

UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

James 1:26-27

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** A few weeks ago we began a series of lessons with the general theme of “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - A. These lessons are designed to help Christians grow and be strong in the Lord (1 Pet. 2:2: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”).
 - B. We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 14:20); and even if we’ve been Christians for many years, we need to be reminded of these first principles (2 Pet. 3:1)
2. **3** Lesson #1: Christians must put first things first (Matt. 6:33).
3. In Lesson #2: need to strive for spiritual maturity (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
4. We must also realize we live in a world shot through and through with worldliness.
 - A. Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers facing the Lord’s church today.
 - B. Many have quit preaching on such topics of as worldliness and have actually begun to defend behavior the Bible specifically condemns as sinful...or “worldly” (e.g., gambling, immodest dress, social drinking, homosexuality).
 - C. Paul warned the Corinthians about returning to the world (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 - D. Consider James’s admonition concerning worldliness in **James 1:27**: “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*”
5. **4** Let’s study worldliness so we can identify it, avoid it, and remain unspotted from it.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **5** Understanding worldliness:
 - A. Thayer defines worldliness as:

******“Worldly affairs; the aggregate of things earthly; the whole circle of goods, endowments, advantages, pleasures, etc., which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ.”******
 - B. Worldliness is the over emphasis on things of this world. It is the sin of:
 - (1) Being too concerned about material possessions,
 - (2) Spending an inordinate amount of our time and energy in the pursuit of material things (Notice I didn’t say being rich is a sin!),
 - (3) A fascination with and desire to spend the majority of our time and energy in temporal interests.
 - C. Worldliness certainly includes immoral behavior that appeals purely to our fleshly man: drinking (even socially), drugs, fornication, pornography, dancing, foul language, dirty jokes, immodest dress, etc.
 - D. But, worldliness also includes things that are in and of themselves morally neutral, but they become “worldly” whenever they occupy more of our time and interest than serving God (e.g., work, recreation, entertainment, television, shopping, etc.).
 - E. Worldliness is deceiving! Like politicians it promises much, but delivers very little!

- (1) That sin provides pleasure is undeniable (Heb. 11:25), but it does not deliver what it promises (“*passing pleasures of sin*”).
- (2) Most people define happiness by their participation in, and enjoyment of, “worldly living” (e.g., grab all the gusto”, “it doesn’t get any better than this”).
- (3) Satan entices us with sin, but like a mirage in the desert, worldliness leads us on until it consumes us and kills us! **(Jas. 1:12-15:** “*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*”)

F. It’s important for us to recognize the dangers of worldliness! **Jas. 4:4:** “*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*”

2. **6** The Christian’s relationship with the world:

A. The Christian must not love the world (Jas. 4:4; **1 Jn. 2:15-17:** “*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*”).

- (1) Attitude makes all the difference. If we have the right attitude when we see the dangers of worldliness, we will not love it, nor be engrossed in its pursuits.
 - (a) Instead, we must have a deep, and insatiable love for truth and righteousness, appreciating their unsurpassed value (**Matt. 5:6:** “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*”; **Matt. 13:45-46:** “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*”).
 - (b) When it comes to truth and righteousness most do not truly “hunger and thirst,” otherwise they would want more than a “snack” and a “sip.”
 - (c) Hungering and thirsting for righteousness must be the primary motivating force in our life!
- (2) A correct attitude toward worldliness vs. truth and righteousness is essential for us to keep our priorities in the right order (Matt. 6:33).
 - (a) Requires a totally different mindset: **Col. 3:1-3:** “*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*”
 - (b) God is jealous, because He loves us! **Ex. 20:5:** “*For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...*”; Rom. 5:8
 - (c) If we truly meditate on what He has given us, surely we’ll appreciate our need to reject the world! **2 Pet. 1:3:** “*as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that*

through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”; Rom. 5:8).

- B. It's totally incompatible to be a faithful Christian and simultaneously be friendly with the world.
- (1) Friendship arises from common interests.
 - (2) Christians are going to have to make up their minds as to whose friend they want to be—God's or the world's (Jas. 4:4).
 - (3) Too many want to throw their arms around both the world and the Lord at the same time (**Matt. 6:24**: *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*).
 - (4) This does not mean we cannot have friends that are not Christians (1 Cor. 5:9-10), but refers to intimate acquaintance with worldly things and participation in worldly behavior (1 Cor. 15:33).
- C. The Christian must not conform to the world (**Rom. 12:1-2a**: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*).
- (1) Conforming is to be like the world, to fit into its mold, to act in harmony with it.
 - (2) Christians are to be different than the world, yet many are trying to be like the world! (**Phil. 2:15-16a**: *“that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life,”*)
 - (3) Many excuses are given for going along with the world:
 - (a) “Everybody is doing it!”
 - (b) “If it feels good I have the right to do it! Who are you to say otherwise?!”
 - (c) “I’m just trying to get along or fit in!”
 - (d) “It doesn’t hurt anyone!”
 - (e) “It’s really not so bad!”
 - (f) “Nobody at church will ever find out!”
 - (4) This is “situation ethics” type thinking, it’s wrong, but pervades many minds.
- D. The Christian must keep himself unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27).
- (1) How will Christ present the church? (**Eph. 5:27**: *“that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”*)
 - (2) If you worked for a very rich man and he loaned you his \$1 million Ferrari to drive and you brought it back covered with mud and with nicks and dings all over it what do you think he would say? What do you think he would do?
 - (3) If we blemish the church, we will not be part of the body presented to God! The church must remove, or purge out, those worldly members and not continue to fellowship them (1 Cor. 5:6-7, 11).

- (4) Lambs that were offered under the law of Moses had to be without blemish (Ex. 12:5), so must the Christian offer himself unto God without worldly blemishes.

E. Also, we must not allow the cares of this world to get in our way:

- (1) What happens when the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches take over our lives? (**Matt. 13:22**: “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”)
- (2) There is great danger in materialism! We must not covet after, nor trust riches, but trust in God and put Him first (**I Tim. 6:10**: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”; **I Tim. 6:17**: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”).
- (3) We need to remember **I Tim. 6:6-9**: “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”
- (4) Some, like the Pharaoh’s with their buried treasure, act as if they can take their things with them. Money can’t buy a home in heaven, but it certainly can keep you out!
- (5) There is nothing wrong with working hard for a living (**Psa. 128:2**: “When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.”).
 - (a) Work serves legitimate purposes and is required by God: **I Tim. 5:8**; **Eph. 4:28**: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”
 - (b) But, in the final analysis, even the most satisfying secular work will leave us “empty-handed”: **Eccl. 2:11**: “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”).
 - (c) So let’s be careful that we are not too busy making a living that we fail to make a life, that we fail to live for our family or for God.
- (6) We need to remember that we are strangers and pilgrims in this life, we are just passing through. Let us learn to travel light like a real pilgrim (**I Pet. 2:11**: “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,”).

3. **7** The world’s attitude toward the Christian:

- A. The Christian must be different from people of the world (**I Pet. 4:3-4**: “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”).
- (1) The people of the world hate us, because they hate the “light” of truth; thus, they will speak evil of us and even persecute us:
I Jn. 3:13: “Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.”

Jn. 3:19-21: “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

- (2) They will think we are “strange,” we are “religious nuts,” we are fanatics.
- (3) People you thought were your friends will turn on you; you will become a social outcast for the most part.
- (4) Standing for the truth will even get you criticism from people claiming to be Christians! Even from some of our brethren! (recall *What Saith the Scriptures?*)

B. Thus, as Christians we should expect ridicule, scorn, and mockery and be ready for it (**Jn. 15:20:** “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...”).

- (1) Don’t be surprised if you become a social outcast from your worldly friends.
- (2) We can’t allow such pressure to make us try to live with one foot in the world and one in the church; can’t play both sides of the fence! (i.e., conformity; Jas. 4:4; Lk. 9:62; Matt. 10:37).
- (3) The world will try to pressure us to do as they do so their consciences might be pacified. But, let us never compromise our faith! 2 Tim. 4:10

4. **8** True joy is in Christianity, not worldliness:

A. God knows better than we do how to best enjoy life (Eccl. 7:29; Gen. 3).

- (1) Jesus came not only to get us to heaven, but to teach us how to enjoy life, how to find true fulfillment (Jn. 10:10).
- (2) Many view God as sitting in heaven constantly searching for people having fun so He can say, “Cut that out!”
- (3) God’s commandments were not given to keep us from having fun! **1 Jn. 5:3:** “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

B. God is not a petty tyrant who wants to order us around to build up His ego. Three characteristics of His commands make that plain:

- (1) First, His commands are always possible: God has never asked the unreachable.

Psa. 103:13-14: “As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. 14 For He knows our frame [“how we were formed”; NIV]; He remembers that we are dust.”

- (a) Moreover, He is with us in all that He asks of us.
- (b) If we’ll do His will, God will provide the way (1 Cor. 10:13; **Heb. 13:20-21:** “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”).

- (2) Secondly, His commands are always understandable:

- (a) Adam and Eve did not obey the command of God but they fully understood it (Genesis 3:2-3: Eve repeated God's command to the serpent!).
 - (b) We comprehend human speech (i.e., words) and learn and do great things! Our whole educational system depends on this principle!
 - (c) Why should that principle be any less powerful when the words come from God's mouth? **Psa. 119:130:** *"The entrance of your words gives light. It gives understanding to the simple."*; **Isa. 35:8:** *"The Holy Highway" No evil man can walk upon it God will walk there with you; even the most stupid cannot miss the way."*
- (3) Third, His commands are always gracious:
- (a) God has never given a single command for His own advantage (**Jas. 1:17:** *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."*).
 - (b) All is for our sake and for our good (**Deut. 10:13:** *"...keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"*; **Ezek. 33:11:** *"As I live," says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die...'"*).
- C. Contrary to what many think, you can have tons of fun without participating in sin!
- (1) Make not mistake! Sin can be fun! Heb. 11:25
 - (2) But in the end, sin always brings heartache! Just look at all the problems in the world! Temporal and eternal consequences! **Jas. 1:15:** *"..and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."*; Rom. 6:23
- Rev. 22:14-15:** *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie."*; Acts 23:1
- D. God's knows better than us; He knows sin ensnares, enslaves, and destroys! 1 Jn. 5:3
- (1) Sin takes you further than you wanted to go; keeps you longer than you wanted to stay; and makes you pay more than you wanted to pay!
 - (2) At best, sin's pleasure is only *"for a season,"* while Christianity is enduring (**1 Tim. 4:7-8:** *"...exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."*; **1 Tim. 6:6:** *"Now godliness with contentment is great gain."*; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).
 - (3) Every commandment and precept from Him is in our best interest!
- E. What truly defines you? What is your life all about?
- (1) Solomon's searched for the meaning of life; he tried everything *"under the sun"* and the temporal things of this life couldn't fully satisfy.
 - (2) He learned a life without God (Christ) as its center is *"vanity"*; so don't be fooled by the world! It offers much, but it can't deliver it!
- Eccl. 12:13-14:** *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."*

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. Life is really quite simple...there are two choices...God or the World.
2. But, our choices have consequences, temporal and eternal.
 - (a) If we choose worldliness we will enjoy only *“the pleasures of sin for a season”* (Heb. 11:25), but we will reap *“indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish”* (Rom. 2:8-9).
 - (b) If we choose rather *“to suffer affliction with the people of God”* (Heb. 11:25) we *“will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him”* (Jas. 1:12).
3. Which have you chosen? Josh. 24:15
4. Are you keeping yourself *“unspotted from the world”*?

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