

The Pastor and the World, Pt. 3: A Mindset of a Pilgrim

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We must use the world in a way that is holy and pleasing to God. We must allow the teachings of the Bible to shape how we think about the world and our activities in it. We have been thinking previously about the doctrine of creation to help us think rightly about the world or act rightly in it.

Another doctrine that is helpful in this regard is the return of Christ and the end of the age. In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul refers to “the latter times,” and in verse 8 he mentions “the life ... which is to come.” He returns to the theme again (6:12, 14-15, 19), and shows how we must always view the things of this present world in light of “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14).

We must use this world knowing that it is neither our true home nor our lasting treasure (Matthew 6:24-34; Hebrew 11:8-10). Calvin said Christ “teaches us to travel as pilgrims in this world.” Your goal should not be to accumulate large quantities of possessions. You may use what you need and sample what you like, but you should constantly ask whether this possession or that activity will help you along to heaven or hinder you.

We are not tourists in this world living for pleasure and entertainment, but wanderers banished from paradise and longing to return. Calvin wrote, “If heaven is our homeland, what else is the earth but our place of exile?”

The Puritans picked up Calvin’s pilgrimage theme and developed it further. The pilgrim view should include at least six perspectives:

A biblical outlook for our faith and practice.

- A godly outlook that promotes diligent living in the childlike fear of God in our duty to God, to family, and to country.
- A churchly outlook that is concerned pre-eminently with God’s glory and the worship, fellowship, doctrine,

government, and discipline of Christ's church.

- A warfaring outlook, since the church on earth wages war against indwelling sin (for the remains of our old nature lie dormant within us like a volcano that can burn out of control at any time), and against a beckoning, seducing, yet hostile world that does not agree to cease-fires and does not sign peace treaties.
- A methodical outlook that trains the believer to use the spiritual disciplines faithfully and regularly every day.
- A two-worldly outlook, which enables us to have heaven "in our eye" while we are walking on earth, so that we are willing to deny ourselves anything that would hinder us from running the Christian race with our eyes on Jesus and glory (Hebrews 12:1-2).

The Word of God teaches us that we are pilgrims, but it also teaches us that all mankind is headed for one of two ultimate destinations. A pilgrim mindset therefore is also an evangelistic mindset. We are not to envy the rich and powerful but to pray for their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:1-5).

We are to use the world with one eye on Judgment Day. This perspective makes us willing to make great sacrifices in this life so that other people will find eternal life. It also reminds us that God will call us to account for how we used the world, and whether we did so in a manner that advanced God's purposes and kingdom.

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