

DO YOU FEEL AT HOME?

Curtis Pugh

Poteau, Oklahoma

From outward observation it must be said that most professing Christians feel quite at home in this world. Most Baptists in our day are included in that group. Professing Christians on the whole take part in the same activities as the world. They are given over to sports of all kinds, seeking after whatever pleasure tickles their fancy. They live for the acquisition of wealth to heap upon themselves. Their participation in worldly celebrations and pagan holidays, etc. is the norm. In short, most professing Christians participate in the same things as those who do not profess faith in Christ. They seem to do so with the same great gusto as those who reject Christ and God. Their pleasure in worldly activities is demonstrated by their zeal for these kinds of things. They seem to feel quite at home in the godless society in which they dwell. We are mindful of 1 John 2:15-17 where it is written, **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”** Probably the insertion of those verses at this point in this article is enough to cause some folk to stop reading. Perhaps that is an indication of their love for the world and their distaste for what God says in those three verses.

Old time preachers used to preach against worldliness. They used to preach against settling down in this present evil world. Baptists used to be a separate people. There was a time long past when Baptists stood against worldliness, but that was when they followed the Bible. Today, even among

the few who claim to believe and follow the Bible, little difference can be seen between the way they live and the things they do as contrasted with the worldlings among whom they dwell. In those almost-forgotten historic days Baptists dressed modestly, lived clean lives, and pursued conformity to the teachings of the Bible. Their churches tried to be pure. Unrepentant erring members were excluded from the church fellowship. Today most Baptists knowingly pursue conformity to the world. To them it is a horrible thing to be considered different from the world. They are like boys on a cliff or other precipice. They delight in walking as near the edge as possible. Their questions about sins go like this: can I do this and still be regarded as a Christian. And so they dress immodestly just like most people do in their church and participate in worldly activities right along with their lost friends and neighbors. Their music and methods even in their religion is that of the world. They have lost the idea of a "solemn assembly" as commanded by God to His people Israel. Their assemblies are more like a jamboree or a rock concert than they are a time of solemn contemplation of the glory of Jehovah. Preachers are more like stand-up comedians who use buzz words and catch phrases to entertain and make their hearers feel good. Applause praises religious performers instead of praise from the heart honoring the Christ of God. Most Baptists are not even aware that true worship of God involves heart-adoration of Him in a solemn and truly joyful manner. They do not understand that true worship springs from a regenerate heart in response to God's enlightening that heart to Divine Truth. They have no spiritual ears with which to hear and so they cannot hear and cannot respond in joyful, solemn adoration and praise. They have never been thrilled by hearing! They have substituted the worldly thrill and excitement of flesh-tickling music suited to the tastes of their fellows rather than seeking worship that is pleasing to God. "Feel-good religion" is the norm. Foot patting and hand clapping has been substituted because of their inability to experience heartfelt praise.

And so it is the question arises posed in our title: Do You Feel At Home? The Bible tells us that we ought not to be at home or feel at home in this world. Consider these words: **“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”** (1 Peter 2:11). We are to consider ourselves “strangers and pilgrims:” literally foreigners and temporary residents in a country not our own. James Strong says of the word “strangers” that the Greek means “in the NT, a stranger, a foreigner, one who lives in a place without the right of citizenship.” From the Bible it seems that God's people have no rights in this world except the expectation to receive verbal and physical persecution for Jesus' sake. Baptists often boast that our citizenship is in heaven. If that is so, Baptists have for the most part abandoned the practices and customs of that heavenly place as observed by the old Baptists. They have adopted the behavior, culture, and habits of their temporary residence to the point that they are not a visible minority. They are mainstream! Instead of being visitors, they have become immigrants and applied for citizenship in this world. They, like the ancient nation of Israel, have lost their pilgrim nature. They are settled down comfortably, feeling quite at home in this world. No longer being marked out as different, they have escaped persecution! How worldly wise they are!

In Jeremiah 48:11 the prophet says about Israel's neighbor, **“Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.”** This is an allusion to wine making as practiced among the Jews. It has nothing to do with preserving grape juice as grape juice, by the way. Moab was condemned as being polluted and having “settled on his lees.” The word lees means the sediment or dregs which settles to the bottom of wine during the fermentation process. Jeremiah could use this illustration because the Jews round about him understood the process of wine making. Wine, in order to be purified of these dregs or lees

and its taste and clarity preserved was "emptied from vessel to vessel." That is, the wine would from time to time be carefully poured into another container in such a way as to leave the dregs behind. The sediment was thus separated from the beverage. This act of being poured from one vessel to another pictures what God had done to His people Israel in captivity. What the prophet is saying is that God had not dealt with Moab as He had with Israel. This is in line with what God said to Israel in Amos 3:2: **"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."** Those whom God knows in this special sense He deals with in correction and chastening in order to bring their behavior into line with His Word. God does not want worldlings! The Book of Hebrews has it thus: **"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"** (Hebrews 12:6). Christ explained to the lukewarm congregation of the Laodiceans what was happening to them. He was on the outside of that assembly because of their nauseating world-like-ness. By the way, worldliness is "world-like-ness." He told them: **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"** (Revelation 3:19). God sent Israel into captivity in order to purge them of idolatry. He did this because He loved them and had chosen them for His own national people. The New Testament teaches that He does the same thing to His people today both as individuals and as His congregations. It is not to be wondered at, then, that we know almost nothing by experience today of true revival. The life-changing presence of God in our meetings is seldom found. It seems clear that God has treated us as He did His Jewish children. How did He treat Israel when they despised His provision for them? What did He do when they hated the manna He provided? They wanted flesh to eat instead of what God ordained for them. The Psalmist wrote about this sin and what God did to them. It is written: **"But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul"** (Psalm 106:14-15). Can it be that God's people today have so longed after the pleasures and flesh-teasing activities of the world

that God has "blessed" them with those things, but sent leanness to their souls? Like a little boy who loves the smell of the vanilla extract when someone is baking. He thinks since it smells so good, it must taste wonderfully. He begs and begs for a taste. He is told that he will not like to taste the vanilla. Finally the adult gives him a taste. The adult was right! A little vanilla was needful for the baking, but too much is awful. That may be a poor illustration, but has God give today's American Christians the desires of their hearts and at the same time withdrawn Himself in some measure so that their souls are undernourished and downright skinny? Are we settled upon our lees? Polluted with worldliness? With natural things? With the desires of our wicked hearts?

Or is your heart sick at the sins around you? Do you see that righteousness – that unpopular word and idea – has become a thing of the past as far as our society is concerned? Are you heartsick at the compromising, sin-harboring religious groups that claim to be churches – that claim to be followers of the Lamb? And do you abhor yourself? Do you **"hunger and thirst after righteousness?"** (Matthew 5:6). Or do you feel at home in this world? You must be one or the other. Are you "sick of love," i.e. lovesick for your Heavenly Bridegroom as was the Shulamite bride in Song of Solomon 5:8? Or are you in love with the things of this world: those empty customs of the people and pleasures of sin which last only for a season (see Jeremiah 10:3; Hebrews 11:25). Can it be said of you that you are not only a citizen of another country, but that you are in love with the Heavenly Bridegroom who resides there? Peter wrote of Christ saying, **"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"** (1 Peter 1:8). The context indicates that the people to whom he wrote were in the midst of grievous trials. Their difficulties pressed sorely upon them. Yet, because of their love for Christ they were rejoicing with Heavenly and Heaven-sent indescribable joy! They loved the One they had never seen! Such love as this can only be found in a regenerated heart. Such

love-sickness and longing after righteousness and the King of Righteousness Himself – our Melchizedek – cannot be produced either by or in a spiritually dead person. Let the Arminian preach of the need for loving God by natural ability. He thinks he can produce such love out of his own wicked heart. He knows nothing of the sovereign work of regeneration – of the Holy Spirit's work in the inner man. Paul wrote, **“...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”** (Romans 5:5). The love of a true child of God for Christ, for righteousness, for truth and for the glory of God is produced by God Himself!

And so it is we close with a warning and an exhortation. If you feel at home in this world then you are of this world and your citizenship is here, not in Heaven. If you are satisfied with the toys and treasures sought after and hoarded by the unsaved masses, you are one of them. You need regeneration. You need to be born again. Regardless of your baptism, your church membership, your false profession or your good works: these things count for nothing apart from a new birth – a heavenly birth of the Holy Spirit. If you are pleased with yourself and the world you have been deceived by your own wicked heart or by someone preaching a false gospel of free will. Cast yourself upon the Lord! **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”** (2 Corinthians 13:5).