

Crucified Unto Me

by Watchman Nee

The sermon emphasizes the importance of separation to God and separation from the world, and explains that deliverance from the world comes from a revelation of the Cross of Christ.

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Matthew 11:18-19, John 15:19, Romans 6:6, Galatians 6:14, Colossians 2:20-21, 1 John 2:16, Revelation 17:3, Revelation 18:2, Revelation 21:10

Topics: "The Cross of Christ", "Separation from the World"

Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes the necessity of separation from the world and dedication to God as foundational principles of Christian living. He illustrates the stark contrast between Babylon, representing worldly values, and the New Jerusalem, symbolizing holiness and divine purpose. Nee argues that true understanding and revelation of God's plan require a spiritual ascent, urging believers to build a moral barrier against worldly influences. He highlights that the Cross of Christ signifies the world's judgment and calls Christians to recognize their crucifixion to the world and the world's crucifixion to them. Ultimately, he asserts that spiritual deliverance comes from seeing the world as doomed and aligning oneself with God's eternal purpose.

Transcript

Separation to God, separation from the world, is the first principle of Christian living. John, in his revelation of Jesus Christ, was shown two irreconcilable extremes, two worlds that morally were poles apart. He was first carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness to see Babylon, mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth (17:3). Then he was carried in the same Spirit to a great and high mountain, from whence to view Jerusalem, the bride, the Lamb's wife (21:10). The contrast is clear and could hardly be more explicitly stated.

Whether we be a Moses or a Balaam, in order to have God's view of things we must be taken like John to a mountain top. Many cannot see God's eternal plan, or if they see it they understand it only as dry-as-dust doctrine, but they are content to stay on the plains. For understanding never moves us; only revelation does that. From the wilderness we may see something of Babylon, but we need spiritual revelation to see God's new Jerusalem. Once see it, and we shall never be the same again. As Christians therefore we bank everything on that opening of the eyes, but to experience it we must be prepared to forsake the common levels and climb.

The harlot Babylon is always "the great city" (16:19, etc.) with the emphasis on her attainment of greatness. The bride Jerusalem is by contrast "the holy city" (21:2, 10) with the accent correspondingly on her separation to God. She is "from God," and is prepared "for her husband." For this reason she possesses the glory of God. This is a matter of experience for us all. Holiness in us is what is of God, what is wholly set apart to Christ. It follows the rule that only what originated in heaven returns there; for nothing else is holy. Let go this principle of holiness and we are instantly in Babylon.

Thus it comes about that the wall is the first feature John mentions in his description of the city itself. There are gates, making provision for the goings of God, but the wall takes precedence. For, I repeat, separation is the first principle of Christian living. If God wants his city with its measurements and its glory in that day, then we must build that wall in human hearts now. This means in practice that we must guard as precious all that is of God and refuse and reject all that is of Babylon. I do not imply by this a separation between Christians. We dare not exclude our brethren themselves, even when we cannot take part in some of the things they do. No, we must love and receive our fellow Christians, but be uncompromising in our separation from the world in principle.

Nehemiah in his day succeeded in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, but only in the face of great opposition. For Satan hates distinctiveness. Separation of men to God he cannot abide. Nehemiah and his colleagues armed themselves therefore, and thus equipped for war they laid stone to stone. This is the price of holiness we must be prepared for.

For build we certainly must. Eden was a garden without artificial wall to keep foes out; so that Satan had entry. God intended that Adam and Eve should "guard it" (Gen. 2:15) by themselves constituting a moral barrier to him. Today, through Christ, God plans in the heart of his redeemed people an Eden to which, in triumphant fact, Satan will at last have no moral access whatever. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they which are in the Lamb's book of life."

Most of us would agree that to the apostle Paul was given a special revelation of the Church of God. In a similar way we feel that God gave to John a special understanding of the nature of the world. Kosmos is in fact peculiarly John's word. The other Gospels use it only fifteen times (Matthew nine, Mark and Luke three each) while Paul has it forty-seven times in eight letters. But John uses it 105 times in all, seventy-eight in his Gospel, twenty-four in his epistles and a further three in the Revelation.

In his first epistle John writes: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (2:16). In these words that so clearly reflect the temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:6) John defines the things of the world. All that can be included under lust or primitive desire, all that excites greedy ambition, and all that arouses in us the pride or glamor of life, all such things are part of the Satanic system. Perhaps we scarcely need stay here to consider further the first two of these, but let us look for a moment at the third. Everything that stirs pride in us is of the world. Prominence, wealth, achievement, these the world acclaim. Men are justly proud of success. Yet John labels all that brings this sense of success as "of the world."

Every success therefore that we experience (and I am not suggesting that we should be failures!) calls in us for an instant, humble confession of its inherent sinfulness, for whenever we meet success we have in some degree touched the world system. Whenever we sense complacency over some achievement we may know at once that we have touched the world. We may know, too, that we have brought ourselves

under the judgment of God, for have we not already agreed that the whole world is under judgment? Now (and let us try to grasp this fact) those who realize this and confess their need are thereby safeguarded.

But the trouble is, how many of us are aware of it? Even those of us who live our lives in the seclusion of our own private homes are just as prone to fall a prey to the pride of life as those who have great public successes. A woman in a humble kitchen can touch the world and its complacency even while cooking the daily meal or entertaining guests. Every glory that is not glory to God is vainglory, and it is amazing what paltry successes can produce vainglory. Wherever we meet pride we meet the world, and there is an immediate leakage in our fellowship with God. Oh that God would open our eyes to see clearly what the world is! Not only evil things, but all those things that draw us ever so gently away from God, are units of that system that is antagonistic to him. Satisfaction in the achievement of some legitimate piece of work has the power to come instantly between us and God himself. For if it is the pride of life and not the praise of God that it awakens in us, we can know for certain that we have touched the world. There is thus a constant need for us to watch and pray if we are to maintain our communion with God unsullied.

What then is the way of escape from this snare which the Devil has set to catch God's people? First let me say emphatically that it is not to be found by our running away. Many think we can escape the world by seeking to abstain from the things of the world. That is folly. How could we ever escape the world system by using what, after all, are little more than worldly methods? Let me remind you of Jesus' words in Matt. 11:18, 19. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He hath a devil.' The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!' " Some think that John the Baptist here offers us a recipe for escape from the world, but "neither eating nor drinking" is not Christianity. Christ came both eating and drinking, and that is Christianity! The apostle Paul speaks of "the elements of the world," and he defines these as, "handle not, nor taste, nor touch" (Col. 2:20, 21). So abstinence is merely worldly and no more, and what hope is there, by using worldly elements, of escaping the world system? Yet how many earnest Christians are forsaking all sorts of worldly pleasures in the hope thereby of being delivered out of the world! You can build yourself a hermit's hut in some remote spot and think to escape the world by retiring there, but the world will follow you even as far as that. It will dog your footsteps and find you out no matter where you hide.

Our deliverance from the world begins, not with our giving up this or that but with our seeing, as with God's eyes, that it is a world under sentence of death as in the figure with which we opened this chapter, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!" (Rev. 18:2). Now a sentence of death is always passed, not on the dead but on the living. And in one sense the world is a living force today, relentlessly pursuing and seeking out its subjects. But while it is true that when sentence is pronounced death lies still in the future, it is nevertheless certain. A person under sentence of death has no future beyond the confines of a condemned cell. Likewise the world, being under sentence, has no future. The world system has not yet been "wound up," as we say, and terminated by God, but the winding up is a settled matter. It makes all the difference to us that we see this. Some folk seek deliverance from the world in asceticism, and like the Baptist, neither eat nor drink. That today is Buddhism, not Christianity. As Christians we both eat and drink, but we do so in the realization that eating and drinking belong to the world and, with it, are under the death sentence, so they have no grip upon us.

Let us suppose that the municipal authorities of Shanghai should decree that the school where you are employed must be closed. As soon as you hear this news you realize there is no future for you in that school. You go on working there for a period, but you do not build up anything for the future there. Your attitude to the school changes the instant you hear it must close down. Or to use another illustration,

suppose the government decides to close a certain bank. Will you hasten to deposit in it a large sum of money in order to save the bank from collapse? No, not a cent more do you pay into it once you hear it has no future. You put nothing in because you expect nothing from it.

And we may justly say of the world that it is under a decree of closure. Babylon fell when her champions made war with the Lamb, and when by his death and resurrection he overcame them, who is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14). There is no future for her.

A revelation of the Cross of Christ involves for us the discovery of this fact, that through it everything belonging to the world is under sentence of death. We still go on living in the world and using the things of the world, but we can build no future with them, for the Cross has shattered all our hope in them. The Cross of our Lord Jesus, we may truly say, has ruined our prospects in the world; we have nothing to live for there.

There is no true way of salvation from the world that does not start from such a revelation. We need only try to escape the world by running away from it to discover how much we love it, and how much it loves us. We may flee where we will to avoid it, but it will assuredly track us down. But we inevitably lose all interest in the world, and it loses its grip on us, as soon as it dawns upon us that the world is doomed. To see that is to be automatically severed from Satan's entire economy.

At the end of his letter to the Galatians Paul states this very clearly. "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (6:14). Have you noticed something striking about this verse? In relation to the world it speaks of the two aspects of the work of the Cross already hinted at in our last chapter. "I have been crucified unto the world" is a statement which we find fairly easy to fit into our understanding of being crucified with Christ as defined in such passages as Romans 6. But here it specifically says too that "the world has been crucified to me." When God comes to you and me with the revelation of the finished work of Christ, he not only shows us ourselves there on the Cross. He shows us our world there too. If you and I cannot escape the judgment of the Cross, then neither can the world escape the judgment of the Cross. Have I really seen this? That is the question. When I see it, then I do not try to repudiate a world I love; I see that the Cross has repudiated it. I do not try to escape a world that clings to me; I see that by the Cross I have escaped.

Like so much else in the Christian life, the way of deliverance out of the world comes as a surprise to most of us, for it is so at odds with all man's natural concepts. Man seeks to solve the problem of the world by removing himself physically from what he regards as the danger zone. But physical separation does not bring about spiritual separation; and the reverse is also true, that physical contact with the world does not necessitate spiritual capture by the world. Spiritual bondage to the world is a fruit of spiritual blindness, and deliverance is the outcome of having our eyes opened. However close our touch with the world may be outwardly, we are released from its power when we truly see its nature. The essential character of the world is Satanic; it is at enmity with God. To see this is to find deliverance.

Let me ask you: What is your occupation? A merchant? A doctor? Do not run away from these callings. Simply write down: Trade is under the sentence of death. Write: Medicine is under the sentence of death. If you do that in truth, life will be changed for you hereafter. In the midst of a world under judgment for its hostility to God you will know what it is to live as one who truly loves and fears him.

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