

TO BE GOD'S CHILDREN

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God, through the knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ in the New Testament, truly provides “all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” and contains “exceeding great and precious promises” that enable us to “be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 1:3-4). One of these great and precious promises is found in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18: “*I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*” How is this promise obtained?

In the world but not of the world

As with all of God's promises, this one is conditional: “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing*” (2 Cor 6:17). “*Them*” refers to the unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-16), which is the world. And this world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). It is necessary for Christians to be *in* the world (John 17:11,15,18; 1 Cor 5:9-10). Christians are the ones whom God has commanded to spread His gospel throughout the world to every creature (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). In Matthew 5:13-16, Christ says, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Christians are the world's example of what God desires all men to be (1 Tim 4:12). The world is also the means by which Christians receive the persecution that they need in order to grow to be perfect like Christ (John 15:18-21; 16:33; 17:14; 2 Tim 3:12; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-7; 5:8-10). Therefore, in several ways it would be contrary to God's purposes for Christians to be physically removed from the world. But though we are *in* the world, we must not be *of* the world (John 17:14-16).

Coming out from the world and being separate

Jesus prayed that God would not remove his disciples from the

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(continued)

world, but that He would keep them from the evil that is in the world (John 17:15; see also Gal 1:4). Coming out from the world and being separate from it (2 Cor 6:14-18) means that our manner of life should be completely different from the world (John 15:18-21; Jas 1:27; 1 Pet 4:3-4). That includes what we think (2 Cor 10:5), say (1 John 4:5), and do (Col 3:17). This means that we must refrain from every evil thing (John 17:15; Heb 12:1). Not being of the world also means that we must put off some things that are not necessarily sinful in and of themselves. For example, we have been commanded by God to put off all anger (Eph 4:31) even though it is not a sin (Eph 4:26). The reason for this is “the anger of man works not the righteousness of God” (Jas 1:20). Therefore, even though anger is not a sin, it does not accomplish God’s righteousness. This teaches us that to come out from the world, we should not only put away all sinful things but also all things that do not work God’s righteousness even if they are not sinful. In a similar fashion, the Lord says, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:31-33). Food, drink, and clothes are obviously not inherently sinful things, as they are among the “necessities of life.” Yet, the Lord clearly teaches us that we cannot love and serve God and also material things (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13). Money is also not inherently sinful, but the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim 6:10). This is why we are commanded, “*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*” (1 John 2:15; see also Luke 12:13-34; 1 Tim 6:5-12,17-19). We must not be conformed to this world (Rom 12:1), be spotted by it (Jas 1:27), or corrupted by it (2 Pet 1:4). Friendship with the world is enmity with God and whoever is a friend of this world is God’s enemy (Jas 4:4). But if we come out from this world, and are holy to God, we will be His children!