

It Takes WORK To Be Different From The World

All Christians realize that they live a different kind of life than the people in the world. That is part of being the "light" to the world and the "salt" of the earth that Jesus spoke of in Matt. 5:13-16. Christians have always had to struggle with the temptations of the world and, sadly, sometimes the world wins the convert back. Paul spoke of Demas in II Tim. 4:10 and said, "for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica." We do not know specifically what was in Thessalonica since the city offered many worldly things; but, we know that the world gathered a soul for the devil and a once-saved convert went back to wallowing in a filthy hog pen (II Pet. 2:22). Remaining pure and different from the world is hard work! It requires a lot of thought and care. It will never be easy.

It is interesting to note that this problem did not originate in our times or in the New Testament world and times. God recognized the problem in the Old Testament as He was preparing His people for success in the new Promised Land! Notice Leviticus 19-20. God realized that the Israelites would have a lot of vile influences in the land as they entered it. Their success depended upon them remaining different from the people already in the land. The coming of the Israelites was important for two reasons: (1) It was a fulfillment of the blessings given to Abraham many centuries earlier (Gen. 17:1-8); and (2) it was a punishment to the nations in Canaan for their perverted behavior (Gen. 15:16). However, the Israelites would not be able to maintain their presence in the land without remaining true to God. In other words, they could not become like the people they were replacing. They, like us, could NOT conform to the world around them. That's a hard job!

Since God knew it would be a hard job to maintain purity in the land, He gave many laws as a help to stay pure and different as they began to live in the land. Notice the many ideas and areas in the laws that God gave in Leviticus 19-20. These same areas are snares to many today.

Do not rush to LOOK LIKE the people in the new land who know not God. (19:27-28)

Remember to keep the SACRED DAYS and PRACTICES that God taught. (19:30-31)

Maintain RESPECT and HONOR for the gray headed and older people you know. (19:32)

Do not get involved with the RELIGIONS of the people already in Canaan. (20:2-5)

Do not get involved with the OCCULT PRACTICES from Canaan. (20:6)

Maintain full RESPECT for your PARENTS. (20:8-9)

Maintain SEXUAL PURITY in all ways and manners. (20:10-21)

Keep ALL of God's statutes and judgments, not a select few. (20:22-23)

Maintain the DISTINCTION between CLEAN and UNCLEAR things. (20:25)

Know that you have been SEPARATED to be God's family. (20:26)

Am I saying to go back to the Old Testament law and look like the Israelites. No. But, God's people need to know the areas of concern that are often sacrificed, mocked, and attacked as the pressures of the

"modern" world move in to change people so they conform to "new" ways. God knew the areas of attack and temptation in Canaan. Those areas are no different today. Just because something is new is no reason to believe it is better. Just because "everyone else" is living a certain way does not really mean "everyone else" really is living that way. Find people who will support you, not degrade the things you know to be pure and holy. Every one of the areas Moses mentioned has come under attack today in our modern environment. Others look at us and disrespect the ways that have sustained us. Moses thought it right and proper to warn the Israelites about the areas that would come under attack. It is still right and proper to warn people today about these same areas.

It will take work, perseverance, and help from fellow Christians, along with guidance from God's Word to withstand the attacks of the world. But, our Promised Land will make all of these efforts well worth the time to become, and remain, God's people. Let's plan on being in that new land for an eternity! - - Richard Peterson