

Nature, Nurture, Choice, & God's Will 3

Don't Let the World Shape You

(preached 8/21/22)

Please turn to *Romans 12:1*.

THUS FAR...

- NATURE: you were born that way.
- NURTURE: you were raised that way (your environment [INCLUDING OTHER PEOPLE] influenced & molded you and still does).
- CHOICE: you picked it (according to personal desires/goals).
- GOD'S WILL: He picked it (also designed, planned, created, and enacted).
- So far we've covered both the corrupted nature we inherited from our old dad Adam, and the divine nature we inherited from our new Dad God our Father.
- Our biological birth was NOT the way God made us—it's the result of corrupted nature.
- Our born-again self is the way God made us—holy, righteous, forgiven, and children of God.
- Our spirits are now direct creations of God and the Lord has shared His divine nature with us!

Today we discuss NURTURE and let's give it an extended definition: ***it's the way our environment molded and shaped us internally.***

- By “internally” I mean what we believe, how we perceive things, how we act/react, what we feel, and how we think.
- The “environment” mostly points to people: our parents and how they raised us, our family growing up and now, our spouse, our kids, the people we work with.
- It can also include what sort of neighborhood and conditions we grew up and live in now.
- Last we are also nurture by events, traumatic and otherwise.

Examples:

- Our parents gave us everything when we lived with them, spoiled us...so now we struggle with a sense of entitlement and its robbed us of ambition.
- We had nothing growing up and our parents were always saying “we can't afford that.” So perhaps now we fight, struggle, and compete for everything always afraid that we're going to go without.
- We almost drowned as a kid, and now we're afraid of water and refuse to swim.
- People criticized us for most of our lives, pointing out our flaws, and now we have self-worth issues and lack confidence.
- Or perhaps we've worked really hard to overachieve to prove to ourselves and others that we have worth.

- We saw our parents deal with conflict by yelling at each other, so we grow up yelling—or perhaps the opposite.

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

FALLEN NATURE birthed us into its likeness, and the FALLEN WORLD has molded us our whole lives to keep us that way.

BF SKINNER. Mid-20th century psychologist BF Skinner postulated that humanity *lacked free will and were completely shaped and controlled by their environment and evolution*. He wrote a book titled “Walden 2” and imagined a world where “behavioral engineers” had technology that could control every aspect of the environment, therefore successfully manipulating humanity into whatever direction they wanted. Other psychologists came to similar conclusions: when Pavlov presented food to his dog, Fido famously salivated in response to this environmental stimulus.

WHO ARE THE BEHAVIORAL ENGINEERS? To a certain degree, I concur with these conclusions.... First I believe that there are “behavioral engineers” who are able to manipulate us through information and other means in order to direct and drive humanity toward something that fits with their agenda. *Who are these beings?*

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

Satan and his fallen angelic princes are beings both ancient and powerful, living in the heavenly dimensions and working overtime to bring about the Revelation 13 Beast system. Their desire is to direct us away from the Saving Grace of Jesus Christ so that we’ll eventually look to the false messiah they’ll be presenting soon.

Verse 12 isn't talking about earthly conflict—it speaks to an entire **WORLD** the enemy has created to keep humanity thinking about our basic needs and pleasures, and fighting with each other.

THE MATRIX. One of the best examples I can think of is the movie series called the Matrix. In the first installment, Neo discovers his entire world is carefully crafted by a nefarious AI that rules the planet and deceives everyone. Said AI has carefully crafted an detailed environment that manipulates and controls all of humanity.

RED PILL. When Neo finally takes “the red pill” he breaks free of the Matrix and sees things for how they truly are. Then and only then is he enabled and empowered—supernaturally so—to resist and fight back.

THE WORLD. We have a Matrix here and Jesus called it “the World.” For the last 2 weeks we see how the world fell into corruption as a direct result of Satan using his powers on the first couple. This world belongs to Satan whom both Jesus and Paul referred to as “the god (or ruler) of this world” (*John 14:30, 2 Corinthians 4:4*).

THIS WORLD AND THE PEOPLE IN IT ARE THE ENVIRONMENT THAT'S BEEN CAREFULLY CRAFTED BY Satan TO DISCIPLE AND CONTROL HUMANKIND.

THE WORLD IS WICKED, EVIL, AND ITS DESTINY IS DESTRUCTION.

OPPOSITE OF GOD. It's a kingdom that represents the opposite of God's. In the Lord's Kingdom there is only goodness, justice, righteousness, and love.

SKEPTICISM. In response to His flesh & blood brothers' skepticism of Him, Jesus said:

John 7:7 (ESV)

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

Listen to what Jesus said to the Pharisees:

John 8:12 (ESV)

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

In other words, there's no Light in this world until Jesus showed up—it was and still is a place of darkness.

PHARISEES ATTACK. When the same Pharisees verbally attacked Him for this statement, listen to Jesus' reply:

John 8:23-24 (ESV)

²³ He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

CHRIST DIDN'T COME FROM MATRIX. This mind-blowing statement shows us that Jesus didn't come from the Matrix—it didn't create Him.

- The Virgin Birth insured He was born in the image of God and His sinless life proved He never conformed Himself to the likeness of this world.
- It also reveals that He came here from some other place—one created by Someone Else other than the evil AI who formed the Matrix.

SUPERIOR. This Someone Else and this somewhere else is clearly superior to this world in every way. Jesus came here to shine Light on the fact that we're plugged into Satan's system, and the devil is manipulating us just like Pavlov did his dog. Jesus arrived here to offer the red pill, and that is His blood.

NEO LIVING CONDITIONS AFTER FREEDOM. When Neo finally took the red pill in the movie, I remember thinking his living conditions didn't necessarily improve, (although they did.) He formally lived a "normal" life with all the plusses and minuses that brings...but the reality was that he was imprisoned in some pod, full of gross fluid, not truly making any of his own decisions!

LIVING UNDERGROUND. When he's finally out, he has to live underground with all the other free people in hiding. Yet I say this: he's free. After his old self—and his old reality—"died" and he was born again, he could start making the transition to operating in the supernatural like he did by the end of the movie.

WHEN YOU AND I DIE TO OUR OLD SELF, THE ONE BIRTHED BY THIS WORLD (THE MATRIX), WE DIE TO THE WORLD.

Part of our discipleship—continuing to follow Christ—is to pursue a Christian lifestyle that clearly shows we are set apart from the rest of the world.

Jesus has freed us from the Matrix. He's delivered us from the delusion and illusion we lived under our entire lives, the very ones who shaped who we WERE. He's opened our eyes to the falsehoods others have shared with us, possibly including our parents. Does that make them evil? No. They were only raising us the way they knew how.

BROUGHT NEW REALITY/CAST OUT SATAN. Now that He's freed us from living in a small plastic bubble full of yucky fluid and some weird respirator thing over our mouths, Christ has stopped the flow of falsehoods and deceptions the Devil has been feeding us. As a matter of fact, He's already decided to end Satan's life and bring a whole new reality to humanity:

John 12:27-32 (ESV)

²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

GOD'S VOICE. Consider this famous scene: A voice from outside the world, outside the Matrix, speaks so that all within can hear. And said voice responds to Jesus, specifically answering His request to "glorify" itself. When Father does exactly that, He showing 1) that He and Jesus are from outside this world and 2) that they are greater than this world.

WORLD IS BIGGER THAN US. You and I are not greater, by ourselves—the world will chew us up and spit it us out. Now that someone else not from here has come from someplace else not of here has come, however, that's a different story. He says, verse 31, that He is not only stronger than the ruler of this world but has already judged him and will soon remove him completely.

CROSS BRINGS ATTENTION. In the meantime, He's going to bring attention to Himself by going to the Cross. When He was lifted up from this earth at His crucifixion, the people trapped in the Matrix finally saw their way out—the red pill. By drawing attention—glorifying—Father and therefore Jesus, people look at and to Jesus. They see something outside of and greater than anything they've seen within this world. They see hope.

DON'T LIVE FOR THIS WORLD. It's not a sin to have ice cream, take a vacation, and live in comfortable home. That being said, while we must live in this world until death or the Rapture, our mission **isn't** to indulge in it and "live life to the fullest." The command God has given us it to BE the same light shining into the darkness that Jesus was when He was here and still is now. He placed the Holy Spirit within us to share the same red pill with anyone who will take it.

MATRIX TRAITOR. I recall in the original Matrix movie, there was one fellow who'd been red pilled by decided to make a deal with the devil. He met with one of the agents who was feeding him a steak dinner in some fancy restaurant and, as he was eating, he said something like: "I know this is nothing more than computer code and not real, but it sure tastes good." He goes on to make a deal that he'll be put back in the Matrix and allowed to live a lavish lifestyle if he'll just betray Neo and the others who found freedom.

We weren't born again and freed from Satan just to go back to him and whatever he's offering.

We're not here to live easy, comfortable, trouble-free lives up until the Lord finally calls us to His side in heaven.

This world is evil, hates Jesus, and hates us:

John 15:18-25 (ESV)

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also.

²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

Let's break this down:

Verse 18: the devil and the matrix he created hates Jesus for Christ is the Light Who shone into its darkness and exposed its evil. He did it first.

Verse 19: now that the same Light lives in you and I, when we shine this world hates us too. When this light shines, the world recognizes the same Light as Christ.

Verse 19: Jesus has taken us out of this place. He pulled off the respirator, opened the tube, drained the swampy fluid within, and pulled us out! Then He cleaned us up, gave us new clothes, and set us on a mission to do the same as others.

Verses 20-21: whatever they did to Christ they will do to us when we shine: persecution. Jesus died on the cross so we wouldn't have the penalty of our own sin upon us. He didn't die on the cross to give us a trouble free life. As a matter of fact, Salvation is when the trouble begins.

PERSECUTION. Formerly the world loved us because we were one with it. After Jesus took us out of it and made us one with Him, however, we got a target painted on our backs.

Verses 22-25: even with God in the flesh showing up, preaching the Gospel, and performing miracles...there will still people who preferred to stay in the illusion Satan has provided. They would rather remain plugged into the Matrix, trapped in a small plastic tube. They'll choose the delusion rather than the truth.

HEARD & REJECTED. A person whose never been exposed to Christ or His Gospel is one thing. Yet for someone who has heard the truth and continues to reject it...it's not going to go well for them.

Let me ask you 2 questions.

- 1) Do you know of anyone who grew up in an impoverished and/or abusive home?
- 2) Do you know of anyone who grew up in a bad neighborhood with drugs, violence, and murder?

SHOOTINGS. I just had a reality check a couple week ago when a church youth group from the inner city rented our cabin. The Pastor was very thankful he could bring the kids here and said to me: "every one of those kids has lost from 1-3 people to violence and drugs. Is it that way around here?" I was so stunned by the question, I just stood there staring at him in shock. It's not that way around here and I could have answered, but I was forced to take a step back to see how good we really have it in Addison and the surrounding towns.

WORLD IS ABUSIVE. This whole planet is an abusive atmosphere in a bad neighborhood. All the government and volunteer programs in the world won't change that, and neither would a trillion dollars because the corruption is in the world itself. The ruler of this world is the most evil and reprobate being ever to exist and even the most powerful government on the earth isn't strong enough to dethrone Him.

BUT JESUS.

John 16:33 (ESV)

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

TROUBLE. There's still going to be lots of trouble for born-again Christians right up until the end. The Church **isn't** going to turn the planet into a righteous Christian kingdom before Jesus comes back. Things are getting worse and not better, just as the Lord and the Apostles prophesied.

But it won't be this way forever. A day of reckoning is coming:

2 Thessalonians 1:5-12 (ESV)

⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—

⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels

⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,

¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOT VICTIMS. Until that day comes, you and I no longer need to feel like victims. While it's true that this world has used great power to mold us into its image, Jesus Who is greater has shaped us into His.

LEAVE FATHER AND MOTHER. In the Bible, a boy transitions to a man when he leaves his father and mother, clings to his wife, and the two become one flesh. Therefore let's cast off whatever our environment has made us to be, and put on the righteousness and purpose of Jesus, Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith!