

Holy Worldliness

Matthias Overholt

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Well thank you all for coming today, and thank you, brother Chester, for what you shared; what a story, and you'll tell us more about it later. How many of you were drawing parallels today as he was talking about these folks in the past and where we might be today in our culture in this country? I see a few hands. I thought about the same thing. We are in desperate times. We are in times that are dangerous.

My father said that prior to World War II... (that was his era, his generation) He went into relief work after the war, and went into France and Poland and spent several years helping with the refugees. He talked to many of the Russian Mennonite people, and they gave him many stories. And of course as we were growing up Father would tell us those stories; very, very touching, troubling. And one of the things he said was that things happened and changed very quickly. The people were there living their lives and making a living and involving themselves in their culture; some of them serving the Lord. But things happened quickly, and the life that they knew changed.

So this could happen today in our country too. So far they tolerate us, we're okay, they eat our pies and buy our quilts and buy some of our food, but it could happen quickly. And we do see that there are clouds on the horizon and we want to warn our people to not get involved here, to not love this world, and be ready for anything that the Lord will allow us to go through. His grace will be sufficient.

The title of this little talk today is called Holy Worldliness. First of all, it's an oxymoron; there's nothing like holy worldliness, there's nothing like worldly holiness. They are against each other; they are opposites. I'd like to read first of all from the handout:

Does God our Creator want his people to be distinctive and separate from the worldly culture they find themselves in? Yes or no? If we have answered "Yes" to this question, what is this supposed to look like?

Are you holy? Do you want to be holy? Does it really matter if you are holy or not? Does it make a difference what you read or what you meditate on? Does it matter what you eat? Does it matter if you use mind altering drugs? Does it matter what clothing you wear? What about debt? What about big business? What about our hobbies? Does it matter if we are covetous or content? Is God holy? Are you holy? Does it matter?

"The term holiness means, in its broadest sense, separation. The Hebrew word 'Kadash', in its intensive stem, means to separate. When God commanded the children of Israel to sanctify themselves, He asked that they removed from themselves all physical and ceremonial uncleanness. As applied to God in its broadest sense, holiness means His separation from, and independence of, everything not Himself; it signifies His absolute perfection, His self existence and self-sufficiency. In this respect no creature can be like Him. He stands in a category by himself.

“However, the more general significance of holiness as applied to God is separateness from evil, from sin and uncleanness in every form. He has no part in evil and he puts all sin from him. His holiness is the fundamental attribute of his moral nature. Holiness is the most urgent and exacting quality in the being of God; and, to be rightly adjusted to it, is the most solemn duty of man. It is a serious matter to live anymore world, because it involves personal relations with the absolute God. God's holiness makes holiness obligatory upon all His moral creatures; therefore, God says, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' God's holiness signifies that He constantly wills for Himself and for all moral beings that which is right and just.”

This was submitted to me by my brother-in-law Mark Chupp, from some sources that he had. Thank you for writing that.

1 Corinthians 6:14-14, 7:1-2 7:1b - "...perfecting holiness and the fear of God." We heard about the long war against God by brother Strubhar, and Satan wants our people sidetracked; Satan wants all people sidetracked. Satan doesn't want any of us to be holy at all in our lifestyle. We heard about a people that got sidetracked not so very long ago.

So, just a few points here:

1. Holiness should start with leadership. What I mean by that is men, women, husbands, wives, leaders in your community; someone has to set the example. And it starts of course in each and every one of us.

Here's an interesting thought from Exodus 32: "Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies;) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Who is on the Lord side? Let him come unto me.' "Who is for holiness, stand over here.

Remember, I think it was Exodus 24, God called Moses up, he left Aaron and Hur in charge of the group, he said, "We're going to go up the mountain," and he gave him the laws. And so it was in chapter 32 there, several chapters later, and the folks came to Aaron and said, "We don't know what happened to him, he's been gone a while." It's only been 40 days, but to them I guess it seemed like a while. And so they said, "Hey, make us some gods." And so Aaron willingly (he must have been a liberal at heart, maybe Moses was a conservative, generally the prophets are the conservatives) Aaron says, "Okay, let's make for peace." So Aaron says, "Take your gold off," and he threw it in the fire. And what he said to Moses later on was, "Hey, the calf just walked out. We threw it in there and out walked this thing." Because Moses asked him later, "Why did you do this?"

But anyway, I thought it was significant that it says that Aaron made them naked. He was the leader, he made them naked. And they came back, and Joshua said, "What do I hear? It's the noise of war." Moses said, "No, it's not the noise of war, it's the noise of singing." The people were singing and dancing and they were involving themselves in things they shouldn't have been. But the leader of the church congregation made them naked.

Father today, are you making your daughters naked? Are you protecting their chastity, purity by covering their beauty? In the home first, so their brothers don't covet their beauty? Those of you that are part of the Old Order groups here today, are you allowing your children to participate in Rumspringa? This is a reproach on the greater Body of Christ. Fathers, you should be going after them saying, "Children, don't do this. This is wrong; this is not what we're about." Instead of saying, "Well, you know, we had to do our walk, and now they have to do their walk." This is not right.

School principals, are you making your students naked? Do we abbreviate our clothing so we can better participate in sports? I saw that in the study of EMC, now EMU, and also probably Goshen has its story, and Hesston, and some of these schools. And if you look at the old pictures, there they are, they are very modestly attired. And then along comes the wanting to be accepted by the fellow universities around them, and so they start abbreviating, and the cultures and customs change, and the times, and we've got to play this school now, and you know these clothes, they don't work very well. And you watch the pictures, and pretty soon the sisters that were modest, that were covering their beauty, that were looking holy, maybe they weren't holy at heart, but at least they looked holy, and so they start abbreviating and soon it looks terrible. It looks like nakedness, what happened? And they're still saying, Yea, God. They're still saying, Jesus, Jesus, whatever, but something is terribly wrong here.

Pastors, what are you changing in your standard of practice to accommodate the worldly-minded in your congregations? Are you making your people naked? And I'd like to tell you a story; I was in a conservative conference church not too long ago, several years ago, in our area down there in Sarasota, Florida. There was a wedding, and so, as weddings go, the bride wears a nice long gown, dress, and at the end, they were going to throw the garter. Now throwing the garter has nothing to do with holiness, but this was the custom. And I was like, "I can't be here, this is wrong." She's going to expose her beauty for the eyes of all the young men there, and they're going to throw this to the crowd, and whoever gets it, they're the next married or whatever happens there. And so we stepped back, me and a couple of people in our group, and I was like, "This is not right!" I didn't feel like superior to them, I didn't feel like I was more holy than them, I didn't feel like I was better than them, I just said, "This isn't right! We can't participate in this." Where was the pastor? Why didn't he run up there and say, "Hey, don't do that, this isn't right?" Well, you know what, this young lady, through the week, wore shorts, so she exposed that part of her leg anyway. So it was nothing different. But it was still... It wasn't right; it was like, is this holiness? And this is a Mennonite church, and they're saying, Yea God, and what's up here?

2. Our deepest yearning and desire should be to be holy. "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." No one will see the Lord without holiness. And, "What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..." I'd like to tell a story of a lady that I worked for. She was part of a local community church, and she was leading a Bible study, and she was discipling new converts. And she told me about this, and she was excited about this. And she had on a tank top outfit, and I was a little bit distracted by all this, and I said, "I need to talk to her about this," and I said, "Does it matter what your young women wear when you're discipling them? Does it matter what you wear?" And she said, "Well, I'm too old anyway, nobody would desire me." And I thought, "Well here you are, trying to disciple these people, and something is wrong, something is really wrong here."

Another story; we sang at an Evangelical church, and afterward we had question and answer, and they asked us young people – this was year's ago – and I figured it was going to come, they asked us what we wear to the beach. Well what would Jesus wear to the beach? That should answer it. Something that is holy, not like the world, the culture around us, that all they want to do is to expose. That's Satan, we heard about him this morning, that's his agenda.

We all understand it has to start inside. It has to start inside first of all. To be like them to win them doesn't work. We must call them to something higher; higher road – the highway of holiness. Isaiah 35:8 "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Nothing unclean will walk on it; the redeemed will walk there.

3. We need to have an internal standard of holiness and separation from what is carnal, fleshly, and worldly. And that is everyday for us men; we've got these electronic devices that we use, and we're living in a very real world. So sometimes we have to say we're not having Internet in the home. That's where we're at right now; we're trying to figure out what to do about all that. I've got a website for my business, but my wife checks the Internet, she takes care of all that. I don't want to be distracted; I've had a real story in the past of some of this stuff getting a grip on me, my own moral defeats, and so forth, and so I just don't want to surf the web. She's going to have to take care of that.

So there are some things we've got to do. I get an equipment trader magazine; the person that puts the magazine together so conveniently has this picture of this beautiful girl right inside the front cover. So every time it comes into our home, the first thing I've got to do is to take a magic marker and put some clothes on her. I've got to do it for my own sake, or otherwise I'll get distracted, and I want to stay holy, inside, in every way. I don't want to allow any hooks for the enemy; he's got them in the past, and I don't want him to get them again. And so I need to take some steps in that direction.

Men, what can we do to help us stay holy as we involve ourselves in this world? Internet, cell phones, our vehicles, our houses. Do we have through thin the inward parts? And, men, let's not go silent either. Different times I'd find myself where I didn't want to be and my pride wouldn't allow me to confess. The Holy Spirit would say, "Tell the brothers." So every time I went to pray, and every time I went to get before the Lord, the Holy Spirit, in his gentlemanly way, as we heard this morning, would say, "Tell it to the brothers. Just confess what happened. Tell them what you did. Tell them about your moral defeat." I couldn't do that, because I was too proud, and I wanted to be accepted. After all that I have said and done, I'm landing flat on my face, and I've done something unholy, but the Lord allowed an accident to happen that got my attention, and I said, "I must do this." So the first thing I did was to go and get in touch with our pastor. And in his kindness he said, "Why didn't you come earlier? You wouldn't have had to live that whole year in silence and defeat like that." And so that's my heartbeat for the young men here today, that we don't go silent. If we find ourselves making some wrong choices, and pushing some buttons, dealing with life and not dealing with it well, if we could just find a brother to confess our faults to, pray for one another that you might be healed. Because Satan wants us to silent.

And lest I be too hard on the men, women, you are very relational, and some of the burden I've had for our sisters is the romance novels, even if it has a Plain lady on the cover, it is still a concern for me. It seems like they've recently had a lot of these books out there, and they have Plain people now. But it's still a romance novel, boy meets girl. And ladies, if you find yourself in a bad relationship, these can be way of medicating for you too, so be very careful about that. Be very careful about reaching for some of these things when God wants us to go to Him and say, "Lord, please help me, heal me, change me."

So we must get cleaned up on the inside, and we need to stay clean. Mark 7 "The things that come out of a man defile a man... evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, etc" We can't say, "The devil made me do it." We can't say that, because each one of us is dealing with this skin that we're trapped in that has no desire to surrender to the Lord Jesus, no desire to do what's right. This skin is our mortal enemy; we have to constantly be putting him down. And maybe my theology isn't right either, brother. If it's not, please correct me. After I've heard all these things by brother Strubhar and some of the others I think, "How can I even get up here and share; I don't even know if my theology is right." So correct me if I'm wrong. But we all need to be holy inside.

And men, there's so many things we can find ourselves fudging in a little bit. I used to drive truck, and I could not run a legal logbook. And I know you've got to run so many hours, and you've got to rest so many hours, and I could not. And I found myself backing up in the book, and kind of running two books. And finally I said, "I can't keep signing my name on the bottom and saying I certified all these entries are true and correct, when they're not true and correct. It's a lie." And so I decided not to sign them anymore. And then I would pray, "Please Lord don't let me get stopped at the weigh station, I just want to go past." Finally I just quit. I said, "I can't do this anymore." So those of you that are okay with that, the Lord will work with you in that area.

Nothing is lost in God's economy, if our response to failure is Godly. We heard the other night, brother Chester said, these stones that come our way, can we just step on them, and can we keep coming higher and closer to Christ, and saying, "Lord, continue to change me in the things you allow in our lives; just help me to become more like you." Instead of going silent, but step on those stones, so nothing is lost in God's economy if our response to failure is godly. God will redeem all the years the locusts have eaten. By the way, if you here today, and you want your children to look identified and separate from the culture around them, fathers, you can't have anything hidden in your own life, because if they see that, and experience that, they're going to throw out and reject everything you're trying to teach them, because it won't make any sense at all. And that's just a concern of mine.

4. We do need an external standard of faith and practice. We heard about how the focus can be wrong. God wanted his people to be separated and holy. And if you look there are Numbers 15, God comes along and says to Moses, "They've got to have a ribbon of blue; when they go down to the Canaanite shopping malls, I want them to know that they are different, I want them to know that they are distinct, I want them to know that they are a separate people." If you notice the story right after what happened, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram made a big noise. They said, "We're all holy here. We don't need any more of these external distinctions. We don't need any of this stuff; we're holy enough. Moses, you are taking too much on yourself." And you know the story, they murmured against the Lord's leader there, and God was very displeased, and the ground opened up and swallowed them up.

But I thought it was very significant: it was right after God told them, "I want some of these distinctives to remind you. They don't make you holy, but it's just for you to remember to be holy in the culture." The threads don't make you holy at all, by the way; you can't don them and say, "Okay, I'm righteous now." No, your heart can still be dead and cold and dark. But God still wants those visible reminders.

I grew up embarrassed of my plain background. When my mom would go into the store I would stay as far back behind her as I could, and she'd get up to the checkout line, and I would just kind of wait until she was occupied there, and I would sneak on past her, and go out the door quickly. And I didn't want to have anything to do with these people that looked different.

So it was a real struggle. My brother and I would have two sets of clothes, and we would, there in front of Father, wear our suspenders and we looked very different, and then we'd get in the car and we'd chuck those clothes, and we get our town clothes on. We didn't want to be identified at all with these different people. We were selling peaches in Holmes County years ago, and my brother and I were with a truck driver delivering them. He was a very carnal man, very worldly, ungodly man. And as we passed one of our Old Order sisters beside the road, walking there, he said, "The problem with these people is they wear too many clothes." He couldn't covet her beauty. She didn't have it for display; she had it covered. And he said that's the problem with these people. I thought about that later that it was very significant. Praise the Lord.

Just a couple of things here. I know you guys have heard it all, some of you are up to your ears, especially young people today. Dad says, "Do this, wear this, etc." but you've got to hear it, because God still wants a distinct people, recognizable on sight as the people of God. And what you wear identifies you with different aspects of culture.

I'll show you what I used to wear. Now this is a plain hat. John Stetson came along with the ones that have the little dimple on the top. But I thought this would be plainer, because it has a flat top. And so I used to wear this; and when I was dating my wife I wore this. Until one day, I went somewhere, and the guy says, "Hey cowboy, how ya doin?" And it really struck me: "I'm identifying with the Western culture! I'm identifying with cowboy culture. He thinks I'm a cowboy." And I quit wearing it. I thought this was plain; it's got a narrow band, it's white, it's flat on top, there's nothing really... It's just plain. But it identified me with another culture, and it looked like I was promoting that culture.

And here's another one. What culture am I identifying with now? Is this the cowboy culture? No, it's the sports culture, primarily (baseball cap). Now this inside has camo, so it's also the hunting culture, and that's another our men can kind of slide in, especially around hunting season, we don the threads, and we show up in town, and they have no idea that we are separate in any way. We can just blend in, get a little fuzzy there a bit.

Okay, I've got one more thing. Nate, come up here. I wanted a little piece of cloth, and I don't see one... oh, I've got a handkerchief, here we go. Okay, I've got a small piece of cloth right here on the table, and this is a tablecloth.

Nathan: This is a tablecloth? But it's not covering the table.

Matthias: Well, but it's symbolic. It's symbolic of a tablecloth. The important thing is that you believe that it can cover, but it's symbolic. Well actually, it was just a Corinthian custom in the old days. No, actually it was not, but you get the point, okay. Folks, that's not going to work. That's not going to work. If you today are wearing this little tiny thing on top of your head, and you expect your children to cover their hair and look identified, they're going to say, "That's a joke!" You know the progression; grandma as a big covering, daughter comes along – just watch the pictures – daughter comes along, and she's got a smaller one, pretty soon the next generation has a little tiny coffee strainer on top that's about that big. And then the next generation says, "This is a joke. Why do you wear that thing? It was after all some kind of custom from way back anyway. It doesn't apply today."

You see where I'm going with this? These things happen by degrees. But something happened in the heart first of all. Internal standards of holiness in the heart, that's where it's got to start. But then we have to say...and we're going to get some flak, preachers, principals, you're going to get some flak from your people. Maybe like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "Hey, we're good, we're great, we're already holy enough, please don't make us do anything more." And yet, we've got to explain to them some of the significance of this. It's a reminder; it doesn't make them any more holy. A reminder not to be involved in the culture around us. We're to reach them, to give them a higher road to walk on, not be like them to win them. That doesn't work.