

REVELATION'S SAINT'S - A "PECULIAR" PEOPLE

My dear friends, I want to talk heart to heart with you. We appreciate you attending this Bible seminar. It is our desire, as we choose topics for this seminar that we choose the topics that would be of particular importance for the time in which we live. And there are some topics that God would have us place an emphasis upon, primarily in these last days. How do people live, who are preparing for the final days of Earth's history?

Malachi 3:18

“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

What does a “*Righteous*” man or woman look like?

“Holy and upright living, in accordance with God's standard. The word righteousness comes from a root word that means "straightness." It refers to a state that conforms to an authoritative standard. Righteousness is a moral concept. God's character is the definition and source of all righteousness. Therefore, man's righteousness is defined in terms of God's.” (Nelson's Bible Dictionary)

Key Point:

The righteous serve God, and therefore, righteousness is defined in God's terms, not our own!

2 Corinthians 5:20

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The Scriptures tell us that we are ambassadors for Jesus. An Ambassador is a very important individual who lives in a foreign country. And there in that foreign country he represents his government. And an ambassador holds to the policy and the laws, and standards of his country and strives to represent his country in the very best possible way. Now the Bible says that you and I are ambassadors for Christ. In other words, just as an ambassador in the political realm, strives to represent his land as best he can, so does the Christian hold to the standards, and laws and regulations of the government of heaven.

We live in a foreign world. As the old Christian song says, *“This world is not our home, I'm just a pass'in through.”* I hope and pray that you are looking for a better home than what this world presently provides. And so we are ambassadors for Christ while we are on this earth, and Jesus has placed us in a most important position—one of representing Him in His physical absence. This is the aim of God's children.

Sometimes people come to me and say, *"Pastor, what's wrong with doing this or that?"* Or, *"What's wrong with this little thing over here?"* Or, *"You mean God's going to keep me out of heaven because of this?"* And beloved, my response is this: Is that the way Christ's Ambassador's should act and speak? A political ambassador will go out of his way for his secular government, above and beyond the call of duty. Will not the Christian go the extra measure for his or her Lord?

The little sin or the little problem is not really the issue in question. The real question is, *“Is the heart in love with Jesus?”* Because if we go through our whole Christian life saying, *"Well, why*

can't I do this" and "Why can't I do that?" that's not true Christianity. True Christianity is made up of a relationship. You do things because your connected to Christ. That it's your natural desire to do His will. In other words, you want to do what pleases Jesus.

When God makes His will plain in the Bible and people hold to the attitude of *"Well do we really have to; and Why can't I do this or that? or "God's word says this, but I think..."*, the root problem is simply this: *the heart is not fully in love with Jesus.*

1 John 3:22

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

We've talked a lot about the commandments in this seminar, and we're told that if we love God, His commandments are not grievous. When we really love someone, and we love to please them, it's not hard to do that which is pleasing in their sight. And when we truly love God, not one of His commandments will grieve us. Not one will seem hard or harsh to us; but in all of His commandments we'll see a loving Father, a God who cares for us and desires only the best for us.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments . . ." when we ask God things, we can and will receive, but there is a prerequisite. *Because we keep His commandments.* And that's what an ambassador does. He holds onto the laws of the land. But it goes further than that.

"do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Here John shows us that being an ambassador for God and having a relationship with God takes us beyond just keeping the commandments. The response of the Christian goes into those things that are what? ***"Pleasing in His sight."*** If we really love God, we'll keep His commandments. But we'll do more than that, for the commandments are really just the minimum for the Christian. If we read in the Bible that God would be pleased if we follow Him, even in what might even be considered by some as *"little things,"* if we really love God, and are truly desiring to please the Lord, wouldn't we want to pick up on those things that He speaks about and please Him?

Friends, do you love God enough to submit yourselves to Him and do those things that are pleasing in His sight? Are we ready to go above and beyond the call of duty as far as the Ten Commandments? Are we ready to follow the Lamb *"wheresoever He goeth?"* The 144,000 are known for being willing to walk with Jesus *wherever* He goes. The true follower of Jesus is willing for the Spirit of Christ to do the necessary heart surgery on us to take the love of the world out of us. That is to say the love of things that are not for the best purposes of the Christian life. The love for the things of this world appeal to the carnal nature of man.

Don't you believe we should love God enough to desire to do whatever is pleasing in His sight? Of course, and along with that we should desire to *stop doing* anything that is *not* pleasing in His sight.

And love of course, is to be the primary motive for serving Jesus. If you don't have a love relationship with Jesus, this whole subject will not mean much to you. What are some of those things that we ought to be doing that are pleasing in His sight?

Hebrews 12:1,

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience (endurance) the race that is set before us."

"lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Just as John said, we should be willing to keep His commandments *and* do those things that are pleasing in His sight, Paul says we should lay aside every sin *and* the weight. The weights of the world can keep us from achieving the will of God for our lives. When we make the decision to do those things that are pleasing in Jesus' sight, there are some things that are weights in our lives that we're going to have to lay aside.

The Bible speaks of the heavenly New Jerusalem as Mt. Zion. And as we ascend to the heavenly Zion, we don't need any extra baggage. We read about those who climb Mt. Everest. These different teams that make it lay aside every non-essential weight. They wanted just the essential things. And that's good in the physical realm but it's also good in the spiritual realm. And if we're weighed down with various weights, things in our life that are not pleasing to God, we're in danger of being left behind because the weights will keep us back from running the race of the Christian. God would be pleased if we laid aside the weights in our life which hold us back from running the Christian race, living the true life of faith.

Let's now discuss what some of those weights might be. You've sat through some studies with some strong presentations. *How many of you love to hear the straight truth of the Bible preached?* And though I don't make any apologies for preaching so plainly, I do want you to know I speak it with love in my heart. The problem we're having in our world today is this; the Christian church and community are in love with two different things. We are supposedly in love with God on one hand, and yet we're in love with the world and its sinful pleasures on the other hand. And many Christians today are trying to walk with both—they're straddling the fence. Friends, it's just not Biblically possible. The Bible says that those who are close to the heart of God are far from this world, and worldliness (being and acting like the world) is a great problem within the Christian community today. In our next subject, on baptism, we will learn what it means to be truly born of God, and that's choosing to die to sin. Then the Bible says we go on to live a sanctified life. At this time we want to take that second step and see what it really means to enter into a true born-again experience with God.

1 John 5:4

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

So here we take it a step farther today. If we want to be truly born of God, the next step is we must overcome this world. Now that's kind of a general statement. What does it mean to overcome the world? John gets more specific if you go back to 1 John 2:15.

1 John 2:15

"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."

And so he spells it out in three specific areas. First of all, he says, *"You can't love the world."* Then he talks about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the things we see, and then he says, *"the pride of life,"* all these things must be overcome in a true born-again experience with God. This desire to be like the world and to act like the world and to dress like the world and do the activities of the world is what has made Christianity look so weak to the people of the world. People today are laughing at Christianity and they say, *"Why should I be a Christian? I don't see any difference. They look the same, dress the same, they act the same, they do the same things, drink the same liquor, smoke the same cigarettes, attend many of the same parties, watch the same kind of movies and TV shows, and if they're a professed Christian and I'm not, what's the difference?"* And you can hardly blame them. There ought to be a difference between Christians and the world! This is why the world calls those that are going to church and living like the world, hypocrites!

Acts 2:47

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Key Point:

The word "church" in the Greek (ekklesia) means the "called out" ones.

Today you can find a church that will condone any kind of worldly lifestyle you want to live. And they will accommodate it, and many churches will not say anything about it. But as we read the Bible, the church of the Bible, the Christian church is a church of *standards*. It is a church of morals. It represents God's heavenly kingdom, His character, and the greatest blessing is that it is made up of a body of believers that are truly born again. And being truly born of God, born of water and the Spirit, they have overcome the world, and they *"love not the things"* in it. Today, we're going to learn what some of those *things* are.

Why is the Christian life such a high calling?

1 Peter 2:9

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

Peculiar doesn't mean queer. It does mean that you should be different from the rest of the world. It says, *"... that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"*

God says, *"You're a special people, you're peculiar. You ought to be different."* Christ is on the throne of your heart. Paul and John wrote of several things. They talked about the world itself, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. Let's get into some of these specifics first of all by saying this. The devil can get the world into your heart through your senses. You take things into your body by mouth, with our eyes, or with our ears. These are the great avenues the devil uses to lead us into sin.

Mark 4:24

"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."

"And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear." Take heed what ye hear. Does what we hear have anything to do with our relationship with God? Can we fill our heart and

mind with trash until we have no room for the sweet sound of the Holy Spirit's voice? I believe so. And so I'd like to begin first of all with some of the things we hear.

Proverbs 23:12

“Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.” God is asking us to follow His instruction and listen to His words of truth, and stay away from immorality, drug abuse, alcohol, violence, fornication, adultery, and the world in general. Throughout the Bible, God stresses that the things we listen to ought to give us knowledge, they should elevate us, they should strengthen us.

Isaiah 33:15

“He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood. . .”

In other words, the Christian is going to stop his ears from hearing anything that is going to be detrimental to his or her Christian experience. There are certain things that a Christian should not listen to. Certain kinds of lyrics and music. Take Rock and Roll. Have you ever listened to that kind of music? How can you be glorifying Jesus when you're beating on the drums of Babylon, guitars blasting, voices shrieking, wild screaming. Most lyrics hardly make any sense. Is that for the Christian? Is that Holy Spirit filled? Some who wouldn't dare listen to that, listen to other artists, not quite so wild, but totally involved with themes that are completely opposed to the Bible. Now friends, I love music, but I believe as we study the Word of God and as we look at our society today, the devil is having a heyday by flooding our minds with the world and its sins and its vices and all these things through much of the music that enters into our ears. Have you heard about "backward masking"? People have taken rock albums and recorded it in such a way that when played in reverse it would give a message. Led Zeppelin recorded a song in the 70's called *"Stairway to Heaven."* It was one of the most popular songs in the history of rock music. Sold by the multi-millions. When you listen to it, they talk about the stairway to heaven. But when played backwards the song talks about Satan, and the worship of Satan. As you look into the origin of much of the popular music, and there's a wealth of information on this in the Christian books stores, we know that as we trace its origin, it comes straight out of the occult. It comes straight out of devil worship. As you study many of the modern bands, (and you just look at their C.D. covers, you will see more witchcraft, Satanism and occult symbolism, than any other place in the world that I am aware of), many of them readily admit their worship of Satan.

You say, *"Hey, I don't listen to the covers!"* Of course, but what influence do they have? Your mood can be totally controlled by what you see and the music you listen to. Scripture tells us, *“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”* (Prov. 23:7) Worldly music and the words that go into our minds, have a direct impact on our lives, and directly impacts our spiritual walk with God. The reason is, whatever you feed your mind with is going to come out. Isn't that right? That's just the law of the mind. If the devil wants to feed garbage thoughts to us, there's something about music that makes it more palatable to us. It doesn't matter if it's rock, rap, jazz, reggae, pop, funk, country, soul, blues, or whatever, have you ever noticed a lot of people will sing words that they would never say? My friends, your mind is the place that Satan tempts you, but you have a choice! Guard your minds from Satan.

Key Point:

If a cereal company can sell you a box of cereal in 30 seconds, how much can the devil cram into our minds during a 4 minute song?

We must be careful that we make choices to listen to music that will be edifying and lead us closer to God. **You say, "What do I do with my music collection?" Sometimes you have to make some tough decisions. Keep only the truly Godly Music, and throw out the rest!** I know, that's what I did when I gave my heart to Jesus. Everything that wasn't going to point me to Jesus and be in harmony with His word, had to go! Go out and buy some good Christian music. If you don't replace it with something good, you'll go back to the old in 2 weeks.

And I'm talking about more than just Rock 'n Roll. Of course Rock 'n Roll is just one of those things that I believe if Christ were here today, He would condemn.

Some older folks don't listen to Rock music, so let me touch on Country music for a moment.

Sometimes we as parents get on our young people for all this heavy metal music, and all the confusion that they listen to, and yet folks we go down the highway stomping our feet to this country western sentimental music. Friends, I'm not talking about Marty Robins singing "*Home, Home on the Range.*" But I am talking about country music singers that sing about all this sin and adultery and worldliness. And we can't expect our young people to listen to us when we knock them for their rock and roll, if they see compromise in our life. We need to be careful of what we listen to. How in the world can Christians listen to music that builds up adultery and drinking as something acceptable? **Jesus said "Take heed what ye hear."**

Now somebody will say, "*Are you saying I'm going to hell-fire for listening to that?*" I'm not going to judge that but if you fill your mind with words of lying, cheating, stealing, coveting, adultery, and rebellion, you can be lost for that! If we keep listening to that you'll probably be eventually be doing what they're singing about and you *can* be lost for that because you'll have a carnal mind. *(As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.) "Truly, truly, I say unto thee, unless you are born again, you shall not see the kingdom of heaven."* What I am saying is that poor music choices are a weight. And weights will keep you down in your Christian experience. Christ says, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" Anyone can walk the broad way, but those preparing for heaven will guard their ears and only listen to music that uplifts their minds to heaven. A truly converted Christian won't feel comfortable listening to these worldly music options. Please don't give God any excuses! The saints will sing a new song. It's the song that those who overcome the world's pleasures will sing! They will sing the song of their victory over sin and entanglements of this world.

While we're talking about this, let me mention something else. This is something I see creeping into many Christian churches today along with the music and that is the dancing. Now you may call me old-fashioned, but I've not only got the statistics, I have seen first hand the result of what I'm going to say next.

There may be a cultural dance, and there was David in the Bible that danced before the Lord with sacred joy, but that's not what I'm referring to. As we look at the world today and its nightclub dancing and all the different forms of it, there can be no doubt that it does not elevate a person to Jesus Christ. I have articles that absolutely were alarming. Approximately, 70% of adultery, 70% of wrongful pregnancies out of wedlock, and 70% of those that turned to prostitution could trace the beginning of it all to sensual dancing.

Here's a good Bible rule. Move your mind to Christ and His kingdom, and your lips to sing His praises.

1 John 2:6

"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Psalms 40:1-3

"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."

Move your ears to only hear sacred music that uplifts Jesus and His will for your life. Sacred music will move your heart closer to Jesus.

People will sometimes say, *"Oh, but I just dance for the exercise."* If we made all men dance only with men, I wonder how long the men would do it for *"exercise."* The fact is that there are certain sexual improprieties that are taken while dancing that would not be normally proper to take. And then the Bible says, *"shutteth his eyes from seeing evil."* And so it goes beyond what we hear. It goes into what we *see*.

There are certain things that a Christian ought not to be watching. Our senses are the avenue to our mind. John specifically spoke of something else that we must overcome in the world and that is the lust of the eyes. What about the things that we see? When an individual gives his heart to Jesus, their eyes should observe the ways of the upright! Our eyes should be observing things that are good, wholesome, clean and upright.

Psalms 101:2,3

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."

There are certain things we shouldn't look at. Certain books, certain magazines we shouldn't behold.

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?" David goes on to answer himself. *"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."* When we walk within our house with a perfect heart, I believe God will come unto us, Amen? When we walk behind closed doors with a perfect heart, that's what counts. What about out on the street? And what about at home with the family? When you're talking with your wife and your children? And even more, when nobody's around but you? How is your heart then? The Bible says, *"I will walk in my house with a perfect heart."*

Notice **Vs.3**, *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."* Does that have relevance to our day? You better believe it does. Is there something in your house that continually pumps in wicked things? The Bible says, *"I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me."* The Bible says, *"I hate the ways of the wicked."* The shows that Christians thought were too worldly to watch in the 70's seem tame next to what is shown today. These different soap operas, *"One life to Live," "General Hospital," "The Young and the Restless."* Now what's going on in those shows? You know you only have to watch it once a month to know the whole plot. One guy's got amnesia. And while he's got amnesia the other one's cheating with his wife, and this little girl gets pregnant and the other one is running around sleeping with whoever, and that's the whole plot. Nothing but adultery and sin! And dear Christian men and women fill themselves up with this trash and then think they can live the Christian life, all the while wondering why they can't understand their Bibles. The same goes for blood, violence, immorality, pornography, etc.

Let's broaden our awareness today. I want to be clear. I'm not saying *all* television is wrong. There are a *few* good things on television. I'm not even going to talk about movies because it is a fact and it's indisputable that there have been desperately few movies that any Christian can look at with a clear conscience. That's indisputable. That's unquestionable. So, I'm going to take the lessor of the two evils and deal just with television today. Let's get an idea of who's creating our shows just to heighten our awareness that we might choose carefully. First of all, let's see who creates television. A survey was done on the 104 members of TV's Creative Community. These are the writers, the producers, and the network officials and those in charge of programming. As they surveyed them, they found out that only 7 percent of them have ever attended church in their lives. All the rest are atheist. They found out that only 5 percent thought that homosexuality was wrong. They found that only 16 percent thought that adultery was wrong. And these are the people that are producing television programs today.

Now, I want to ask you a question: Can you watch violence and murder to the glory of God? NO! That's breaking the sixth commandment. Let me share with you the results of this survey. In that time period, there was a total of 2,610 incidences of violence. That's a total of 9.74 per hour. You can't watch that to the glory of God. The next category was sexual incidents outside of the God-ordained marriage relationship, (that's breaking the seventh commandment), and that was a total of 2,717. That's 10.14 incidents per hour! My friends, can you watch that to the glory of God? NO. Next one. Profanity incidences, (that's breaking the third commandment)—a total of 2,200 that's 8.19 per hour. Friends, can you watch that to the glory of God? Absolutely not! Then let me ask you a question! Can you watch prime-time television to the glory of God? **Absolutely not!** Is anyone going to tell me that by watching that trash, they're preparing themselves and their mind for heaven? If you're watching trash TV, you're not preparing yourself for heaven dear friend. You're only kidding yourself. It is a fundamental principle that *"By beholding we become changed."*

There's a higher principle involved in this.

2 Corinthians 3:18

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

That's a beautiful thought. By beholding you become what? Changed! If you behold Jesus, and you behold righteousness, and you behold love, and you behold purity, you're going to become like that. That's a beautiful principle. In other words, the more time you spend with Jesus, the more you look at Him and His example, the more you're going to be a beautiful, pure, and wholesome person.

But it works the other way. If we behold violence, profanity, illicit sex, we are going to become like that! ***You can't think crooked and walk straight.*** It cannot be done. We are simply a product of what we constantly see on our televisions and movies, and that's nothing more than lust, violence, murder and profanity day after day after day. And that's why we have such a terrible society in America today. What you feed on is what you become. Even if you are not committing any of these sins; by watching this kind of TV programing, you are guilty of condoning the sin practiced in the lives of others. How can a born again Christian feel comfortable and enjoy watching others commit sin? When we watch violence, and then see it out in the street, it doesn't bother us anymore, does it? No, it sure doesn't. We hear and see these things and don't realize they're destroying us! And it's destroying our homes, and destroying the Christian church.

Psalm 119:37

The Bible says, *"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; (TV), and quicken thou me in thy way."* Now notice verse 38, *"Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear."*

If you really put the TV, to the scriptural test, you'll turn it off, unless it is programing that will help you grow in Jesus, like you find on 3ABN, Amazing Facts TV, and Hope Channel. In these last days we must turn away our eyes from all this vanity, and in its place, establish the Word of God in our hearts. **For those that have televisions, set your Bible on your television and see which one you reach for most. If you're spending more time with your television than the Word of God, you're in trouble.**

What should a Christian choose to think about? There's a good safe Bible rule you can follow. Let's look at it together.

Philippians 4:8,

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

If you follow that as a guideline, you'll always be blessed in what you listen to and the places you go. Now we've talked about what we hear, we've talked about what we see, now what's left to talk about?

There is another area that I wish to study with you tonight.

2 Corinthians 5:17

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are new."

How does God feel about how we dress? Do you think that God is desiring to teach us something in that area? It's an area that preachers do not preach on any more, and that is the area of the pride of life. As we go into this next area, I just want to make a preliminary statement. What you're going to hear in the next few minutes is something that almost every single Protestant church would preach, hardly without exception, until the 1970's. How we dress matters as Christian ambassadors.

And I want everyone to be perfectly comfortable. You've probably never had the opportunity to hear this before. So as we go into this next area, I want there to be one thing in all of our minds and that is, *"Lord what makes you happy?"* Lord what pleases you? What can I do to come more in harmony with your will and truly overcome this world and especially this area of the pride of life?

We are all covered by God's grace and growing in grace together. I know you love Jesus, and you want to do what's pleasing to Him. But today we're living in a very compromised day and age. We're living in a time when men and women in the church are hardly distinguishable from the world. But as Christians, we are not to bring the standard of God down to fit our lives. The standard of God remains holy and the Bible does not need changing—people's hearts need changing and I wouldn't be doing you any favor by holding back God's counsel from you in any area. The Bible

tells us that we are living in a period of Earth's history where God's people are to consecrate themselves before God. And what we're going to cover today in this next part is not only part of that consecration but is something that every church used to teach regarding the pride of life. The way we dress and present ourselves before God and the world.

1 Cor. 10:31

“Whether therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Does the “*whatsoever*” even include our manner of dress? Yes! Everyone of us falls short somewhere! **We are all growing in grace.** And as we run the Christian race we run together, we don't seek to put anyone down or run with the competitiveness of the world. Rather we seek to help each other along. And so we don't look at anybody else and ever feel that we're better than them. We're covered with the righteousness of Christ and are growing in Him, if we surrender to Him and ask Him to create in us a clean heart and a right spirit.

God is concerned about what we hear, what we see, and friends, I believe God even has some counsel about what we wear. Now remember, we're talking about not only commandments but things that are pleasing in His sight. We're talking about laying aside unnecessary weights that would prevent us from being the very best ambassadors for Christ.

We are only presenting a Bible principal now and remember that the Christian is not attempting to see what the minimum requirements are for heaven, but rather out of love for God, the Christian desires to be the best ambassador possible.

Genesis 35:1-4

*“And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, **Put away the strange gods** that are among you, and be clean, and **change your garments**: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob **all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings** which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”*

They changed the way they dressed! We come to church with the best we have. We are meeting the King of Kings. If you were going to meet the President of the United States, you would dress in the best you have. Well, the Lord is way above the President! We come in the best we have. The subject of dress might be new to you today, but this is not new to the Christian faith.

Exodus 33:4

*“And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and **no man did put on him his ornaments**. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore **now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee**. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.”*

The words “*by the mount Horeb,*” are literally translated, “*From Horeb onward.*” In other words, they took them off, and left them off. **Again we can see that when they were to consecrate themselves to God, there was a change of dress. They changed their clothes and took off their adornment.**

1 Tim.2:9-10

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

In what kind of apparel?

The overall principle is modesty. *"... with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair."* If your Bible has a margin, by broided hair it says *"plaited"* hair. Now we don't see this custom often in our world today but you still see it in some of the middle east countries. It's where they would weave strands of pearls and beads and gold into their hair, and that's what plaited hair is. Ladies, there's nothing wrong with making your hair look nice. The Bible says a woman's hair is her glory. But when we adorn it with pearls and gold and these things, it is then displeasing to God. So it goes on to say, *"... not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."* Here in the New Testament, Paul tells Timothy he is ordained to teach truth, and instructs that we are **"not"** to wear immodest clothes and not to wear adornment.

What does the word *"not"* mean? When God instructed Adam and Eve in the Garden regarding the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Lord said they shall *"not"* eat of it. Did the word *"not"* mean a little bit? Did it mean they could have one bite? *"Not"* meant nothing!! Adam and Eve found that out all too late.

The Bible says *"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* Matt.4:4 Is the word *"not"* an inspired word? Does it proceed from the Word of God? Then should we live by that word as well, shouldn't we? Paul's instruction here is according to the truth in Christ. It's not a matter of whether certain Christians or even churches believe that any more. Someone could say, "Well, it doesn't mention diamonds here." (emeralds, rubies, etc.)" *God doesn't have to mention every metal or precious stone under the sun to get His point across.* Paul is pointing out that we as Christians are a "peculiar people" and those items of adornment are not to be sought after but rather it is the adornment of "good works" that we are to be adorned with.

When Jesus is your Lord, He is the Pearl of Great Price in your life and "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14), you have something far more valuable than any jewel here on earth.

Everything is going to extremes today. Extreme music, extreme entertainment, extreme sports. Now we have extreme body piercing and tattoo's. What started in the most extreme of pagan groups has now become part of mainstream life in America! Other denominations used to preach this truth about the non wearing of jewelry for the Christian very strongly, but the Christian church in general has lost that "peculiarity" that Peter talked about.

I think of the different main-line Protestant churches. Whether John Wesley, from the Methodist church or Roger William from the Baptist church or Calvin's literature and sermons from the Presbyterian church, without exception all of these mainline Christian churches wrote and taught their people exactly what you're hearing here tonight. In fact, let me read you a quote from John Wesley. He's the founder of the Methodist church. This is what the Methodists used to teach, and I am quoting now directly, *"I exhort you to wear no gold or pearls or precious stones. (Now where do you suppose he was quoting from here? 1 Timothy 2:9) I do not advise women to wear rings, earrings or necklaces. It is true that these things are little, very little things, therefore they're not worth defending. Therefore give them up. Let them drop, throw them away without*

another word, else a little evil may cause much pain in the flesh, a little self-indulgence much hurt to your soul." That's what the Methodists use to teach. Other Christian churches taught the same thing, but that's all changed. Churches used to preach this for years. Not today. Why? The Christian Church has compromised with the times. So many preachers today don't even touch on the dress topic anymore.

1 John 2:15

"love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

Now I've heard it preached, (and perhaps you have too), that **Christianity does not consist in a list of do's and don'ts, and I agree. We are not to live with a "check-list religion".** *Being a converted grace saved Christian* is not something that is attained through doing this and not doing that and judging other people because they don't live as we think they should. To be spiritually minded is to have your whole life centered around a relationship with Jesus Christ. When I've given my heart to Christ, I die to my old selfish desires and submit completely to Christ and His will and teachings. I'm a happy person because I love to please Him!

But brothers and sisters, there are things that will happen as a result of having our minds transformed by the gospel!

Romans 12:2

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Notice how Paul says we are to be transformed—not conformed! When the Bible tells us to make a change and we insist on arguing saying, *"I just don't see what's wrong with it."* Perhaps the answer would lie in that we need to ask God for a deeper transformation that we can see His will more clearly. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Romans tells us to make our bodies a *"living sacrifice"* to dedicate our whole beings to do the will of God.

Baptism means that we have been "born again." And when we are born into this world the birth is not complete until the umbilical cord is severed. When we are born spiritually into the family of God, we also have a cord to cut—the cord of pride and temptation that binds us to the things of the world.

Christian churches taught for years that the embellishing of the body with unnecessary adornment was a sign of worldliness. It is true that we are saved by grace, but God's grace is a transforming grace and it places us under greater obligation than before. We come under the servant-hood of Christ. Nothing I can ever do can pay God back. The man that has truly received Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord will have the response in his heart, "Lord, anything You want me to do, I'm willing to do it, not because he thinks he can pay God back for what He has done; but because down deep in his heart he appreciates so much what God has done for Him. When God helps us realize what He has done on our behalf, the love that flows from a deep appreciation will be the great motivating factor that will lead us to surrender our lives to His controlling influence.

1 John 4:19

"We love him, because he first loved us."

My dear friends, what I've been presenting to you throughout this seminar comes from the Bible and what I've been presenting tonight comes from the Bible. We are here not just because we are preparing for baptism, but we are preparing for heaven!

Why am I even taking time to study this with you?

- 1) Why did we take time to talk about the Sabbath? Because that's heaven's day of worship and we're getting ready for heaven!
- 2) Why talk about the diet of the Bible? Is it because then we can just live a few extra years here on earth and be healthier sinners? No, it's because that's heaven's diet and we're getting ready for heaven!
- 3) Why would we study to change our understanding on Christian doctrine, if need be? Because we want heaven's understanding so we can better understand and love the God who we wish to dwell with!
- 4) Why would we bother to talk about dress tonight? Because heaven is a place of holiness and I want heaven's holiness to be my character because I want to get ready for heaven.

What I'm telling you now is for serious Christians who stand on "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Sincere people have come to me said, "Pastor, I notice that you and your wife don't wear ornaments and jewelry. You don't even wear wedding rings." And they ask, "Why is that?" Friends, let me talk openly about this tonight. We simply don't wear it because of what we read in the Bible, in all these texts we have looked at.

Isaiah 3:18-22

"In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels,"

Where you may not understand what all of these things are, upon further study, you will find that they all have to do with adornment in some way. Remember, the Bible was written for the world, not just Americans. But there is plenty in these verses we do know, like the "chains, and the bracelets," and the "earrings, the rings, and nose jewels," The word "rings" includes the signet ring, which was one that was used to identify yourself. Yet the Bible says that the Lord is going to take it all away. Let me ask you a question, does the Bible say, some rings or most rings, or the ones that are not special? NO The Bible say He is going to take them all away. Does that include the wedding ring? Yes

Let me ask you a question. Doesn't the same verse that says "Nose jewels," say "Rings?" Nancy and I decided that based on the teaching of scripture, we wouldn't wear ornamentation. But do you know what? It hasn't caused an ounce of difference in our relationship. It's the commitment of love in my heart that keeps me faithful to my wife —not a ring. If I wanted to flirt with the girls while married, a ring isn't going to make a difference, isn't that right? With over 50% divorce rate today, you can plainly see a ring doesn't make the difference. It's what's in your heart that will keep you faithful. You are married by a bond of love based on mutual promises to the other before God — not simply because you wear a ring on your finger. The Bible doesn't make exceptions, so I don't either.

Wearing adornment of any kind is a stumbling block to my mission as an ambassador for Jesus Christ. Adornment is a weight which leavens your Christian witness. The Bible tells us

in Gal. 5:9 "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." James 1:27 tells us, "Keep yourself unspotted from the world." Why would he say this? Because little spots lead to bigger spots. If you begin to let the world in, it becomes a slippery slope where there seems to be no end to what it may lead to or what your example may lead others to!

This is not fanaticism. This is not legalism. This is pure, unspotted religion.

Again the overall principle is modesty and being separate from the world. God desires that His people have a natural beauty. Heaven's streets are going to be paved with what? Gold. And we think about how wonderful it is. Having streets of gold! But friends, really think about it. If heaven's *streets* are paved with gold, what's God really saying about gold? What should it mean to us? When we get to heaven are we going to be taking jack-hammers to the golden streets trying to get some? Of course not! And that's the same attitude that should be with us today. Let me share another Scriptural picture that really helped Nancy and I to make our choice to not chose the custom of the world in the wearing of adornment, including the wedding ring.

Revelation 12:1

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:"

The first thing to remember, is that a "Woman" in prophecy represents a church. When you see a pure woman, you see a pure church. When you see an impure woman, you see an impure church. This woman (God's true church) is clothed with the sun. Remember Psalms 119:105, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*" God's church is pure because it is walking in the light of His word. You might say, but pastor, she is wearing a crown! That is true. The Greek has two words that we translate in English "Crown." The first is "Diadem," meaning a kingly crown. The second is the word "Stephanos," meaning a victor's crown. Guess which one the pure woman (church) is wearing? You are right, it's the Stephanos or victor's crown. Notice now in comparison with the apostate church in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:3-5

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

As you continue to study, you will see that when God describes His church that has gone into apostasy or rebellion, He pictures them as adorned! If, God pictures His church as adorned when they are in apostasy, what am I telling Jesus when I choose to wear it? Nancy and I decided we didn't want to send the message to heaven that we were in apostasy or rebellion. A lot of people say, It's not an issue. Lots of Christians wear jewelry! Well, first of all, just because something has been around for a while doesn't mean it's worth having. But listen closely folks— The church of convenience is the fastest growing church in the world. A religion that allows me to live how I like and still take on Jesus' name. People have made the same mistake I've been tempted to make, and that is when they become Christians, and want to know what a Christian is and how a Christian should act and dress and so on, they look at other Christians. Now is a Christian a follower of

Christians, or is **a Christian a follower of Jesus Christ?** **JESUS IS THE ONLY JEWEL A CHRISTIAN NEEDS! He's the Pearl of Great Price! And when you have Him, you have enough.**

Some will inevitably say that there were some in the Bible that wore jewelry and therefore this is justification for the practice today. Remember, just because we see something done in the Bible doesn't mean God approved of it. For example, adultery, slavery, polygamy, drunkenness. The Bible is an honest book. It shows us the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to the human experience. That's another reason I know that the Bible is inspired. It's not a contrived effort to hide anything by showing just the good things and leaving the bad things out. And that's why Jesus came to bring more light to the world and raise the standard—not lower it!

- *Lots of Christians go to church on Sunday but that doesn't make it the Sabbath.
- *Lots of people eat pork but that doesn't make it clean food for the Christian.
- *Lots of people drink alcohol but alcohol is still poison to the body nonetheless.
- *Lots of people watch R rated movies but that doesn't make them acceptable to the Christian.
- *Why do we then wish to imitate the world in regard to dress and adornment?

You can't look at people as your ultimate and final example. They're going to let you down. Plan on it. **Jesus will NEVER let you down.** And if you want to use other people as your reason to do or not do something or to wear or not wear something, look around and you'll sure enough see someone doing the very thing you want to be able to do. But if you decide to follow Christ no matter *what* anyone else does, be faithful and come to church on Sabbath, and follow the Bible *regardless* of what anyone else does, you know what? You'll really frustrate the devil. Don't give the devil a foothold. The non-wearing of jewelry is to protect us, so the devil doesn't use it to get into our hearts and leaven our Christian experience.

Sometimes you will see Seventh-day Adventist's wearing jewelry and wonder why? There are 4 primary reasons why some Adventist members misunderstand this subject and wear some jewelry.

- 1) They have never been taught properly from Scripture.
- 2) They've somehow been convinced that the church says it's okay, though that is not true.
- 3) They look around and see others in the church wearing jewelry and rings and use others as their example.
- 4) They don't care what the Bible says, they're going to follow their own desires, regardless of what the Bible says.

We don't judge the reason because we don't know all the reasons and problems some people are going through.

The church cannot measure itself by the world because the church is ***“called out”*** of the world. Salvation is not wrapped up in whether one wears jewelry or not, but there are things that will happen as a result of the gospel entering our hearts.

Friends, I'm not worrying about shining or glittering with anything but the love of Jesus. And I believe with all my heart in the day that Jesus comes for His bride, the character of His people will outshine any piece of gold or diamond we've ever seen.

Jesus declared to His listeners, let your light so shine before men (not the jewels), that they may see your good works, and glorify God!

1 Peter 3:3, 4

*"Whose adorning let it **not** be that **outward adorning** of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be **the hidden man of the heart**, in that which is not corruptible, **even the ornament, of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.**"*

The ornaments of the world are a counterfeit of God's true ornaments. God's true Christians will not wear the outward adorning, but rather they will have a "*Meek and quiet spirit.*" They will have the fruit of the Spirit—**love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.** God has ornaments of a "*meek and quiet spirit*" — in other words, the character of God will shine bright within the saint that loves Jesus. And God says that kind of ornament is so precious, it's of great price.

You see, the devil has this all twisted up in today's world. The devil wishes for us to place value on things that God does not and ignore that which God highly prizes. There are some who because of their lack of self-confidence or self-worth feel that perhaps by putting on adornment, they *are trying to "add value" to themselves by putting value on.* God says, *No, all the value you'll ever need is your character that is fashioned after Jesus.* You cannot be more valuable than what you are in God's sight now. If you wore every diamond in the world, you wouldn't be one cent more valuable than what you are now.

Vs. 5, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:"

Friends, I can expect the world to dress in a way that would draw attention to themselves, through immodest dress and the wearing of adornment, but the Christian holds to God's high standards. God says, "*I have a better way.*" I have true ornaments. They're inward. They're character. They're the love of Jesus on your face. It's the smile and the precious grace of God, the love that you show to your fellow man, and that meek and quiet spirit, so that when people see you, they don't see the outward adorning, but they see **Christ in you the hope of glory.** God says, "*When you have those kinds of ornaments, they're so precious, there's no price that can be put on them.*" It's worth more than the greatest diamond in the world. That's the beauty of this message. Christ *does* have ornaments, but they're *inward* instead of *outward* like the world. The one He associates with sinful pride, the other one He associates with His people as character within. The only valuables leaving this earth and going to heaven will be transformed people. There is a great worldly influence at work in the Christian church. I want to appeal to you and encourage you to go home and earnestly pray about it. Study God's Word and say, "*Jesus, what would please you?*" and make your decision, by putting your desires aside and pray, "*Lord, not my will, but Thy will be done.*" **When there is a war going on, it is important that the uniform you are wearing reflects the army for which you are fighting.**

In the Civil War, the North wore blue and the South wore grey. The Mason–Dixon line was to be the dividing line between the North and the South and a certain man had a house which was on the line. Part of it was on one side and part was on the other. As a sign that he was on the line, the

man wore clothes which had a blue top and a grey bottom. He thought this would place him in a safe position trying to appease both sides. When the armies drew near to his house though and observed this man's divided profession, the Blue coats of the North shot him in the bottom below his waist and the greys of the South shot him in the top above the waist. Needless to say, he didn't make out so good. And so it is today. We must take off that which would cause confusion to the world or the church as to which side we are on. It must become clear that we have made a break with the world and have joined Christ's army.

And I want to say to those who love the Lord, your bodies are holy to God. And they belong to Jesus Christ, not only inwardly but outwardly. And it's my prayer today as we study and consider these things, we'll do what's pleasing to Jesus.

REMEMBER—YOU'RE AN AMBASSADOR FOR HIM—WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT POSITION OF REPRESENTING JESUS BEFORE THE WORLD! Jesus removes the things that distract and begins the cleansing process, and people immediately notice the improvement. Titus chapter 2 will summarize our whole message this evening.

Titus 2:11-14

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

"Who gave Himself for us" –Is Jesus asking too much from us to lay aside lifeless beads and jewels that we might better reflect His simple purity to this lost world?

Philippians 1:6

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The good work of God is to happen *"in you."* God works from the inside out. The work starts within you and when the good work of God goes on, on the inside, things of the world, start falling off on the outside!!