

# DISPLACED PERSONS

By

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Since World War II millions of people have been driven from their homes and their native lands by war. They are described as D.P.'s, Displaced Persons.

These are people torn loose from their homeland, its culture and its benefits, cast adrift in the world with no nationality and no place to call home.

Christianity is the fellowship of Displaced Persons. Since the day Adam and Eve were displaced from Eden and cast out into a world of animosity, hardship, and death, it has been known to every believer that this world is not the Christian's home.

Abraham was called from his home to become a "sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own...for he looked for the city which has the foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:9-10). For 175 years Abraham lived as a man without a country, facing gross wickedness — as that of Sodom and Gomorrah — and innumerable enemies of heathen about him. He defied the world's concepts in order to please his heavenly King and became known as the Father of the Faithful. Christians are identified through scripture as Sons of Abraham, because by faith we follow in his steps as pilgrims and sojourners in a country not our own.

Moses, in spite of his position as a prince in Egypt and as the lawgiver of Israel, was a displaced person all 120 years of his life.

Jesus left the glory of heaven to enter this sin-bound world and was without a homeland during His life on earth. He who created the worlds, who had total power over the world in which He lived, had no place to lay His head.

He was the greatest in the world, yet was content to be least. He was the rightful Heir of all things (Heb. 1:2), but He never contended for His rights. He was glorified in Heaven (John 17:5), yet committed everything to God and lived in the world only for His Father's glory.

Resistance and clamor were not a part of His nature or His Kingdom. He severely rebuked those who were devoted to this world and its treasures. The rich man (Luke 12) who hoarded his grain in ever-expanding elevators he called a "fool". The servant who hid the talent instead of using it for the master He cast out. He questioned the faith of those who sought the esteem of the world. "How can you believe, who receive glory on of another...?" (John 5:44). Jesus gave example of a person totally obedient to God, and in doing so demonstrated that the faithful son of God is a displaced person in this world.

The same condition is to be the mark of His disciples. "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19). In the words of Malcolm Muggeridge, "The only ultimate disaster that can befall us, I have come to realize, is to feel ourselves to be at home here on earth.," Christ fervently prayed, "I pray not that you should take them from the world, but that you should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16).

The Christian who take seriously the business of forsaking the things of the world, who truly seeks first God's kingdom, will not have to announce to the world that he is through with it. It will be through with him, and he will find it out soon enough. At his answer to the call of Christ, to march to another f=drum, to obey another commander-in-chief, he is displaced by business associates, neighbors, and even family.

Persons displaced because of war are considered victims of great tragedy. But not so the ones who voluntarily forsake the world for the Kingdom of Christ. For the Christian, the whole arrangement has distinct advantages.

The less attachment we have to the world, the greater our freedom from the world's fashion. The most common complaint is the "rat race", the frantic effort to keep pace, to stay with the latest fashion, whether it be in men's hair style, or the latest invention of the evolutionists. Drug abuse and alcoholism are encouraged by the ambition to "conform to this world." All the other kids are trying it. Everyone else in the company — party, team, group — takes a social drink! The Christian is not offended by such hate, since he has no need of the world's false evaluation. He prefers to be abhorred, rather than embraced by it.

There is a fashion code for Christians. It is the code of the Homeland, written by God in the Bible, and designed for the country where all is in perfect harmony with Him. It is for those who "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God", who have "put on the new man that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Co. 3:1, 10).

But isn't this being "other-worldly?" Isn't it likely to make one a misfit? Won't it cause people to think one is peculiar? The answer is Yes, to all three questions. This is just the point, a Christian IS loyal to another world. He doesn't "fit" this one and isn't supposed to.

Although displaced from the world, the believer is translated into Christ's kingdom and finds fellowship with the body of believers in the church, where one is not alone, where others bear the same burdens and have the same goal of a new and righteous world in the presence of God. The church is designed to be the refuge and rehabilitation center for God's displaced persons. In it is to be found the apostle's doctrine, loving concern of the saints, the celebration of Christ's death in the communion and continual prayer.

What a crime that this refuge is mission in so many churches. Some have such a horror of being estranged from the world that they eagerly invite it into the church. The world's foremost entertainers come straight from the most irreligious stage to perform at the church's public worship. We do not argue against the good intentions of those who make the church "contemporary", that they appeal to the sinner on the world's level in order to bring him in to the church. But it doesn't work. It only succeeds in bringing the world into the church, and the sinner is deprived of the challenge to a full-blown repentance and translation from the power of darkness to the Kingdom of light.

Men are slow to learn that to be on the world's popularity list is strong evidence that one has not denied it. Peter learned that you cannot follow Christ and be accepted at the fireside of His enemies. "You are one of them", they said. "No, I am not", he answered., denying Christ rather than to deny the world.

In the frantic scramble to harvest the millions of church-shoppers of the day there is a tremendous pressure of competition among churches. Such competition is not a

warfare between the saints and the power of Satan, but rather a contest to see which church can best please the multitude. Instead of a refuge for those who are pilgrims and sojourners in the world, the church has become the public forum for the children of the world. But you do not inspire a man to change by becoming as he is. The Martyrs of the early church challenged the enemy by their resistance, by holding to their unique life-style and other-world fashions until death. Jesus went among men as the sinless one, despised and hated by the mob, but admired, loved and worshipped by those who are "of God."

We do not suggest a return to asceticism, the monastery, or convent. The Christian is not to withdraw from the world. He is needed as salt and light. He must be **in** the world. But he must give a distinct flavor of **another** world. "For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor of life unto life" (II Cor. 2:15-16).

The church which is following the apostolic pattern must follow Christ in two ways: 1) by denying self, at the price of personal sacrifice and the subjugation of the flesh; 2) by denying the world, dying to the world, and living as a loyal subject of the Kingdom NOT of this world. Such a course will make one a displaced person. But what of it? The world is passing away (I John 2:17) and when Christ comes it is to be dissolved: "and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10). Even now we see the signs of deterioration — the ecologists have amplified it enough — and it is evident that the process can never be reversed.

It is not the ecologist, but the Christian who is under Divine mandate to be salt of the earth and light of the world, to show that there is something better, permanent and perfect, to live "without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you are seen as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). Like Abraham we look for a city from God, not a One-World Babylon of men. Even now we approach mount Zion, not the crumbling ruins fought over by Jews and Arabs, but "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22) which is above. Indeed, "this world is not my home."

This is the witness of the church, the "holy nation" of God with citizenship in heaven, for the moment displaced in this world, but loyal to our native King, looking "for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13). Immortality is not obtained by democratic vote. Those who seek security in the multitude, who seek to create a new world by numerical strength, will at last come to tragic end in death.

It is the pilgrims, the displaced people of Christ who often stand alone in the world, who finally arrive at the new creation in the glorious company of innumerable saints.

"My Kingdom is not of this world."

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