

The Challenge of Worldliness

Introduction

- I. Life has its warning systems: announcements to keep us safe and protected.
 - a. We have sirens for tornados, smoke detectors and fire alarms. We have security systems for our homes. Our cars have alarms that ring continually if the seat belt is not fastened.

- II. To ignore the warnings and alarms when they sound is to risk great danger.

- III. In 1984 an Avianca Airlines jet crashed in Spain. Investigators studying the accident made an eerie discovery. The cockpit recorder revealed that several minutes before impact a loud, computer-synthesized voice came from the plane's automatic warning system repeatedly saying, "Pull up! Pull up!" The pilot thought the system was malfunctioning, and switched the system off. Minutes later the jet crashed into the side of a mountain killing everyone on board.

- IV. God has given us a warning system through His Word.
 - a. Tonight we're doing to consider a warning that is given several times through the NT.

 - b. What's the warning: "Beware the World." Notice three strong warnings God gives us about the world:
 - i. "Do not be conformed to this world..." Rom. 12:2
 - ii. "A friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God..." Jas. 4:4
 - iii. "Do not love the world..." 1 John 2:15

 - c. These verses are clear. They strictly forbid worldliness.

- V. What is the world we are warned against?
 - a. It's not nature. It's not the globe – planet earth.

 - b. The world is "the organized system of man that is actively rebelling against God." It is the thinking, the planning, speaking, living of man that is against God.

- VI. These verses make us uncomfortable for a few reasons:
 - a. **Sparks a lot of questions:**
 - i. Do I have to give up my favorite TV shows/movies? Is it ok to watch a movie as long as I fast-forward through the racy scene? Is the music I listen to worldly? Do I spend too much time on my phone, computer, checking facebook, watching youtube? Is it ok for a Christian to drive a nice car, have a nice house, and go on vacations? What about the way I dress? Can I wear the latest fashions?

ii. Many of us have these types of questions.

b. Might Have to Change our Lifestyle

i. Many Christians feel that the preacher is invading their personal space. We're afraid we'll have to leave and make changes to a lifestyle we've grown comfortable with

c. But brethren, the warning has been sounded: beware the world. Do not get caught up, overtaken, led astray by the world.

VII. Before you think...eh this isn't something I have to worry about....this isn't a big deal – consider Demas.

a. He was a travel companion of the Apostle Paul.

b. He stood by Paul – likely at great risk – when Paul was arrested.

c. We read of Demas sending greetings to the church in Colossae and to Philemon.

d. We would see him as a solid great Christian today. A man we'd want serving in our local congregation.

VIII. Yet Paul writes: "Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me..." 2 Tim. 4:10

a. What a tragedy! A life lasted. An influence ruined. A soul lost – because not only did he desert Paul, he deserted the Lord.

b. He left the Lord for the passing pleasures of the world.

IX. What happened?

a. What seems clear is that Demas' leaving the Lord wasn't immediate. He didn't go from being a faithful follower to a deserter in one day.

b. His life doesn't demonstrate that. No, instead Demas **drifted**.

c. It was a gradual weakening, a subtle contaminating, and an eventual conforming to the world.

d. Demas is an example to us that we can be ignorant of the signs, the symptoms of worldliness.

e. People can be attending church, singing the songs, hearing the sermons – appearing on the outside no different than they've always been.

f. But inside, that person is drifting. He sits in the church but is not there. She sings songs without affection. He listens to preaching but doesn't apply what the Bible teaches. He is no longer excited about serving God. She's no longer bothered by her sins.

X. Some try to keep the world at an arms length. I'm not doing what everyone else is. The boundary between God and the world is clear.

a. But as the world continues to grow worse and worse, instead of taking steps closer to God, more like God, we're drifting slowly and slowly, at an arms length from the world – yet further and further from God.

XI. Are you drifting? Look at your life. Look at your choices.

a. Are you taking steps closer and closer to God – or are you drifting further away from God – closer and closer to the world?

b. It seems to me that the greatest threat in the Lord's church is not persecution from the world, but seduction.

So what are we to do? I'd like for us tonight to consider the warnings God gives us about the world, and then the answer to these warnings.

Do Not Be Conformed (Romans 12:2)

- I. Paul says we are not to conform – that is we are not to live like the world.
 - a. We like to fit in. We don't like to call attention to ourselves, to be different.
 - b. To conform means to take the form of, just like an ice tray. It carries the idea of being molded – molded by the world.
 - c. Think like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, we live no differently than the world around us.
- II. It brings about a great question: are the lines between Christian and worldly conduct blurry in your mind – or in your life? Is your lifestyle obviously different from that of the non-Christian?
 - a. Image I take a blind test in which my job is to identify the authentic, true follower of Jesus Christ. My choices are you (Christian) and your unbelieving co-worker.
 - b. I'm given detailed reports showing conversations, internet activity, manner of dress, ipod playlist, television habits, hobbies, financial transactions.
 - c. The question is, would I be able to tell you apart? Would I be able to tell a difference between you and your unbelieving neighbor, coworker, classmate, or friend?
 - d. Have the lines between Christian and worldly conduct in your life become so impossible to tell apart that there is really no difference at all?
- III. Paul gives the answer here: do not be conformed, but be **transformed**. It's the idea of change.

4 [CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH – LESSON 6]

- a. Our kids understand the concept of transformers. They are robots that change into cars, planes, trains, and other things. They started as a robot and the changed into something new.
- b. Here Paul is describing a change in us – the change from living and thinking like the world, to living and thinking like Christ.
- c. We are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:7). We died to the old way of sin, and are now living in obedience to Christ – all that I am belongs to Him. It is new – new in the way we speak, think, live.

IV. Notice Paul says – do not be conformed but be transformed.

- a. When we talk about this subject, we tend to focus on not conforming to the world – don't smoke, don't drink, don't curse – don't be like the world, don't do those things! And that's right.
- b. But remember our goal is not to keep the world at an arms length, but to seek after God. We are not just to not conform, but we are to live transformed.
- c. God is just as concerned with what we do, as what we don't do. Paul would go on to mention things like:
 - i. Love one another sincerely, put other people first, keep your spiritual fervor burning brightly, maintain your hope no matter how dark things get, be patient in the midst of affliction, be faithful in prayer, share with God's people, be hospitable with everyone.
- d. How are you doing with that list? Not conforming but transforming means that not only am I striving against sin, but I am daily trying to be more and more like Jesus.
- e. God has called us to live a life different and distinct, abnormal from what is around us –
 - i. normal is getting revenge on those who do you wrong. Abnormal is praying for them and blessing them.
 - ii. Normal is leaving a spouse when your needs aren't getting met. Abnormal is hanging in there, keeping your commitments, and being the mate you promised you'd be.
 - iii. Normal is waiting to be served. Abnormal is taking the lead and serving others

1 Pet. 1:15-16 – called to be holy, called to be like God – separate, unique, distinct.

Do Not Befriend the World (Jas. 4:4)

- I. Friendship carries the idea of closeness, familiarity, and loyalty.
 - a. It is asking the question, "Where does your allegiance lie?" Who do you look to for help, for guidance, for deep connected companionship?
 - b. I'm sure we remember the passage from Paul – "Bad company corrupts good morals." 1 Cor. 15:33
- II. Friendship implies growing comfortable.

- a. Friends have common interests. Friendship requires time, attention. Friends are loyal to one another – stick up for one another.
- b. We are not to be friends with the world.
- c. The world wants us to be like it – to conform to their mold – to think, speak, and act like them – a lifestyle opposed to God.
- d. The friend of the world is an enemy of God. It was much like Lot, fighting off the influence of the world around him (2 Peter 2:7-8).
- e. Why did Lot not give in? He remembered who he was – he belonged to God.

III. I don't belong down here. I am Christ's – I belong to God

- a. This means the world does not determine my standards, where my time is spent, where my priorities lie.
- b. God comes first, my allegiance belongs to Him.

IV. Now obviously I'm not saying that you need to avoid those who are not Christians like the plague.

- a. I'm not saying we need to move to a Christian colony.
- b. Jesus spent time with sinful people (Matt. 9:11-13) – He saw them as sick, needing a physician.
 - i. How are we to influence the world with the light of the gospel if we are never around the world – if they never see the light?
 - ii. The answer is not isolation.
 - iii. Nor is the answer to become friends with the world – to give them my allegiance, my time, my priority.

V. I need to remember that while I am here – I belong to God.

- a. John 17:16 – in the world, not of the world.
- b. I am here – and while I am here I recognize my responsibilities. I will love my neighbor and care for them.
- c. I will obey the law of the land as long as it does not break the law of God (Matt. 22:21) – I will render to God – my allegiance belongs to God.

VI. I belong to heaven – Phil. 3:18-21 – the enemies of the cross set their mind on earthly things – but we belong to heaven.

- a. We are citizens of heaven – we need to live that way. Though we are here, we belong in heaven – and our lives must reflect this.

VII. What is the answer to this warning – do not befriend the world?

- a. Be a friend of God. Abraham was called a friend of God (Jas. 2:23). Jesus said we are His friends if we do what He commands (Jn. 15:14).

- b. Remember who you are – you belong to God, you belong to heaven, and your allegiance belongs to God. To Christ be loyal and be true.

Do Not Love the World (1 John 2:15-17)

- I. After highlighting the godless things of the world John shows how there are ultimately worthless because they simply do not last – they pass away (world is passing away...)

- II. What's the point? Don't waste your life pursuing the things which don't last.
 - a. There's no future in worldliness. None. This world is temporary, and superficial – and does not satisfy.

 - b. The world sparkles, and dazzles but never delivers as advertised. A moment of pleasure and happiness is quickly replaced with emptiness and regret – caught in the snares of sin.

- III. Then we read of Moses in Heb.11:24-26 – he saw the reward of God as greater than the treasures of Egypt.
 - a. His aim was heaven, and that was reflected in the decisions he made – denying the Egyptian lifestyle, and choosing God.

 - b. That is the point Jesus makes in **Matt.** 6:19-21 – where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

 - c. Where your treasure/goal/aim in life is will be reflected by the decisions you make in this life – where your time is spent, your money is spent, your thoughts linger towards – where's your treasure?

- IV. Jesus asked a great question when He asked, “what will it profit a man if He gained the whole world, and lost His own soul.” **Mark 8:36**
 - a. If I got everything the world offers – all the fame, all the money, all the pleasure, but in so doing lost my soul – what good would that do?

 - b. It all would be vain, empty. If you've missed heaven, you've missed all there is.

V. Don't love the world. Where is your hope? What are you pursuing?

a. Story of man in Alaska – failed to consider the end of his trip – cost him his life.

b. How many today have failed to consider eternity – so caught up with the passing pleasures of this life.

c. Here's a sobering thought – everyone will spend eternity somewhere.

VI. How do we overcome the love of the world – we set our hope on heaven – not here (Col. 3:2).

a. My eyes are directed towards home, heaven – that's something my life will reflect. **This world is not my home**

VII. Do not conform to the world, do not befriend the world, do not love the world.

a. Do you see the warning? Don't be influenced by the world around you.

b. Don't be conformed. Be different – transformed – let the world see that in you – in your thoughts, in your words, in your dress.

c. Don't befriend the world – your allegiance belongs to God – God determines what you do, right and wrong, what is best for your life.

d. Do not love the world – put your hope on God, and the hope of a home with Him.

VIII. This is something which requires our determination brethren – our diligence.

a. **Gal. 6:14 NLT** – crucify the world, crucify self, making the commitment to overcome the world, and to seriously live for Christ.

IX. **Ending:** One of my favorite things to see is the videos of soldiers coming home. They surprise their family in different ways. To see the joy on their face because their loved one has come back home, and is with them, never to leave again.

a. Jesus is coming, beloved. It will be a surprise. Oh what a wonderful day that will be.

b. No more evil. No more pain. With our loved ones. With our Lord. 1 Thess. 4:17 – we will be with the Lord **always**.

c. You belong – I invited you – Jesus invites, He is coming to claim all who have accepted the invitation – those prepared. Will you come?