

Celebration Services (June 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

"Coastal Erosion" (Pt. 1)

**"Coastal Erosion ... when the church loses separation from the world"**

**INTRO ... Recent Storms**

## COASTAL EROSION

Coastal Erosion as a Picture of Separation .... New Orleans & the Gulf of Mexico

***"The Church is Being Harmed and Becoming Ineffective in Her Mission, because of Ignorance or Casualness about her Proximity to the World"***

**"I appeal to any old Christian who keeps his eyes open, and knows what is going on in the Churches. [Does that characterize you?] I ask him whether it be not true that nothing damages the cause of religion so much as "the world"? It is not open sin, or open unbelief, which robs Christ of His professing servants, so much as the love of the world, the fear of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the desire to keep in with the world. This is the great rock on which thousands of young people are continually making shipwreck. They do not object to any article of the Christian faith. They do not deliberately choose evil, and openly rebel against God. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last; and they think it proper to have some religion. But they cannot give up their idol: they must have the world. And so after running well and bidding fair for heaven, while boys and girls, they turn aside when they become men and women, and go down the broad way which leads to destruction. They begin with Abraham and Moses, and end with Demas and Lot's wife."** J.C. Ryle, "The World", p. 289 in *Practical Religion*

## BE SEPARATE & BEWARE

### (1) BE SEPARATE ..... 2Cor 6:14-18

- This is **NOT a Plea for MONASTIC LIVING** .... the Church has a STRATEGIC Function that Necessitates Involvement in the World

Mk 16:15 "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel!"

Phil 2:14-16 "Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life"

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Rom 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

James 4:4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions — is not from the Father but is from the world.

- **Without Biblical Knowledge**, we may be prone to treat the world like a **WORM** rather than a **SNAKE**

- **The CASUAL** Lack Biblical knowledge about their HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT
- **The "MISSIONAL"** Can Lack Biblical Knowledge as they Seek to Engage the Culture

**"Missional teaching on culture also tends to be flawed with the assumption (or explicit teaching) that the culture is neutral. There is a casual, undiscerning recklessness about approaching culture that doesn't recognize that culture has swallowed more Christians than Christians have changed culture."** Dave Harvey, "To be or Not to be Missional", (SGM Leadership Conference 2007)

**(2) BEWARE .... Heb 3:12-13** (NKJV = "**Beware**, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" )

*"Be Separate" = Know Your Environment*

*"Beware" = Know Yourself*

Matt 26:41 "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

#### INSIGHTS FROM THESE PASSAGES:

**1. The Flesh is WEAK**

**2. Our Heart Retains the Ability to be characterized by EVIL, UNBELIEF and DISAFFECTION for God**

— and Sin Operating in STEALTH (through Deceit) retains the ability to HARDEN our Hearts (Harden = to Lose Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit... we don't hear from God, don't quickly sense his conviction or displeasure)

#### THE ANATOMY OF COMBUSTION

- **WEAKNESS and INDWELLING SIN** .... there remains Combustible Material in Your Flesh

Prov 6:27 'Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?'

Jam 1:14-15 "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

– *What Happens when Weakness & Indwelling Sin Get Overexposed to Sin?*

.... Nothing? Are We No Longer "Combustible" as Christians?

## ***How Does a Christian go from Loving Christ & Following Hard after Him into Practicing Sin? .... Via the Winding ROAD of DECEPTION***

**"Sin will take you places you never wanted to go and keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay." E.V. Hill**

- **DECEIT** .... Sin will come in a DISGUISE; Sin's Introductory Moments are more a SUBTLE WARMING than an Intense Temperature Shift (that would be too obvious)

## **LOT ... A MAN IN UNWISE PROXIMITY** (a City too close to the Water's Edge)

### **Gen 13:1-13**

– Lot "lifted up his eyes" ... and... "chose for himself" .... "Lot settled among the cities" (several to choose from) ... and "moved his tents as far as Sodom"

– ***Lot Wanted Something in Particular***— there was a SEED OF CRAVING .... even though he was a Believer:

2 Peter 2:6-8 "if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);"

### **Gen 19**

**"Lot's folly was this: Though the worldliness of Sodom vexed his righteous soul, he lived as close to the world as he could, hanging on to it for dear life until the bitter end. And the result was that though God judged all of Sodom except Lot and his daughters, Sodom was reborn in their very lives. We see, then, that it is possible for believing people like us who are truly distressed by the course of this world to live lives that are so profoundly influenced by culture that Sodom is reborn in the lives of those we love the most."** Kent Hughes, "Set Apart", p. 15

### ***Lot illustrates the expression of inward desire described in Jam 1:14-15***

– The problem with Lot was present when he "LIFTED UP HIS EYES"— there was already IN HIM a desire that informed his Unwise Decision about Proximity— Lot's not sinning yet, sin is just at work deceiving him and LURING him.

**"No choice is ever made without some degree of affection. Therefore, "affections are in the soul as the helm is in the ship; if it be laid hold on by a skillful hand, he turneth the whole vessel which way he pleaseth..."** John Owen, Sin and Temptation, intro. xix,

**PRIME AUDIENCE FOR MESSAGE** .... not merely those who are living in Sodom— but rather those who are "Lifting Up Their Eyes" in the Direction of Sodom

***Lot built his life too close to Sodom ... What are you building to close to?*** Success? ... Sensuality? ... Thrill? .... Laziness/Ease? ..... Greed? .... Disrespect? .... Pride? .... Craving for Acceptance? ... Materialism? .... Vanity? ...

