomes obvious that if the sojourner was to be treated the same as the one who was born among you, then there was a distinct difference between those who were born among the Israelites and all the others who

were not born among you. So in the Old Testament, the neighbor was not just someone who was near. He was a brother by birth or by choice. And became a brother by choice when he made the covenant.

Now did the meaning of the neighbor change in the New Testament? What is the principle that God shows in the Old Testament? "I am Lord your God, I change not." God does not introduce confusion into these things, but He does expand upon. The world in the New Testament is the same world as the Old Testament. But what He expands upon is He is getting to the heart. He lets us know openly what the real problem is. It is "gods many and lords many." It is demons. It is Satan the Devil that is causing the problems in the world. But the basic pattern never changes because God is God.

In reference to the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the word neighbor must retain the same meaning as in the original text, that is, Leviticus 19, unless we can find biblical evidence to the contrary. I will tell you right now, you will find no biblical evidence to the contrary because God does not contradict Himself. So if the Old Testament definition of neighbor is brought forth in the New Testament, it would mean that the neighbors we are commanded to love as ourselves would apply only to our brethren in Christ. That is what Leviticus 19 says. That is what the lawyer that started this there in Luke 10 quoted. Jesus said yes, you have given the right answer. We look back there and we find out then that neighbors and brothers and fellow Israelites, one born in the land, they are all synonymous.

In the New Testament, then, neighbor is a synonym for brethren. It is a synonym for Christian.

The word for neighbor in the New Testament, the one that is primarily used is *plesion*. I am going to give you five verses that clearly show that brethren and neighbor are used synonymously.

Acts 7:26-27 And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting [he is Moses], and tried to reconcile them, saying, "Men, you are brethren [who are the brethren? Two Israelites were fighting with one another.]; why do you wrong one another?" But

he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away [Neighbor and brother are synonymous], saying, "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?"

Is that clear or what?

Galatians 5:13-15 For you, brethren [written to the saints], have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. [brethren/one another, those who have made the covenant] For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [What Paul is quoting here is Leviticus 19:18. He is tying it to the brethren. He is tying it to the saints, those to whom the book is written.] But if you fight and devour one another [those within the fellowship], beware lest you be consumed by one another.

Neighbor/brother/one another. It is the church.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

To whom is the book written? To the saints who were in Ephesus. Neighbor and we are all one of another.

James 2. This is a rather lengthy one. James the second chapter and we could actually go through verses 1 through 16.

James 2:1-8 My brethren. . . for if there should come into your assembly [church services]. . . and you pay attention to one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here [and so forth]. . . have you not shown partiality among yourselves [within the church] and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren. . . do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called [the church of God]? . . . "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Can it get more pointed? Neighbors/brother/assembly/fellowship—he weaves them all together. We can go all the way verse 16 and it just keeps being repeated over and over again.

James 4:11-12 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law [Leviticus 19:18] and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who was able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another [brother]?

That is right within the context.

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said [this is actually a critical verse, Jesus is speaking] to them, "My mother and My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

I mean, you cannot get any more authority than that. Your Lord and Savior said that His brothers and sisters and mother is the church. Just as in the Old Testament, the neighbor is one who obeys the laws of God, those who have made the covenant with God.

Now, why did the lawyer, who certainly must have understood this principle, ask Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" and why did Jesus answer with the parable? Well, the reason is because the Jews hated the Samaritans and the lawyer wanted to justify his hatred of the Samaritans. The Jews knew that Jesus had made converts among the Samaritans. You can find that recorded in Luke 9:52, and Jesus emphasized the teaching by showing the lawyer that even a hated nationality, the Samaritans, could in reality be a neighbor because he was keeping the law of God.

The priest and the Levite were *not* neighbors to the injured man because they did not obey God's law to give mercy to one they found needed help. But on the other hand, the hated Samaritan proved to be the true neighbor.

So then, a neighbor, by biblical definition, is not merely somebody who is near but a believer who keeps God's law. There it is. By Jesus' own definition the command to love your neighbor as yourself is telling us the

measure of loving service God expects us to give to the brethren. And if we are not as generous to a brother or a sister as we would be to ourselves, then we are, according to James the second chapter, a respecter of persons. And brethren, that is one high and difficult standard.

But to say that we are to love *anyone* who is near exactly in the same manner would be to place a terrible burden upon the believer. If that were true, then would be required to share our homes, our clothes, our food with anyone we happen to come across. That was never God's intent. The poor you always have with you. There is no end to the world's problems. If we get ourselves bound up in that it is going to suck our time and our energies and eventually our attitudes right away from the priority that Christ has set to seek first the Kingdom of God.

Turn with me to Acts the second chapter to really drive this home, I think. In the book of Acts we have a history of the people of God, those who have made the covenant with God.

Acts 2:44 Now all who believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them [with the world. No, it says] divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Who was all? It was the believers.

Acts 4:32-37 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common [the believers]. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Everybody? No, it was on the believers]

Nor was anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostle feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was

also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet.

I challenge anybody to prove from the history of the church in either the Acts of the Apostles or in the epistles that the church was ever to use its assets for anyone who is not a member of the Body of Christ.

Now the Bible divides our priorities into four areas:

First, our responsibility to God. Second, our responsibility to our family. Third, are the responsibilities to the church. Fourth, our responsibilities to everything else, including our job, entertainment, hobbies, or any social good works, and if a person is doing the first three, plus his job, which probably will take 8-10 hours a day, there is hardly any time left for anything else.

Let us go to a verse that you might be thinking on in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

Did you notice Jesus did not say love your enemy as yourself? He did not say what we would think might be the logical thing for Him to say, and which the world concludes that He said. No, he did not say that. He just said to love your enemy, but not as yourself. That is reserved for the brethren, those who have made the covenant.

Let us carry this one step further. Who is your enemy? In its broadest sense it is God's enemy. Who is God's enemy? It is the world that is under the sway of Satan.

Now, what is Christ's instruction? He says to love those people. That is the requirement from God. But He does not say, love them as yourself. Love your brother as yourself. So we are to love our enemies in the spirit of I Corinthians 13. If you want to, you can begin to take this into a very refined approach. For example, let us go back to Romans 12.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed [first comes a warning] to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another [To whom was this written? It is written to the church.] with brotherly love [we had the world even define brotherly love], in honor giving preference to one another.

You have to prefer the church over the world. That is what he is saying.

Romans 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I Corinthians 13. You love your enemy. You do good to them. You do not hate them. You do not take advantage of them. You do not run them down. You do the things that are expected by God in I Corinthians 13 in relation to them. But you love your brother as your yourself, having preference for him.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Is it not becoming clear? Now do we love the people in the world? Sure we do. But God shows us that He expects more of us in relation to our brother than He does to the world. We do not hate them. We do not take advantage of them. We do not kill them. But we have a special responsibility for the brother.

What is the parable that Jesus gave? The lesson of the parable is in how to be neighborly and how to make yourself a neighbor of somebody. And as we

take our journey through this life, we are to be a keeper of God's law. We are to show mercy to those injured and in need of mercy *as the opportunity comes to us*. Did you catch that? We make ourselves a neighbor even to those in the world as the opportunity comes to us. God does not require that we go out to find it.

Now why? Because He says, "Seek first the kingdom of God." He set the priority. First to Him, then the family, then the church, then everything else. And usually in life—the everything else—the first priority goes to our employment. So you take care of those things and the opportunities do good, let us say in the world, they are going to be very limited. We just do not have the time.

Let us summarize this. The Bible shows that God sees two distinct classes of people on the earth. In broad generality, they are His people, those who have made the covenant, and the world. His people submit to Him. The world are under the sway of the wicked one. His people are trying to conform to God's government. They see God as their ruler. And the world is going its own way.

So God sees the world as an enemy full of dangerous temptation to His plans for His people. He commands us not to love the world or be a friend of the world, or we make ourselves an enemy of God. And unfortunately some brethren neglect God's Word, underestimate the strength of the world's influence, while overestimating their own spiritual strength. The Bible's testimony is that the world killed Christ, hates the church—and the church is the people. There is even a song that we sing where it says in one line, "My people they devour like bread." He meant the world.

The Bible shows that neighbor, brother, believer, brotherhood, My people, your people, and those who hear the word of God and do it, are synonymous terms. So the Bible differentiates our level of conduct in many areas between the two.

Let me just inject this as we close, that in no way does this make us better. It just sets our priorities and responsibilities. That is all. Those people simply have not yet been called. It is not God's time. And when He does, then they

will understand why we acted the way we did. It was not that we hated them. We simply had so much to do in God's program there was hardly any time left over for the other things.

Let us finish the II Timothy 4 on kind of a sad note.

II Timothy 4:10 For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica.

Brethren, our responsibilities are not exactly the same to everyone. God expected people to turn their full attention to His program, which is designed to create us in His image. And if we allow even our necessary contact with the world to turn us aside, it is going to severely affect our growth and possibly even cost us our salvation. But God has set these priorities in His Word.