

“The Influence of Life: The World or The Spirit”

Ephesians 5:18-21 (PHILLIPS)

15-21 Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God. Don't get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of God! Thank God at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And “fit in with” each other, because of your common reverence for Christ.

- What truly “stimulates” you?
 - From what do you get your influence in life?
 - What gives you the most “charge” in life?
 - Since Paul uses the example of wine, the question may be;
What are you intoxicated with?
- I. It seems very clear and plain that Paul's encouragement to the Early Church in Ephesus was to be stimulated, influenced and led by The Spirit!
- A. Unfortunately, many in the Church today have relegated redemption to checking off a written list that directs and controls our behavior!
1. That IS NOT what redemption is!
 2. Redemption is actually about a transformed life!
 3. A life that is renewed and directed by The Lord and is contrary to the standards of the world!
 4. It is a “death and burial” from one life and a “resurrection” to another way of living!
- B. A closer look at the description of “life in the world” should enable us to determine the source of the influences of our life! The World...or...The Spirit!

1 John 2:15-17 (PHILLIPS)

15-17 Never give your hearts to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world-system, based as it is on men's primitive desires, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself. The world and all its passionate desires will one day disappear. But the man who is following God's will is part of the permanent and cannot die.

1. Notice the way this particular translation describes John's warning to the Church!
2. He said, "Never give your hearts to the world."
3. You begin to see how serious and incredible this statement is when you read another scripture:

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)

23 Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

- C. What we allow to be the major "stimulation" in our lives will absolutely determine the course of our lives!
 1. We see this direction and encouragement by all of God's leaders and writers all throughout scripture!
 2. James, the brother of our Lord, is a little more direct and plain spoken!

James 4:4 (TPT)

4 You have become spiritual adulterers who are having an affair, an unholy relationship with the world. Don't you know that flirting with the world's values places you at odds with God? Whoever chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy!

3. When we allow the world to influence us, direct our feelings and thoughts we are being unfaithful to The Lord Jesus!

II. If we will take the time to really study and understand our redemption and The Christian faith, we would completely change our approach to life, our faith experience and our church family!

Colossians 2:1-10 (NLT)

1 I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. 2 I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. 3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. 5 For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong. 6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. 7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. 8 Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. 9 For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human

body. 10 So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

- A. We can only separate ourselves from the World by knowing, acknowledging, and living what the scriptures teach!
 - 1. Not out of what some would call legalism...
 - 2. But through letting His Word transform and direct your lives!

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NLT)

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

- B. Is there anyway The Lord could be plainer!
 - 1. His Holy Word is not about leverage, control or condemnation!
 - 2. It is about transformation and becoming more like Him!
- C. A. W. Tozer said,
"We have learned to live with unholiness and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing."
 - 1. CHANGE is not only available to the person who comes to Christ, it is the expectation of God as we come.
 - 2. Remember, our faith is not a philosophy, it is a relationship!