

## Culture Shock - Part 7

Cancel Everyone

*Ephesians 4:1-7*

*Memory Verses: Colossians 2:14*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

For the past two months we've been looking at some of the major cultural issues of 2020. We've looked at Covid 19, racism and the George Floyd riots, the issue of transgenderism, and last week, the political arena as we prepare to cast our votes in the upcoming election a week from now. None of these issues are small or have simple solutions. All of these issues have layers of complexity that can make walking through them seem like wading through 4 feet of mud. In a movie that our family recently watched, the 1984 classic, *The Never Ending Story*, our hero Artreyu tries to lead his horse Artax through the swamp of sadness. The further they go the more they sink. Eventually, in tears and panic, tugging at his horses reigns, Artreyu sees his beloved Artax hopelessly sink beneath the mud, seemingly lost forever. It's a very emotional scene. We had to stop the movie. Vera and Hudson were balling, Pierson was throwing things at the screen. No one was happy. Listen, I get it, our culture right now feels a lot like the swamp of sadness. These issues make us angry, frustrated, depressed, hopeless, and shocked to the point where many of us feel like we are sinking in the mud. If we cannot find answers we too, like Artax, will be overcome.

Fortunately for us as Christians we do have answers. We do not need to succumb to culture shock. In *Matthew 24* Christ tell us that all of this is part of God's plan. These issues that we are facing are inevitable and will increase all the more as we approach His second coming. And so he tells us that there are three things we can do. First, don't be led astray by the culture. When it comes to Covid, riots, sexuality, and even politics, this world is going to tell us to follow their lead. We don't. We find our path in the Word of God and in the way of God. Second, don't be alarmed by the culture. We shouldn't be shocked, knowing full and well that Christ is in control and our hope is in him. We don't put our hope in a vaccine. We don't put our hope in a movement like Black Lives Matter. We don't put our hope in scientific fads or cultural trends. And we don't put our hope in who wins the election. Our hope is in one place, Jesus Christ. And so thirdly, we can't be ashamed of Christ. Though the world may take away our jobs, our right to worship, or our freedom of speech we will not deny our Lord. And even if they should threaten to beat us or take away our very lives... we will never stop praising the name of Jesus. *Romans 1:16* – I cannot be ashamed of the Gospel.

And so, as we close out this series I want us to look at one last issue that is prevalent in our culture today, and that is the issue of "Cancel Culture." "Cancel culture" is all the rage right now. Because tensions are high and tolerance is low, people are getting "cancelled" left and right. The phrase "cancel culture" refers to the practice of withdrawing support for (or canceling) people—usually public figures—after they have done or said something destructive, distasteful, or morally disagreeable. We've seen this in recent years with famous people such as Mel Gibson, Lori Loughlin, Lance Armstrong, Michael Jackson, Taylor Swift, Kanye West, and Roseanne Barr, just to name a few. These days, everybody from politicians to pastors, actors to athletes, comedians to commentators, artists to activists, and even structures and statues are being socially "cancelled" based on the wrong tweet, the wrong tone, the wrong opinion, the wrong decision, the wrong word, the wrong anything. In some cases, "dirt" from twenty years ago (or two-hundred years ago!) is being dug up and re-revealed for the world to see. If you have ever screwed up in any kind of public way at any point in your life, it's very possible that you may get "cancelled."

For example, Thomas "Stone Wall" Jackson is a man from history that I have always admired. For one he was a very strong Christian who was nick named "Stone Wall" because his faith in God was so strong that he was unflinching, like a stone wall, in battle. He was asked by his troops how he could be so calm and serene, how he didn't seem to get scared at all on the battlefield. He answered, "my faith teaches me to be as assured of my safety on the battlefield as in bed." He knew that his God was in control of his life and death and so his faith in Christ was assured. He is still considered today as one of the most gifted tactical commanders in U.S. History. And now, he is being canceled all over the United States. His statues are being torn down, his pictures have come off the walls, and to a degree he is being erased from our history. Why is such a man being canceled 150 year after his death you ask? Well, he was a general in the confederate army. Which of course must mean that he was a racist. He wasn't. In fact, in the face of personal attacks, he formed a Sunday School class of black children so he could teach them to read the Bible, and he was known everywhere he went as "the black man's friend." But here we are, 2020, where if you have done something to offend someone, you must be erased, you must be canceled.

But cancel culture isn't just for famous (or infamous people)... cancel culture is to some degree, coming for us all and is already a part of our lives. At some level we have all felt the pain and shame of being written-off based on things we have done or failed to do. We've all been "unfriended", dismissed, rejected, cast-out. We've all felt cancelled by someone. But, we've also cancelled others. We, as sinful humans, tend to remember people primarily by the scandalous things they've done or the specific ways

we were once hurt by them. And therefore, from our vantage point, that's who they are fully and finally. They can't move beyond the scope of redemption, at least to us. They get no quarter, no clemency, no grace or mercy from us. In "cancel culture", any failure renders a final verdict: banned for life... you are dead to me.

And that's not okay. Not for us. Not for followers of Christ. Our countercultural Savior will have none of it. Jesus called "cancelled" people his friends. In fact, his circle of followers included a betrayer, a thief, and a prostitute, just to name a few. He was unwilling to "cancel" the worst of the worst, the baddest of the bad, and the guiltiest of the guilty. He moved toward those whom society moved away from. He befriended, loved, and touched the outcast, the misfit, the leper, the liar, the sexually deviant. He refused to dismiss those who had been dismissed, reject those who had been rejected, denounce those who had been denounced, and shame those who had been shamed. In fact, his closest friends were of such ill-repute that the religious leaders concluded Jesus must be an imposter because no self-respecting man of God would embrace the kinds of people Jesus embraced. Jesus never canceled anyone. Rather his Word encourages a different strategy in **Ephesians 4:1-7**.

This morning I want us to look at three ways we as Christians can respond to cancel culture, and what we will see is this... **How Can We Participate In Cancel Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us? Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us?**

### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first way we respond to cancel culture is... **We Rebuke Sin In The Church As We Restore One Another In Love**. Yes, unfortunately there is a cancel culture in the church today. When someone falls or fails we, in the church like the world, have a tendency to want to cancel them. And, yes we should address sin, but instead of canceling our fallen brothers and sisters we should seek to see them restored to a righteous faith.

Look again at **Ephesians 4:1**. Notice... this is to the church, not the world. And so as the church we are called to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of God. We are to walk sinless, walk blameless, and walk worshipful. And though we are called to walk this way, sometimes people in the church don't. I know, shocking right? So, what are we to do with those who walk counter to the calling of God within the church? There are a couple of passages that can help us here. The main one is **Matthew 18:15-17**, which tells the steps of rebuking a fellow believer who is in unrepentant sin. First, we go to them personally and if they don't repent then secondly we go to them with a small group of people they would respect within the church. If they still won't repent then we take the

matter to the elders & church. **1 Timothy 5:20** agrees that we are to rebuke them in the presence of all. But that is after all else fails. **Titus 3:10** likewise says that we are to warn them once and warn them twice. I hope you see that the process of rebuking someone in sin within the church is a lengthy and patient process. We aren't quick to pronounce judgement on someone, rather we are slow and strategic in the way we approach these situations. This isn't a quick call, but rather one bathed in prayer and patient love.

**Galatians 6:1** tells us that we are to try to restore them in the spirit of gentleness. This process should never be reckless, cold, and uncaring.

The bottom line is that we can't ignore the sins and offenses of our brothers and sisters in the church. Why? Because we are accountable for one another. Look at these two verses. **Ecclesiastes 4:9** says that two or three are better than one because they can help each other succeed. **1 Corinthians 5:12-13** tells us that we are responsible for the judgment of sin within the church. If we choose not to rebuke sin in the church then we will cease to be a God-glorifying healthy church that can be used for his name's sake. **We are spiritually accountable for each other and for the spiritual welfare of the local church.**

So we rebuke them and if they repent it's all good... but what if they don't. Look again at **Ephesians 4:2-3**. We bear with one another in patience eager to restore them to the unity of the body. If they choose to not repent, even though we've patiently tried to restore them, then we must do whatever it takes to push them in that direction. We must take it to the next step. To back to **Matthew 18:17**. If we can't lovingly draw them back to repentance then we must let them go and become to us as a Gentiles and tax collectors. Look back at **Titus 3:10-11**. It says that at this point we are to have nothing more to do with him, knowing that he is sinful. And, **1 Corinthians 5:2, 5** says that we are to remove them from among us, and, get this, deliver them over to satan. Wow... this seems harsh. This can look like canceling... but I assure you it's not. Stay with me. Treating someone like a tax collector doesn't mean writing them off... it means they are not considered as part of the church body anymore... this is way different than being banned from your life. You have relationships all the time with people who are not a part of your church body. So now we are treat these "brothers and sisters" who are under church discipline the same as we would treat those outside the church body. The relationship changes but it isn't canceled.

And why must we put people who do not repent out of the fellowship? To restore them back to a right relationship with God and to assure their salvation. **1 Timothy 5:20** so they would once again stand in fear of God. **1 Corinthians 5:5** so that they would come back to repentance and their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. **James 5:19-20** says that we are bring them back from their wicked ways in order to save them from spiritual death. Listen, **Church discipline has nothing to do with**

canceling sinners, and everything to do with restoring them in the faith.

We must confront sin, we must bear with one another in patient love, we must practice church discipline, and we must strive to restore all to righteous faith... but we don't cancel our brothers and sisters in Christ. We don't write them off, kick them to the curb, and stop pursuing them.

Recently we've seen the cancel culture infiltrate the church by trying to cancel some very godly men. Recently John MacArthur made some seemingly sexist comments towards Beth Moore. Some people within the church went to social media to declare John MacArthur as someone who should be canceled. This is wrong. We all sin, we all fall short, and we all should be drawn to repentance.... but we shouldn't be canceled for one mistake. He should be corrected not canceled.

Last year David Platt was in danger of also being canceled by the christian community simply because he allowed Donald Trump to come to his church to be prayed for. Still people from both sides thought what he had done was worthy of cancelation. This is so silly. Rather than give grace and love and try to understand each other, people jumped to conclusions and went to twitter to express their dissatisfaction with a godly man. David Platt's comments should have been considered, but not canceled. Church, we've got to slow the roll on canceling other christians or christian leaders and learn to bear with one another in love and grace. **How Can We Participate In Cancel Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us?**

The second way we respond to cancel culture is... **We Shun A Sinful Culture As We Serve Sinful People.** The World is a sinful place and we must be separate from it in some way. **1 John 2:15-17** tells us that we cannot love the world or its culture. **2 Corinthians 6:14** says that we must be set apart from unbelievers. Our fellowship non-believers should look radically different than our fellowship with believers.

And while all of this is true and necessary... we must also remember **Ephesians 4:7** that we were shown the grace of God. We aren't set apart because we are better. We are set apart because God has graciously saved us... and we hope he will save them too. And for that reason **1 Corinthians 5:12-13** again reminds us that we aren't called to judge the world. We can't cancel the world when those in it offend us.

Some of you may recall that recently Goya CEO Robert Unanue was in danger of being canceled by those on the left because he made positive comments about Trump. Jimmy Fallon was also in danger of being canceled because he wore black face in an SNL skit many years ago. And of course Rosanne Barr was actually canceled for tweeting some insensitive racial comments. The world is very unforgiving... but we are called to be different. **When the world rejects us instead of canceling them, we forgive them and love them with the love of Christ.**

Though we aren't of this world... we are most certainly in this world for the purpose of drawing the lost to Christ. We can't cancel the world cause we are called to serve the world. **Matthew 5:16** gives us our marching orders... let your light shine so they would see your good works and worship God. You can't cancel the world and serve sinners. Christians may be canceled by the world but we never cancel those Christ is seeking to save in the world. **How Can We Participate In Cancel Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us?**

And lastly, we respond to cancel culture when . **We Depend On The Deliverance Of A Merciful Savior.** Listen, the gift of Christ is the fact that he has not canceled us, but he has canceled our sins. We deserved death... but he went another way. Look at **Colossians 2:14** . He has canceled our record of debt and nailed it to the cross. **Tullian Tchividjian - That's the big difference between Jesus and cancel culture: while our culture (including the church) cancels people who have done terrible things, Jesus cancels the terrible things that people are cancelled for. The sins and scandals that cancel culture chooses not to forget, Jesus chooses not to remember.** If Christ has canceled our sin debt and forgiven us of all that we have done against him – how in the world could we ever think it okay to cancel someone else? **Christ hasn't written us off... we can't write anyone else off either.** We continue to sin, we continue to disobey, ignore, and rebel against our savior... and yet he says he will never leave us nor forsake us. Everyday we depend on the fact that Christ has not canceled us, everyday we depend on more mercy and more grace. And so, we must continue to show grace and mercy to everyone who needs it. **How Can We Participate In Cancel Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us?**

### Application

So what is the take away. Simple, we must take sin within the church serious. At times we must even move forward with church discipline for the sake of restoring the sinner to a righteous faith with God – but we never cancel them. We must also be separated from this world in the way we live and in the way we fellowship, but we never cancel the lost because they need Jesus. And, we simply can't cancel anyone because Christ hasn't canceled us. **How Can We Participate In Cancel Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us?**

### Conclusion

**David Chapelle – “Our culture has accepted two huge lies. The first is that if you disagree with someone's lifestyle, you must fear or hate them. The second is that to love someone means you agree with everything they believe, say or do. Both are nonsense. You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate.”** Yes we live in a shocking culture. A

culture where if you disagree with someone on the handling and rules of Covid 19 you may be canceled. Of if you have a different take on the riots you may be canceled. Of if you don't agree with the modern trend towards transgenderism you may be canceled. Of if you don't vote the way others want you to vote you may be canceled. Cancel culture is real and though we can't control others and whether or not they cancel us... we can choose to follow Christ and not cancel them. **How Can We Participate In Cancel Culture When Jesus Refuses To Cancel Us?**