

This World: A Pleasure Park Or A Battlefield?

Our attitude towards life is likely in the long run to be more important than the events in our life themselves.

It is strange that although a fact remains fixed, our interpretation of the fact changes with the generations and the passing of time.

One such fact is the world we live in.

Human beings have existed for centuries, they have all been given the same short span of years in which to live.

This is a stable fact, quite unchanged by the passage of time. But how different the view of life is that people have today compared with the view our grandparents held!

The overview of this change plainly shows just how great the power of interpretation can be.

Life is for all of us, not only what it is but it is what we believe it should be.

A tremendous load of eventful pain and sorrow rides on the soundness of our own interpretation of the reason for our being given this short span of life, a physical existence.

When we consider the attitude towards life that was held and practiced only a few generations ago and the attitude held by the majority today we see a wide gulf has developed.

Not many generations past Christianity exercised a dominant influence over the thinking of men and women, and they considered that the world was a battlefield between good and evil.

People believed in sin and the devil, and that hell was the end result of living our lives influenced by these evil forces.

People also believed in God and righteousness and that heaven was the end result of a life that aligned itself to the force for good.

Humans had to choose which was to be the driving force of their lives, they were on one side or the other in this battle between good and evil, there was no neutral ground.

If people chose to be on the side of God and righteousness they could expect open hostility from the side of sin and evil. This fight would be real and deadly and would last as long as they continued to live a physical life.

People looked forward to the end of this conflict and entering into the “rest” that scripture confirmed would be their reward at the end of their lives.

Christians considered that they were soldiers engaged in a life and death struggle against the evil in this world, and needed constant protection from the deadly assaults made on them by the enemy.

Ephesians 6:10-17 [Message Bible] *“And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we’ll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is*

*for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. **God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare.** Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out."*

This view of Christians being soldiers in a lifelong struggle is solid Bible doctrine. Tremendous spiritual forces are present in this world.

Humanity because of its spiritual nature is caught up in this conflict between good and evil.

Job 32:7 [New Jerusalem Bible] *"There is, you see, a spirit residing in humanity, the breath of God conferring intelligence."*

This spiritual dimension in human beings that sets them apart from all other creatures, is a key to eternal spiritual life, [**Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**].

The forces of evil, driven by the rebellious Satan, are striving to destroy this potential in all humans.

The conflict is within our human spirit, the seat of our intelligence, where we make our decisions in life.

To obtain deliverance we must choose to be on God's side, in faith and obedience, for it is Christ who has already obtained victory over these evil forces in the world.

John 16:33 [Message Bible] *"In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I have conquered the world."*

Jesus Christ through His life, death and resurrection, has already conquered Satan and all his supporters who held the power of death over human beings.

Hebrews 2:14-15 [Message Bible] *"Since we are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Saviour took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by His death. By embracing death, taking it into Himself, He destroyed the devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death."*

Eventually Satan and death will be totally destroyed, but God is using this evil influence in the world to test our loyalty and dependency on Him and to help us mature in godly character as we resist this evil influence.

1 Peter 5:8 [Message Bible] *"Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up. You are not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It is the same with all Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on your faith. The suffering will not last for ever."*

James 4:6-8 [Message Bible] *"It is common knowledge that God goes against the wilful proud, but God gives grace to the willing humble. So let God work His will in you. Yell a loud 'no' to the Devil and watch him scamper away. Say a quiet 'yes' to God and He will be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. [You cannot serve God and Satan]. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master [your Creator God], it is the only way you will get on your feet [able to stand upright with confidence]."*

What we have just read is in brief what our grandparents thought about this life we have.

This is also what true Christians believe that the Christian Bible really teaches.

But how different today is the attitude toward this same life as was given to our own grandparents.

The fact of life and its limited time remains the same, but the interpretation has changed completely towards the life we experience. People in the main look on this life as an existence in a pleasure park.

Seeking all kinds of pleasure is the escape route from the reality of life that many take.

Such an approach to life is fuelled by **not** knowing the purpose of the life we have been given by the Creator God.

“Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die” is a much accepted philosophy of life.

The young don't consider death, that is something that happens to old people.

The middle aged are too busy making lots of money to indulge in the pleasurable pastimes to consider death.

Forgetting the time is passing for them.

The old look back on life and feel it is too late for them to change and too difficult to contemplate.

Death looms large in their lives but getting through each day dissipates all their energy, and they just seek peace and rest with their limited physical needs taken care of by others.

When you visit an old people's rest home this is very obvious.

Even some *“Christians”* may be facing both ways seeking to enjoy Christ and the world.

They gleefully tell everyone that accepting Jesus [whatever they understand that to be!] does not require them to give up their fun.

Christianity is just the jolliest thing imaginable.

The *“worship services”* growing out of such a view of life is a sort of sanctified nightclub, without the champagne and dressed-up drunks.

Such people need to re-examine their spiritual philosophy in the light of the scripture.

John 15:18-19 [Message Bible] *“If you find the godless world is hating you, remember it got its start by hating Me [Jesus speaking]. If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own. But since I picked you to live on God's terms and no longer on the world's terms, the world is going to hate you.”*

John 16:1-3 [Message Bible] *“I've told you these things to prepare you for rough times ahead. They are going to throw you out of the meeting places. There will even come a time when anyone who kills you will think he is doing God a favour. They will do these things because they never really understood the Father, or Me.”*

Romans 1:18-32 [Message Bible] *“But God's angry displeasure erupts as acts of human mistrust and wrongdoing and lying accumulate, as people try to put a shroud over truth. **But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is!** By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse. What happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialised themselves into silliness and confusion so that **there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives. They pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding life. They traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in his hands for cheap figurines you can buy***

*at any roadside stand. So God said, in effect, 'If that's what you want, that's what you get.' It wasn't long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. And all this because **they traded the true God for a fake god, and worshipped the god they made instead of the God who made them, the God we bless, the God who blesses us.** Oh, yes! Worse followed. Refusing to know God, they soon didn't know how to be human either, women didn't know how to be women, men didn't know how to be men. **Sexually confused**, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men, **all lust, no love.** And then they paid for it, oh, how they paid for it, **emptied of God and love, godless and loveless wretches.** Since they didn't bother to acknowledge God, God quit bothering them and let them run loose. And then all hell broke loose: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious backstabbing. **They made life hell on earth with their envy, wanton killing, bickering, and cheating.** Look at them: mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers. Bullies, swaggerers, insufferable windbags! They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. They ditch their parents when they get in the way. Stupid, slimy, cruel, coldblooded. **And it's not as if they don't know better. They know perfectly well they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care, worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best!**"*

This is the world we are to turn our back on as Christians.

1 John 2:15-17 [New Jerusalem Bible] *"Do not love the world or what is in the world. If anyone does love the world the love of the Father [God] finds no place in him. Because everything there is in the world, disordered bodily desires, disordered desires of the eyes, pride is possession, is not of the Father, but is from the world. And the world and all its disordered desires, is passing away, but whoever does the will of God remains forever."*

Then as we follow Christ and walk in the light of His message we ourselves can be lights, reflecting Christ's way of life to this godless world.

Such a light will bring persecution on us because it exposes the world for what it really is, and the people who follow its ways will hate us as we prick the conscience and make them feel uncomfortable.

We bring to their minds the thought that perhaps there is a God who demands their worship as their Creator and life-giver, and that hurts.

A right view of God and the world to come when this short life ends, requires that we have a right view of the world in which we live and our relationship to it.

Our eternal life depends upon this right view of the life we now have.

So we cannot afford to be careless about the way we conduct our lives now.