

Worldliness

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- Psalter 229:1,5
- Scripture: 1 John 2:1-20
- Text: 1 John 2:15-17
- Psalter 136
- Psalter 23:1-3,6
- Psalter 236

We wish to meditate today on 1 John 2:15-17: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

With God's help, we wish to consider the theme of worldliness under four headings:

1. The essence of worldliness
2. The paths of worldliness
3. The curse of worldliness
4. The deliverance from worldliness

I. The essence of worldliness

In the passage before us, the apostle John contrasts two loves: love for the world and love for the Father. These two loves are incompatible. They are mutually exclusive and cannot exist together. Either you love God or you love the world. You cannot love both. Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matt. 6:24). Today we are confronted with a strong warning from God's authoritative word: “Do not love the world or the things in the world!”

There should be one love that rules our life, one holy passion for God and the things of God. The choice is clear and directions are simple, but the way is not easy. The appeal of the world is strong and the flesh is weak. Jesus said, "Watch

and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." May God bless our consideration of this text, such that we pray earnestly that He would take away our love for the world and cause us to love only Him. We need God's grace for that; we cannot do that without the power of His Holy Spirit.

But why should we not love the world? John gives two critical reasons why we ought not love the world nor the things in the world. The first reason why we must not love the world is that the world is opposed to God.

To understand John's reasoning, we need to grasp his use of the word *world*. "World" in the New Testament is usually the Greek word *kosmos*. It is related to a verb that means "to set in order" or "to adorn or decorate," and has six basic meanings in New Testament usage:

- The universe created by God with design and order (Matt. 13:35)
- The planet earth (John 11:9) in contrast with heaven (1 John 3:17), that is, the world God created in six 24-hour days
- The total of mankind, or of all kinds of people such as both kings and subjects, Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 5:14; 2 Cor. 5:19)
- The total of human existence in this present life, with all of its experiences, possessions, and emotions (Matt. 16:26)
- The elect world of fallen people, who are the object of God's everlasting love and for whom Christ died (1 John 2:2)
- The world order or kingdom that is alienated from God, in rebellion against Him, and condemned by nature through the fall in Paradise and by actual sins in thoughts, words, and actions.

In this passage John is using the word world in the last and most common usage. He is not referring to the physical world in which we live or about the mass of people living on the planet. Rather, he uses the term world to refer to a kingdom, a realm and its inhabitants, that is lost in sin, wholly at odds with anything that is divine or pleasing to God. He is talking about Satan's kingdom of darkness which consists of all unsaved people who live according to the standards of this world. John Calvin defined the world in this sense as "everything connected with the present life, apart from the kingdom of God and the hope of eternal life."

Sometimes the New Testament writers also use the word *aion* for world, which

literally means "a segment of time, or an age." The New Testament repeatedly contrasts this age (this *aion*) with the age to come (the *aion* to come). When *aion* is used in terms of worldliness, it refers to this present age as a world immersed in sin and evil, a world separated from God, secularized, and demonized. Galatians 1:4 describes this age as an evil age. Evil is its dominant characteristic and the devil is its dominant agent. This present evil age is ruled by the devil under the rule of God. Paul calls Satan the god of this world--of this present age (2 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, Romans 12:2 tells us, believers are not to be conformed to this present age, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

What then is the world, or worldliness, in the sense that John uses it in our text and as it is predominantly spoken of in the New Testament? When the word world - be it *kosmos* or *aion* - is used in the context of warning or divine judgment or as that from which believers have been delivered, it refers to man, his institutions, his surroundings, his goals, and his principles of thought and action as penetrated and controlled by immoral, malignant, devilish forces. This is the world that John tells us we are not to love.

John thus speaks of world in our text as antithetical to God. *World* here has an ethical, spiritual connotation that contrasts it with Christ and His church. This is the world which knows not God, nor His Son, but crucified the Lord of glory (John 1:10). John is referring to this present, evil world (John 8:23), as opposed to the other world, the heavenly world. This world, made to reflect the glory of God, now lives, post-fall, in sinister rebellion against the heavenly world. This world is now a fallen, disordered world, in the grip of the evil one, he says in 1 John 5:19. This world, despite its great achievements, is a lost world and is incapable of saving itself and ordering its existence in a meaningful, God-glorifying manner.

The world in this sense is the mass of mankind estranged from God through sin and living after the lusts of the flesh. This "world" is populated by sinful men, women, and children who think primarily of this world and neglect the world to come. Worldly people focus more on their bodies than their souls, more on pleasing men than pleasing God. They fear men more than God. They live more horizontally than vertically. Their motto is "forward," never "upward." Their goal is worldly success rather than divine holiness. They worship the creature rather

than the Creator. They lack reverence. They never bow in rapt, silent wonder in the secret place. They burst with selfish desires rather than heartfelt supplications. God may not be denied, but He is ignored and forgotten.

Worldliness, then, is human activity with God left out. Being of this world means being controlled by what preoccupies the world, the quest for pleasure, profit, and position. Worldliness means yielding to the spirit that animates fallen mankind, the spirit of self-seeking and self-indulgence without regard for God.

Every one of us, by nature, was born as a worldling. We have a native attachment to the world. We live in natural rapport with the spirit of the world. We belong to this evil world, to hell-bent humanity. The world is our native habitat and environment, our order and orbit of existence. We are part of the organized kingdom of the carnal mind which is enmity against God, and which is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). As much as we, after conception, were nourished in our mother's womb through an umbilical cord that attached us to her internal life support system, so we were born with an umbilical cord that tied us to the world's system. That was the womb of our fallen existence. Consequently, our understanding is darkened (Eph. 4:18) as we enter the world. The guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us and the pollution of his sin is inherited by us. Our minds are blinded by the power of the devil (2 Cor. 4:4). Our baser passions and lusts are activated by the devil (Eph. 2:3). We are the disinherited sons of God, who have cast in our allegiance with the prince of this world. We are of our father, the devil. We live under the lordship of satanic powers. Sin lords itself over us; we are sinaholics. We live as slaves of sin (Rom. 6:16) in the service of human passions (1 Pet. 4:2). We give our members as weapons to the service of sin (Rom. 6:15). We are self-affirming, anti-God, tower of Babel builders, driven by pride, autonomy, and paranoia (Gen. 11:1-9).

We are all dead in sins and trespasses and are children of wrath (Eph. 2:1-2), until God graciously regenerates us and makes us true Christians (John 3:5). Only then are we set apart from the rest of mankind, called out of this sinful world to become a living member of the church and kingdom of God. Regeneration, or the new birth, divides the world into the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Those kingdoms always live in holy war with each other. They live in antithesis

rather than synthesis with each other.

The world is one of the three major enemies of the Christian. The other two enemies are the devil and the flesh. All three enemies work together to oppose God and God's people. If you are a true Christian, then you are at war with these enemies.

The devil is the supreme agent of evil, "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). He is the ultimate enemy of God and of the Christian, but he rarely attacks the believer directly. Instead, the devil works through the allurements of the world. First John 5:19 says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," that is, in the grip of the evil one, Satan. This present evil world of people and things is under his sway and influence, with the sovereign permission of God. The world is a major weapon that the devil uses against believers.

We must not look at the evil world as something separate from the devil. We must learn to recognize that he is behind the scenes controlling the strings of all his subjects, just as a puppeteer controls his puppets. So he tries to control you and your actions as well.

We need to acknowledge that the world still has an attraction for the Christian. This is due to remaining sin in the believer, which the Bible calls the flesh. So then, while you must keep yourself "unspotted from the world," as James says, you must keep in mind that the sinful flesh is in league with the world. That is why isolation from the world, as was practiced by monks and mystics, does not keep you from sin. The truth is that we who are believers carry around a piece of the world within us. Just like the world, the flesh is completely opposed to God. As a Christian the part of you called the flesh is in agreement with the world and loves the world.

With the world, the devil, and the flesh against you, is there any hope for victory? Absolutely, for the victory was won when Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and rose again from the dead. In John 15:19 Jesus said, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." Because of His victorious death, and through faith in Him, you, dear believer, have been plucked from the kingdom of this world, and now belong to Christ and the kingdom of heaven. You were once a part of this world. You were born into it. But through Jesus Christ, you have

overcome the so-called evil trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil. First John 2:13 says, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one."

In 1 John 5:4 we read, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." In Christ, by the Spirit's grace, you have overcome the world, but you must also fight a daily battle against the threefold temptations of the world. John says that there are three paths along which we are pulled into the ways of the world: (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life. Every one of us is drawn into the world by one or more of these three avenues, as I'll show in our second thought.

II. The paths of worldliness

John becomes very specific in verse 16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." We must be specific, too, as we admonish one another of those evils from which we must separate ourselves. We can group these specifics under the three major paths of worldliness that John sets before us.

First, John warns against "the lust of the flesh." Love not a world, he warns, that delights in the lusts of the flesh.

Dear congregation, John's prohibition calls us to resist many temptations. We must never indulge in substance abuse, whether in the form of drugs or excessive drinking of alcohol. We must not overeat either. The Bible warns repeatedly against gluttony and drunkenness. We must discipline ourselves to control what enters our body, for it is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Young people, don't befriend those who tempt you to drink or do drugs with them. Older friends, don't let your body and health degenerate because of a lack of diligence and discipline over what you eat. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

The prohibition against fleshly lusting also forbids sexual immorality in all its forms, whether in premarital, extramarital, or homosexual relationships. It forbids any physical intimacy outside the boundaries of marriage. God has wisely and lovingly placed sexual expression within the special, secure bond of marriage.

Premarital sex lacks the purity, exclusiveness, and permanence God intended sexuality to represent. Here too, gracious self-restraint is needed. Young people, make a commitment with those you court or date, that you will preserve each other's bodies for the beauty and fulfillment of marriage. Don't break God's command by sinning against your own body. Deny yourself and seek the best for the one you love. Remember, true love does not harm or lead another into sin. In this context, to say "no" is to truly love. If any of you are presently engaged in unlawful sexual activity, I warn you to cease immediately, repent of your sin, and turn to God for mercy.

We must also avoid provoking lust with our appearance and dress. Men and women must dress modestly, Fashions exposing or accentuating the shame of our nakedness offend the Lord and arouse fleshly lusts. God reckons the sin of lusting to the account of those who promote it as well as those who engage directly in it.

Worldly parties, unedifying entertainment, night clubs, and dancing excite the lusts of the flesh. Love not this world, John warns.

That includes worldly music. Hard rock, soft rock, Christian contemporary music, and many other forms of music today, explicitly by their lyrics or implicitly by their beat, promote the lusts of the flesh. We need to ask of all the music we listen to: Can I pray over this music? Does this music glorify God or ignite fleshly lusts? If it facilitates lust, destroy it. Rid yourself of every CD, every piece of music that leads you away from God. Don't love this present, evil world.

Second, John warns against the "lust of the eyes." He warns not to love a world that delights in the lusts of the eyes.

How active Satan is today to engage our eyes, particularly through tempting us to indulge in various forms of sinful and worldly entertainment. Just as he approached our first parents to tempt them to believe that their Creator was a hard, legalistic God, so he approaches us, and particularly you, young people, whispering, "Has God said that you cannot eat from all the trees of modern entertainment? Has He said, 'You can't watch immoral movies or engage in any activity that tempts your eyes to lust'? Doesn't He want you to live a boring life, like David who · confessed in Psalm 101, 'I will set no wicked thing before mine

eyes'?--and so, isn't He a hard, legalistic God?"

Then Satan whispers, "If you just watch this one immoral movie, you shall not die. You will be enlightened; you'll be in the know. You'll be able to speak with your peers as they discuss the latest movie. Remember, if you don't participate, you will miss the fun and excitement others have. Besides, everyone is going to these movies anyhow. Go ahead, eat this fruit; you will surely live, you shall not die. Try it once and see for yourself. Do you always want to stay under the thumb of your parents, or the church? Aren't you old enough to decide for yourself what is right and wrong? You can shake off the evil, can't you? Take charge of your own life now-go ahead, let your eyes lust just once. Be your own god; determine good and evil for yourself!"

Satan has been using such approaches for thousands of years. He still goes about as a roaring lion, seeking to devour you through your eye-gate. He knows his time is short, so he will do anything to move people to look with lust in their eyes at bad fruit hanging on the tree of forbidden entertainment-any evil fruit that looks pleasant to the eyes and is desired to make one wise in this world. Perhaps he'll even use a friend to entice you, as he used Eve to tempt Adam. Satan is a master at hiding himself under the cloak of friendship.

How many have fallen prey to Satan's temptations to attend the theatre to indulge in the lusting of the eye. He whispers: "This movie isn't so bad. It has a G or PG rating. You can't always be saying no to everyone. Don't be so righteous overmuch." Then, as you slide down the slippery slope of ungodly entertainment that Satan seeks to lead you a step at a time, your conscience gradually becomes desensitized to sin.

Young people, Satan is always fishing to hook your soul on his bait. He baits his hook with lusts of the eye, but hides his hook. How many of you have become hooked on his entertainment bait-watching films that involve every imaginable sin. Some of you are hooked on watching scenes of violence, or fornication. Disrespect for authority, profanity, lying, theft, and mockery of God's institutions scarcely phase you as you watch iniquity played out before your eyes. Oh, what poisonous, forbidden fruit this is!

Today Satan is making such fruit even more tempting by bringing it into the

home. Especially to our people, he whispers, "You don't have to stand in line at the theatre feeling guilty anymore, hoping no one will see you." Instead, he provides entertainment films, as bad or worse than those at the theatre in video format or on the Internet, so that you can watch them in the privacy and comfort of your own home. Video rental stores have sprung up all over our city and country. Dear congregation, let us not love the world. Let us draw a clear line here. Let us say "no" to all video and Internet use for entertainment purposes that will indulge the lust of the eyes.

Entertainment movies, videos, and Internet pornography represent a powerful multi-million dollar industry intent on glamorizing sin. Fornication is made to appear innocent, commonplace, and exciting. Murder is portrayed as thrilling and manly. Profanity is presented as normal, emphatic speech.

Let us not trust our own strength; we overestimate ourselves if we think we can glean good out of entertainment that embraces sin. None of us have advanced spiritually as far as the apostle Paul. Even he had to complain against himself, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:18-19).

The same principles apply to television. The vast bulk of television shows are productions of an anti-Christian nature. They are positively harmful to our spiritual life and growth. Like David, let us not love the world, but make a covenant with our eyes that we will set no wicked thing before us. Let us dispense also with all wicked magazines, trashy love novels, and profane books-yes, with all printed and visual material that contradicts the Ten Commandments.

How can we pray not to be led into temptation while continuing to play with the fire of temptation? James warns us that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15).

Flee the lusts of the eye. Strive for self-denial. Follow Paul who said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not

provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14).

Finally, John warns against "the pride of life." How prevalent such pride is in our hearts by nature! George Swinnock said, "Pride is the first shirt we put on in Paradise and the last we shall take off when we die." Pride of life can include:

1. *Pride of myself and my own accomplishments.* Pride of life is at the root of our humanistic hearts. We are filled, by nature, with self-gratification, self-contentment, and self-fulfilment. We want to be ruler and controller of our own destiny. We live for ourselves, exalting our own wisdom and accomplishments.

2. *Pride of false religions.* All religions in the world that challenge Scripture, teaching that man must do or accomplish something in his own strength to find favor with God, are false and proud religions. That includes those who adhere to some form of free-will Christianity. To assert that fallen, depraved man can do anything contributory to his salvation, oozes with pride.

3. *Pride in challenging the governing providence of God.* That includes the traditional sects such as Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as Masonry or secret lodges. It embraces all customs and practices related to the New Age Movement and transcendental meditation. All practices related to the occult, such as fortune-telling, consulting horoscopes, ouija boards, and palm-reading are also rooted in the pride of life. All unbiblical attempts to destroy life through artificial birth control, abortion, or euthanasia also attempt to usurp the power of divine providence.

4. *Pride in idolizing movie actors, sports heroes, government leaders, or other popular figures in church or society.* John condemns all human idolization as the pride of life.

5. *Pride in materialism.* The love of money lies at the heart of the pride of life. Loving our possessions-such as our homes or cars or clothing more than God is idolatrous pride of life; it feeds our quest for pleasure and gratification. It provides status symbols. Dishonesty in business, tax evasion, or other illegal ways of increasing personal wealth also serve the pride of life. All covetousness or inordinate desires to become rich and increased with goods at the expense of our

own and our family's spiritual welfare is rooted in pride. Pride of life is served by gambling, lotteries, and all that results in lack of stewardship in which our firstfruits must be given to the Lord.

6. *Pride in desecration of the Lord's Day and neglect of worship services.* How proud must we be to think that we don't need one day in seven to exclusively worship the Lord and that we don't need weekly spiritual food in His house to nurture us for the coming week!

Dear friends, I trust that enough has been said to show that nearly any predominant sin can be classified under one or more of these three broad paths and vivid descriptions of worldliness: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Which path are you most prone to walk down? Do you engage in holy warfare against all three of these paths? Do you walk a separate lifestyle from the world? Are you a pilgrim and stranger on the earth? My people "shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations," God says in Numbers 23:9. Can that be said of you? Do you love the Father or do you love the world?

Eternal consequences hinge upon your answers to these questions. John goes on to say, such worldliness is accursed of God, for "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (v. 17). That's the second reason John provides us for not loving the world.

III. The curse of worldliness

The world's best pleasures are but temporary. The world is our passage, not our portion. You and I have a unilateral appointment with death, made by God Himself. Our death-date is on His calendar. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27 says. You and I have no escape from death. Death knows no bail, no parole.

The world will one day be burnt up, together with all its lusts and devotees. Fill your life with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and what have you acquired? A worldly life that will end in eternal hell.

All these lusts for which people have sold their bodies and souls, ruined their families, and stained their own reputations-what do they have when these lusts are passed away? Nothing but a gnawing worm-a worm that can never die, and the

wrath of God as an unquenchable fire. That is all that the love of the world can do for you, despite all your hard work, your daily anxiety, and your pursuit of pleasure. Spurgeon said, "If you had got all the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin was screwed down but grave dust in your mouth."

Such is the end of the world. You too, my friend, you shall die and meet God. And what then? Are you prepared? Do you love the Father or do you love the world? The world passes away, together with all its lusts. Death is the final extinguisher of all human hopes and pleasures.

Oh, that I could persuade everyone of you that the world is temporary, vain, unworthy of your time and attention! The world never gives what it promises. It is a gigantic mirage, a tragic fraud, a hollow bubble. The world lacks substance.

John Trapp wrote, "Pleasure, profit, and preferment are the worldling's trinity." Long ago, Solomon discovered all three to be vanity. Read Ecclesiastes carefully, friends. Then you will understand why John Bunyan called the world Vanity Fair. No wonder James states: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (4:4).

Thank God there is a cure for worldliness. Let's consider that in our last thought after we sing.

APPLICATION

IV. The deliverance from worldliness

God's deliverance of His people from worldliness can be broken down into three thoughts: initial deliverance, continual deliverance, and perfected deliverance. Let's look at each of these briefly.

Initial Deliverance

In every true work of grace in the heart of a sinner, there is without exception a fundamental and radical deliverance from attachment to the world and a pattern of worldliness. In other words, the umbilical cord that tied us to the womb of our native worldliness is cut when we are born into the kingdom of God. If our life support system is still one that flows from the womb of the world, no matter how much you know about Christ or are found among His people, you are still a

worldling. If your heart is still in the world, you are like Lot's wife, notwithstanding the fact that you appear to have left Sodom. You are yet in a state of wrath and condemnation.

Why is this so? For two important reasons. First, because Christ died with the express intention of cutting the umbilical cord between the saved sinner and the world. Galatians 1:4 says that Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." What the Father purposes, the Son purchases. Christ didn't just come as a substitute for His people to deliver them from eternal condemnation, great as that is, but it was the Father's will that He would also come to deliver them from this present evil world. All the beatings and spittings that He bore, the shame of His nakedness, the shrouded heavens and His cry of dereliction, serve to His seeing the travail of His soul and being satisfied because He gave Himself for the sins of those whom He determined, in the application of that salvation, would be wrenched out of this present evil world and be brought into the kingdom of God and into the possession of the forgiveness of their sins.

Second, because the Holy Spirit makes the Father and Son's intention efficacious in the application of the saving virtue of the death of Christ. Paul says in Galatians 6:14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Paul is saying that the cross of Jesus Christ was so powerful to me, by the applying work of the Spirit, that it made the world as undesirable to me as a crucified Roman felon. The world not only lost its fair colors, but became positively homely to Paul.

But Paul also adds that he died to the world. Before Paul came to a Spirit-wrought understanding of who Jesus of Nazareth was and the significance of the cross, he was the favored son of an entire segment of Judaism. He was the rising star of Pharasaic Judaism. He was Gamaliel's prize pupil. Paul said that he outstripped all his peers in zeal for that arrogant world of Judaism. In that context, Paul was a worldling. Not that he abandoned himself to the standards of the dishonest and cheating men of this world-for, as touching the externals of the law, he was blameless. But he lived for the pride of life in his growing stature among the Pharisees.

When Paul's eyes were opened on his Damascus journey to see that he was persecuting the Lord of glory, he immediately cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Paul felt: If Jesus is God, and He has arrested me in His grace, then I have been a fool all my life. Soon the stupendous beauty of Christ's cross conquered Paul fully, so that he now only had an eye and a heart for Christ and His glory. Paul was then not only crucified to his world of Judaism, but the Judaizers now thought of him in a parallel manner as he thought of them. Paul was saying: "When I saw my own wretched, hell-deserving heart as a seething caldron of all kinds of sin and wickedness, and I cast all my guilt and bondage upon the crucified Savior and I found forgiveness and life in Him, and I declared boldly in the synagogue that Jesus is truly the Son of God, suddenly I was no more attractive to the Judaistic world than that Judaistic world now was to me. The world was crucified to me and I to the world. I began to live by a new set of standards. I began to live my life under the pressure of goals and longings that made me despicable in the eyes of the respected Jew."

Paul experienced a cleavage that went in both directions. That cleavage is still experienced today when God converts a sinner. That's why Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

What about you, my friend? Has the beauty of Christ ever de-beautified the world to you and you to the world? Has the crucified Christ caused the world to be crucified to you? Has the love of the Father in Christ conquered within you the love of the world so that the world no longer has dominion over you?

Or do you still willingly cling to this world? Is the world to you still something handsome and attractive? Does the stroke of the world's hand still move you? Do the world's institutions and goals, its opinions and principles, its entertainment and speech still hold sway in your heart? Do you love the world more than the church? Then you love Satan more than God, and you are still under the power of the prince of this world. The cross of Christ has never been efficaciously applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit. No sinner ever received forgiveness of sin rooted in the virtue of the cross of Christ who did not have the world crucified to him.

Scripture says plainly they that are Christ's "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

No true child of God lives dominated by the threefold cord-Satan, flesh, and the world-by which sinners are bound to the world. John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"-i.e. if there is a basic, predominant, undisturbed attachment of love to the world, God's love is not in us and we do not love God. John does not say that the love of the Father is hidden or temporarily squelched, but that that love does not exist. The term carnal Christian is a heretical oxymoron; no true Christian is fundamentally carnal.

You and I are either Christians or worldlings. If we're Christians, we are of course imperfect Christians. We're not talking now about the struggles with remaining affinities or certain aspects of the world and its pleasures that may retain some allurements to the believer. That struggle will continue until our last breath. Nevertheless, a Christian is not a worldling. The world has been crucified to us and we to the world. Our goal in life is no longer to live under the dominion of the lust of the flesh (merely enjoying things), the lust of the eye (merely having things), and the pride of life (merely being someone).

On the other hand, if that which sets our standards, makes us tick, draws out our energy, and excites our emotions, habitually has to do with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, the love of the Father is not in us. You have never known the effectual application of the death of Christ to your soul. You are still entrapped in the womb of this present, evil world. You are still marching to the beat of this world's drum. Your citizenship is still on this earth.

But if we are true Christians, we have a transplanted citizenship in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we await the coming of our Lord. The rules that govern us originate from where our citizenship is, and we will live by the rule and law of heaven. We do not live for this present age but for the age to come. We are pilgrims and sojourners. We have here no abiding place but we look for a city to come. Above all, we look for the King who sits enthroned in majesty and splendor and glory, for the Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.

Continued Deliverance

God's gracious deliverance works itself out continually in the believer's life. In the initial implantation of grace, the dominion of sin and the world are broken. They no longer reign though they remain. They are no longer president of the soul though they are yet resident in the soul. Sin still finds expression in the remnants of worldliness that cling to the born-again believer. The desire to have the approval of those who are living worldly--who are living by the standards and goals of the world-is not altogether dead. Believers are still tempted to conform to the world's standards-be it out of peer pressure, or for economic advancement. We are tempted to have our yea be not quite fully yea in a business deal, or our yea may not quite be fully yea in our personal relationships when we may incur the frown of a worldling. How is this deliverance to be continually wrought in us when we are still so prone to compromise both our yea and our nay?

Only by *doing* the will of God, John tells us (v. 17c). But what does that involve?

We must believe that it is crucial to fight against worldliness. If you're not convinced that you must fight against it with all your being, you will seldom make any headway. James 1:27 says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The purity of our religion is in direct proportion to our commitment that we shall not allow one stain of the world to be placed upon the garments of the imparted righteousness that God has graciously granted me in His regenerating work.

James uses such vivid, antithetical language. James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." He says that such people are guilty of spiritual adultery. James uses strong language because Christ died as the heavenly Bridegroom to have a chaste and spotless bride whose heart is wholly His. When you flirt with the world, you're guilty of spiritual adultery.

Teenagers, do some of you say: "I know that some of the standards in dress and modern fashion reflect a lifestyle that is not biblical, but I can't bear being out of step with the latest styles around me. I must be the world's friend." But at what

price, my friend? At the price of being an enemy of God?

Or perhaps you say, "I know that the lyrics of the music I listen to are sinful and hellish, but I don't concentrate on the lyrics. Besides, if I don't know the latest hits and the latest groups, I'll look like a fool. I know too that the music is filled with repetitive noise that is born of hell where there is no order and beauty and symmetry, but my friends would mock me if I didn't listen to just enough to be able to be with it." At the expense of being an enemy of God?

Do you want pure religion with a pure conscience? Then you must, in dependence upon God, do the will of God by fighting to remain unspotted from the world. If I would have my heart be kept as a chaste virgin to Christ, as Paul puts, I must not let the world's smiles or frowns cause me to alter my standards, change my goals, or shape what I am convinced from the Word of God are the standards for personal dress and the usage of modern entertainment. Are you jealous to retain a virgin's heart for your blessed Savior? Let us dare, friends, to be Daniels in Babylon.

We must use every God-ordained means to conquer worldliness. Use especially the Word of God. Listen repeatedly to sermons. Saturate yourself with Scripture. Meditate on the Word of God. Read good books that can make you wise to salvation. Pray without ceasing. Fellowship with believers. Sanctify the Lord's Day. Consider keeping a spiritual journal. Evangelize and serve others. Be a good steward of your time and your money.

Dear young people, the world is seeking to squeeze you into its mold, its standards, its perspectives, its values. All the media shout at you, as do some of your peers, to live for this present, evil world. You cannot counter that onslaught without immersing yourself in the Word of God. How can you be the blessed man of Psalm 1 who meditates on the Word of God day and night if you seldom spend time with the Scriptures? Ask for grace to search, know, pray over, love, and live the Word of God.

We must continually trust our great High Priest and His Spirit. At times when the power of the world seems to invade my soul again, what comfort there is in remembering that our great High Priest prayed, "Father, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world [here world is used in the sense of this earth),

but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). Blessed be God that at times when every visible defense seems to be down and we are vulnerable to yielding to the foul power of the enemy of our souls, our deliverance is traceable only to the intercession of Jesus Christ and the preserving power of His Spirit. Then we cry out afterwards, “Dear Savior, were it not for Thy intercession, and blessed Spirit, for Thy preservation, in the hour of temptation, I would have been swept into evil.”

Spurgeon put it this way: “I thank God that when temptation is present, He removes my desire, and when desire to sin is present, He removes the temptation.” That, friends, is always the gracious fruit of Jesus Christ who promises His Peters that He will pray for them in the hour of temptation that their faith will not fail (Luke 22:32).

Perfected Deliverance

Finally, dear believers, our gracious deliverance will be perfected and consummated in the age to come, which, says John, “abideth forever!” This age is the age where worldliness is part of the burden of the overlapping of the ages. Heaven is in our hearts and in our deepest affections, dear believer, and yet the world and the devil are still at our elbow and too often penetrate our mind. But thank God that in the age to come, nothing but righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth. This *kosmos*, this *aion*, under the curse of God and the prince of the power of the air, will be no more. Satan and all his will be banished to eternal perdition. And the people of God will shine in the firmament of God's redemptive glory.

In conclusion, we all face the danger of being a present-day Demas in the midst of the world. “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,” Paul lamented (2 Tim. 4:10). Demas prayed and labored with Paul. He witnessed Paul's yearnings after his fellow country men. He saw the tears of Paul staining the parchments when the apostle wrote his pastoral letters. At one point, Paul even called him: “Demas, my fellow-worker.”

Demas forsook the godly apostle who was crucified to the world. What caused Demas to abandon Paul and everything that he stood for? The world bewitched him! Dear friends, beware of anything that has its tap roots in this world's standard

of success. We must die to our success standards.

Who among us will forsake the truth, having loved this present evil world? Beware of the danger of this world.

Only one thing matters: Jesus drawing near with His Word and the kisses of His own presence. Then, and may God fulfil it in us, the world will lie at our feet as dead and we dead to the world. AMEN.