

Live No Longer As The Gentiles Live

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, the Lord prepared them for life in the Promised Land. One of His most repeated admonitions was, "Don't walk in the statutes of the Gentiles!" (**Leviticus 18:1-5**). Throughout the Jews' history, when judgment came upon them it was because they disobeyed this warning (**II Kings 21:2**). We are not Old Testament Jews, but under the New Covenant, the Lord has issued the same admonition. In **Romans 12:2**, Paul says we must not be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds. We are to be different from the world. We are not to walk in the statutes of the Gentiles (using this term to refer to the worldly, not to the non-Jew). Several passages in the New Testament define how we are to be different. Studying these will separate us from the world and draw us closer to God. Examine your life in light of these passages.

Discussion:

- I. **Matthew 5:43-48** – Love no longer as the Gentiles love.
 - A. The Gentiles love conditionally. They are happy to bestow blessings on those who love them first. They will do good to those who have done good to them or who can repay them. They bless those who have blessed them. They find it easy to love the lovely. But the unlovely, they disdain. It should not be that way with us.
 - B. Jesus said we should love as does our Father in heaven who gives blessings to all, even those who are wicked and unrighteous. He proved His love by sacrificing His Son for us, even while we were yet sinners (**Romans 5:8**). A great example of love and service is seen in **John 13:5,12** as Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Here is the Master of the world, Creator of the universe and Savior of mankind, humbling Himself before disciples to do the work of a slave, cleaning their dirty, sweaty, smelly feet. But even beyond that, He worked His way around the room and came to Judas Iscariot, the man who had already set the trap to betray Jesus. Jesus bent before Judas and washed his feet. This is not like the Gentiles. It is unconditional. It does not keep scores. It accepts wrong and does not wrong in return. It serves all out of a genuine care for their soul. In which way do you love?
- II. **Matthew 6:7-8** – Pray no longer as the Gentiles pray.
 - A. Jesus teaches us to steer clear of the useless repetitions that the Gentiles would offer to their gods, thinking they would be heard because they spoke so much. This calls to mind the prophets of Baal before their unlit altar in **I Kings 18:25-29**. They shouted and hollered, they begged and pleaded but no one was there to answer. The repetitions did no good because their god was a figment of their imagination.
 - B. In reality, Jesus' advice in this passage can be summed up in saying, "When you pray, remember who God is and who you are." Jehovah God is not like the gods of the pagans, inventions of mankind and therefore little more than glorified men. The pagan gods were often beset with the same desires and limitations of mankind. But not Jehovah. He is real. But He is not like us. His ways and His thoughts are not ours (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). When we come into the presence of God, we must remember His greatness. We must remember the advice of the Preacher in **Ecclesiastes 5:1-2**. The purpose of our praying is not to provide knowledge for God. He knows our needs before we ask (**Matthew 6:8**). Rather, praying is for us, to point us to God's power, majesty, benevolence and mercy. Prayer is not our time to unload or vent to God. It is a time to humble ourselves before the Almighty. Doing so in amazement that One so awesome would condescend to listen to us. In remembering who He is, we are forced to remember who we are. We are sinners. And if He will not "hear" our prayers, it is because of the separation we have caused through sin (**Isaiah 59:1-2**), not because of weakness on His part. We do not have the right to come shouting in His presence, demanding He give ear to our pleas. Rather, in meekness we pray, giving thanks for His mercy and grace (**Philippians 4:6**).
 - C. While it is important to note that we must not pray as the Gentiles do, it is more important to notice that we must pray. We must humble ourselves in this way. In which way do you pray?

III. **Matthew 6:19-34** – Value no longer what the Gentiles value.

- A. The Gentiles value the things of this world. They store up treasures on earth. Much of their time is spent wondering how they will accumulate wealth. They are impressed with fancy cars, nice houses, new clothes and expensive gadgets. Their master is mammon. As such, their worries and fears revolve around money. They do not have trust in God to take care of them. They believe they will be taken care of by their own planning. But they are unaware that all their planning and toiling can be brought to naught in a moment by moths, rust and thieves. The market dips and their retirement is forfeited. Tragedy strikes and their savings is lost in medical bills. Or perhaps they are like the rich man whose crops were productive in **Luke 12:16-21**. He thought his troubles were over and his life secure. But his riches never did him any good. They could not preserve him from death, nor help him once he was dead. He couldn't even control what would happen to them. In an instant, all that he valued became completely valueless.
- B. Do not take this to mean that Christians are not to be good stewards of the financial blessings God has given them. They must be. But they will be good stewards for the proper reasons. Because money and material things are not the goals, but rather the means to the goal of serving God and one another. What is first and foremost in the mind of a Christian is not the value of a dollar bill but the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord (**Philippians 3:8**). To the child of God, the law, commandments, judgments, precepts and testimony of the Lord are more desirable and valued higher than gold (**Psalms 19:7-10**). No doubt, Christians plan the use of their financial blessings so they will be fed and clothed tomorrow and even in retirement. But the Christian knows that being fed and clothed is not based on their planning, but based on God's providence because they have sought first His kingdom and His righteousness. The Christian is not to be distracted by all that is down here on the earth (**Colossians 3:2**). The Christian does not put his hope in his money but in God, who is the giver of blessings and provides us with blessing not to be hoarded in our bank accounts but to be used to help others (**I Timothy 6:17-19**). Which would you prefer right now: a guarantee of eternal life in heaven or \$1,000,000? The faithful Christian doesn't make any pretense of believing he can serve both God and mammon. He simply serves God and lets God decide how well he will be blessed, being a good steward of the blessings. What do you value?

IV. **Matthew 20:25-28** – Lead no longer as the Gentiles lead.

- A. Leaders among the Gentiles lord their authority over others. They are braggarts about their positions among men. They do not want to be in positions of leadership for the betterment of those under their rule. They want to be leaders for the power and prestige it affords. They want to be leaders so they can be served. They want to be leaders so they could do things their own way. They want to be leaders so they may have the preeminence and the control.
- B. Christians are not to lead as the Gentiles lead. Whether we lead in the church, in the home, on the job, in our schools, among our peers, etc., we lead as servants. We must not seek the power and the prestige. We do not strive for the accolades and praises of men. We do not wish to be in any power struggles or competitions with men. Rather, we want to serve others. If we can serve them in leadership capacities, then we will do that. But we must not strive to receive honor. Rather, we prefer others in honor (**Romans 12:10**). Jesus Himself is our example. He did not come to be served but to serve and He gave His life a ransom for many (**Matthew 20:28**). We do not view leading as being in the lap of luxury. Leadership means sacrifice. It means losing sleep. It means giving up our lives a ransom for others. We are the greatest of leaders, not when we are honored, served and praised, but when we are on our knees washing feet. Take note, this is not just about those who have a leadership title, such as elders, deacons or evangelists. This is about all Christians. We are not to be like the Gentiles who strive to be excepted from service. Rather, we look for opportunities to serve. How do you lead?

V. **Ephesians 4:17-24** – Walk no longer as the Gentiles walk.

- A. Gentiles walk in stubborn reliance upon self. They are too ignorant to realize how truly dependent they are. They do not allow God into their lives, having callused and hardened their hearts to the point that nothing can penetrate. They are going to walk as they want to walk. They are going to do as they want to do. They are going to live as they want to live. They are

going to pursue a path of pleasure for themselves. They live in the moment, in the here and now. They do not live with eternity in mind. If they are religious, their religion is governed by their own desires, heaping up for themselves teachers who will tickle their itching ears (**II Timothy 4:3-4**). No one has the right or even the option of telling them how they should live, not even God.

- B. Christians do not walk in this way, but rather in a manner that is worthy of their calling. They walk in a manner that is worthy of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christians soften their hearts, allowing their consciences to be molded, not by their own lusts, but by the Spirit and His revealed will. We live by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit (**Galatians 5:16, 25**). As **Galatians 2:20** says, we are not living these lives. Christ is living in us. That is, we are not the controllers, we have given the reigns over to Christ. Where He leads, we follow. We do not step out on our own. We recognize that our own way leads to death (**Proverbs 14:12**) and so we trust in the Lord and do not lean on our own understanding (**Proverbs 3:5**). How are you walking?

VI. **I Peter 4:1-5** – Pursue no longer what the Gentiles pursue.

- A. The Gentiles pursue the things of the flesh, lasciviousness and lusts, drinking and drunkenness and even idolatries. Whatever provides a moment's pleasure. What is most important to them is that their flesh is pleased. Their senses and their feelings drive them, not what is right and proper. Additionally, they are incensed by anyone who tries to do differently than they. If someone stops this kind of behavior, the Gentile will be surprised and even malign them. "Your too good to drink with your old buddies, huh?" "What's the matter? You used to know how to have fun."
- B. But we do not pursue the things of the flesh, we flee them (**II Timothy 2:22**). We pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Instead of lasciviousness and lust, Christians pursue modesty in behavior, dress and speech and purity in heart. Instead of drinking and drunkenness, Christians pursue soberness (**I Thessalonians 5:5-8**). Instead of idolatry, Christians pursue God and His righteousness above all else. For all these things the Gentiles mock us, but Christians strive to serve God in all things, not man. We pursue the things of God despite the persecutions we will receive. We do so, because we realize that anything that might be considered of earthly value pales in comparison to what we gain in Christ (**Philippians 3:8**).

Conclusion:

The Jews of the Old Covenant were often judged because they reverted back to the ways of the nations around them. Apostasy seems to be the rule of history. Folks turn to God, but in a generation, or even less, they turn back to the statutes of the Gentiles. Let us make sure that we do not make this mistake. There is only one way to avoid this mistake and that is be different from the world. This teaching and these passages portray a mindset that we must develop. Far too often, we want to try to keep as much of the world as possible. We want to know where the lines are so we can stay on them and get away with as much as possible. That is not the mindset Christ teaches. He expects us to be different. He expects us to love differently. He expects us to pray differently. He expects us to value different things. He expects us to lead in different ways. He expects us to walk differently. And He expects us to pursue different things. He expects us to be a living sacrifice that sacrifices similarity with the world (**Romans 12:1-2**). He does not want us to be as much like the world as we possibly can. He wants us to stand out in the crowd and be different. In the light of these passages and God's expectations therein, how different are you from the world in these respects?