

Intro:

This afternoon I want to continue our series on “Our Church”. We are using the Mount Calvary *Non-Negotiables of Ministry* as a framework for discussing our own philosophy of the ministry and what kind of church we want this church to be.

I’m going to first read the Mount Calvary statement on today’s subject.

We believe in simplicity of Christian lifestyle (1 Cor. 7:30-31; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:4).

We encourage our people to live in the world without being of the world, to use the world without abusing it, to possess material things without being possessed by them. We do not encourage a sophisticated knowledge and familiarity with the godless world system in which God has ordained that we live.

Let’s read the texts in the KJV: 1 Cor. 7:30-31; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:4

I would also like to read them to you from the NAS

^{NAU} **1Co 7.30-31** and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;³¹ and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

^{NAU} **2Co 1.12** For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

^{NAU} **2Ti 2.4** No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

Last week we called our message “*Our Church, Your Ministry*”

This week we are calling it:

Our Church, Your Life

or: *the simple Christian life*

In some ways, today’s message will connect us with some of the things we have been saying from Galatians about “the violent Christian life” — I think it is important for us to pay careful attention not only to having the right kind of doctrine for Christian life, but the right kind of thinking about how to live that Christian life.

Notice in particular that I said “*the right kind of thinking*”. I am not talking about our church drawing up a list of ‘rules to live by’ so that you can successfully navigate every circumstance of our modern world.

- First, we don’t have enough *time* to cover everything that would need to be covered.
- Second, we think it better to help you to learn to think things through for yourself; this is called *philosophy*.

Proposition: We want you to have a good Christian philosophy of life that approaches the world with simplicity.

I. The Biblical philosophy taught by our passages

A. Begin with a right understanding of the world (1 Cor 7.30-31)

1. The context: Paul’s advice that, especially in times of tribulation, Christians contemplating marriage should prefer singleness
2. Paul is not prohibiting marriage, but encouraging singleness of mind
3. Singleness of mind exhibited

a. By an eternal perspective on the sorrows and joys of this life
(they are relatively short)

b. By an eternal perspective of possessions (they are temporary)

You can’t buy anything without it decreasing in value
(because you own it!)

c. By looking at this world as a means and not a goal

1) Use things in this world to move towards the kingdom

2) Don’t use the things of this world as the objective towards which you are moving

If I could just get a new car, a new house, a new truck, a new job... then I would have it made!

Instead, the things I have and the things I get should be for the purpose of advancing the kingdom...

And you should be ready to discard things that are no longer useful (a hard one for me!)

4. The rationale: the world is passing away – it is temporary

“The expression **the form of this world is passing away** is borrowed from the theater and refers to the changing of scenes.”¹

B. Serve with a sincere motive in the world (2 Cor 1.12)

1. Paul’s motives have been challenged by opponents in Corinth
 - a. Charged with seeking power over the Corinthians (control freak)
 - b. Charged with seeking money from the Corinthians (self-centered, self-indulgent) (but see 2 Cor 11.7ff.)
2. Paul’s motives are instead to advance God’s kingdom sincerely and simply, not follow the flesh or the world, but to serve men [especially the Corinthians in this case]

C. Live with a focus on another world (2 Tim 2.4)

1. Do not be entangled by this world

So, then, should we live as a hermit in a cave with no job and no possessions?
No, Paul himself was a tent-maker in order to provide for his own needs

2. Not being entangled means

- a. Not being captivated
- b. Not being distracted
- c. Not being hindered
- d. From the main thing (the main calling of the Christian life)

¹ William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*, electronic ed., 1 Co 7:31 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995).

II. The way of life we mean to encourage (and ways we mean to discourage)

We encourage our people to live in the world without being of the world, to use the world without abusing it, to possess material things without being possessed by them.²

A. Not slothful in business but not devoted to dollars

1. The ‘Protestant Work Ethic’
2. Mammonism – rejected by Christ

B. Friendly with sinners but not fraternizing with sinners

1. Fraternize =

- a. to associate or mingle as brothers or on fraternal terms
- b. to associate on close terms with members of a hostile group especially when contrary to military orders³

The meaning I want you to take with this word is treating as *brethren* people who are *enemies* of the gospel

2. Friendly =

- a. Amiable
- b. Cooperative
- c. Helpful
- d. Involved
- e. Compassionate

C. A spiritual mind not a carnal mind

1. Spiritual mind is devoted to spiritual things

- a. Bible reading and prayers
- b. Good spiritual books and spiritual helps (*Pilgrim’s Progress* for example, but many others)

One of our Mission Director’s said he wanted to encourage men to make their conversation reflect the Bible — Jim Berg says you should be able to think about problems in terms of ‘King James English’ (or whatever version you use).

² From the Mount Calvary statement

³ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993.

2. A carnal mind is devoted to fleshly things (earthly things)
 - a. Focused on the world
 - b. Delights in fleshly pursuits
 - c. Vocabulary of the world (not necessarily 'evil' things, just things of this world)

We do not encourage a sophisticated knowledge and familiarity with the godless world system in which God has ordained that we live.⁴

D. An expertise in the ways of the Spirit rather than the ways of the world

1. "Christian movie critic"
2. Christian experts on the world's music

When I was a boy, maybe 11 or 12, still old enough that my parents wanted someone to watch us when they went out, our pastor's son was one of our favorite 'baby-sitters'. He was a lot of fun, a real charismatic personality and pretty responsible.

- But an expert in the world's music
- We recorded him telling us the Three Little Pigs interspersed with appropriate lines from the 'Top 40' station he listened to.
- He was an expert on music, but it turned out, no expert on the Christian life.

Not saying if your interests are the same as his you will end up living a non-Christian life...

But... you cannot live a victorious Christian life *and* be obsessed with the things of the world

3. Minds filled with video games vs. minds filled with Christ
4. Minds obsessed with fashion
5. Minds obsessed with 'boys' – a particular affliction of teenage girls

⁴ From the Mount Calvary statement

6. Minds obsessed with sports
 - a. I enjoy sports, although I have become much less devoted than I used to be
 - b. I read sports writers who give good information, but hockey is their life – “For them to live is ... hockey”
7. etc.

We are not establishing a new law here – you are being called to a spiritual walk, to make your own decisions, to establish your own convictions, but to do so *in favor of Jesus Christ*.

Conclusion:

Read 2 Tim 3.1-5

We want our church to be filled with people who aren't interested in the pleasures of this world and who have much more than just a form of godliness.

We want the real deal when it comes to godliness.

Be devoted to Christ.