

## *Tuesday's Touch ...#32*

*...from Pastor Ed ...September 1, 2009*

### ***Saints & Sinners***

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves 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. 1 John 2:15-16*

*And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receives sinners, and eats with them. Luke 15:2*

*The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! Luke 7:34*

**O**ver the centuries the Church has struggled in its relationship to “the world,” which the scriptures identify as this present evil age that is entirely motivated by “the lust of the flesh” (living for pleasure and self gratification), “the lust of the eyes” (avarice, living for wealth and material possessions), and the “pride of life” (personal exaltation, ambitious quest for position or fame). An individual’s or church’s perspective on this has a huge impact on how one interacts with, and seeks to minister to “the world”- from unsaved individuals to the socio-political structures surrounding every Christian. It is clear that we are not to love and live for this world. But what does that mean, practically? How do we relate to unbelievers, especially the overtly sinful?

Some, in an attempt to be totally isolated from the world, have demonized any “secular” entertainment such as music, TV, movies, card playing, dancing, etc, and forbid participating in or attending non-Christian sporting events, concerts, etc. There is often a strict list of acceptable and unacceptable clothing, food, drink, etc. Others, in the name of grace, simply have no boundaries.

I believe our first duty, as always, is to look to Jesus. He is our perfect example and we are commanded to “walk as He walked” (1Pet 2:21; 1Jhn 2:6). We find Jesus freely walking among and interacting with the “common folks,” many of whom were overtly sinful. He attended their gatherings and showed Himself gracious. His “separation” was unto God in the Spirit- true holiness of heart. He kept Himself “in bounds” and did “always those things which pleased the Father” (John 8:29), yet, He was approachable, inviting, and gladly received among these “sinners”. They saw in Him someone who

genuinely cared for them and who spoke truth to them in love. We never once find Him angry at them, or personally excoriating *them* for their sins.

It is not so with the religious leaders. They unmercifully condemned Jesus as a winebibber and friend of sinners. They were the ones, not the “sinners,” who were always trying to find ways to kill Him! It is toward them, alone, that Jesus showed anger (Mark 3:5), and unleashed His harshest condemnations. According to Him, they were snakes in the grass, whitewashed tombs full of dead men’s bones- children of hell (Matt 23:15, 23-33). What a warning to His Church!

As we consider our own relationship with non-Christians, we should first consider Jesus’ example, and then ask ourselves the following questions:

1. Is my heart surrendered to God in Christ: to love Him, glorify Him, and walk pleasing in His sight?
2. Do I look at overt sinners as the ungodly who must be condemned and avoided; as objects that I need to “get saved;” or as people who are like me, who need the mercy, forgiveness, and love of God in Christ?
3. Am I more worried about what other Christians will think of me than about following Christ, being led by the Holy Spirit, and loving people where they are?
4. Do I view holiness as consisting *primarily* of external dos and don’ts and the avoidance of “worldly” places or entertainments; or is holiness primarily a heart-separation unto God?
5. By interacting with certain people or going certain places will I expose myself to strong temptations that I may not yet be able to resist? If so, then I must avoid them, but not condemn others who reach out to sinners where I cannot go.

*Savior of Sinners,*

*You came into a world of darkness and sin to save sinners like me. You send us into that same world, just as the Father sent You. Do not take us out of the world, but keep us from evil. Empower us with Your meekness and gentleness.*

*Still trying to follow...*

*Amen*

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