

UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

Jas. 1:27

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Several 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).
 - 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)
 - (1) **Lesson #1** established that all Christians must put “first things first” (Matt. 6:33).
 - (2) **Lesson #2** established the absolute necessity that we constantly strive to grow spiritually maturity (2 Pet. 1:5-11: faith→virtue→knowledge→self-control→ perseverance→ godliness→ brotherly kindness→ love).
2. ****** Not only must Christians put first things first and strive to gain spiritual maturity; we must also realize we live in a world shot through and through with 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.”
 - A. Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers facing the Lord’s church in the 1st century & today.
 - B. Many have quit preaching on worldliness and have actually begun to defend it! (e.g., gambling, immodest dress, social drinking, homosexuality).
 - C. Consider Paul’s warning:

1 Cor. 6:9-11: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. I I And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”
 - D. ****** Consider James’s admonition concerning worldliness: **Jas. 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.”
3. **3** The purpose of this lesson is to help us avoid worldliness so we can remain unspotted from it.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. Understanding worldliness: To avoid worldliness we must know what it is, understand it.
 - 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 the temporary things of this world; even things which in and of themselves may not be sinful.
 - C. ****** Worldliness is an attitude (insidious!) where our priorities get out of line (Matt. 6:33). It is the sin of:

- (1) Overly 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 spending the most of our time and energy in temporal interests.
- D. ** Worldliness certainly includes immoral behavior (and attitudes!); things that appeal purely to our fleshly man: drinking (even socially), drugs, fornication, pornography, immodesty, dancing, filthy language, improper entertainment (e.g., PG & R rated movies, TV, internet), etc.
- E. 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, pleasure, recreation, entertainment, television, shopping, etc.; 1 Cor. 15:58).
- F. ** Worldliness is very deceiving! Like most 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"; \$99 M NYC apartment!).
 - (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. 1:14-15)
- G. It is important for us to be able to recognize worldliness and the dangers it presents.

2. 5 The Christian's relationship to the world:

A. It's very simple: the Christian must not love the world:

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. When we see the dangers of worldliness, we will not love it, nor be engrossed in its pursuits or pine away because we cannot participate in it.
 - (a) ** Instead, we must have a deep and insatiable love for truth and righteousness, appreciating their unsurpassed value:

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."*

Matt. 5:6: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled."*
 - (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."
- (2) A correct attitude toward worldliness versus truth and righteousness is essential for us to keep our priorities in the right order (Matt. 6:33; **Col. 3:2:** *"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."*).

B. ** It is absolutely 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); too many try to throw their arms around both the world and the Lord at the same time (Matt. 6:24).
- (3) 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.

C. ** The Christian must not conform to the world:

Rom. 12:1-2: *"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, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

- (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: *"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,"*

(3) Many excuses are given for going along with the world:

- (a) "Everybody is doing it!"
- (b) "It feels good!"
- (c) "I'm just trying to get along, to fit in!"
- (d) "It doesn't hurt anyone!"
- (e) "It's really not so bad!"
- (f) "God wants me to be happy!"
- (g) "Nobody at church will ever find out!"

(4) This is "situation ethics" type thinking, it is wrong, but it pervades the minds of many.

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 would he do?
- (3) If we are worldly we blemish the church; we will not be part of the pristine and unblemished 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) Just as lambs that were offered under the law of Moses had to be without spot or blemish (Ex. 12:5), Christians must offer themselves to God without worldly blemishes.

E. The cares of this world must not get in the Christian's way.

- (1) What happens when the cares of this world 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 first put our trust in God, put Him first in our lives:
1 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. 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 1 Timothy 6:6-7! **1 Tim. 6:6-7:** *"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."*
- (4) Some, like the Pharaoh's with their buried treasure, act like 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; Eph. 4:28; Eccl. 2:11). But 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 God and/or neglect our family.
- (6) We need to remember we are **strangers** and **pilgrims** in this life, we are just passing through. Let us learn to travel light like a real pilgrim.

3. **6** The world's attitude toward the Christian:

A. The Christian will be different from people of the world:

1 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 will not understand and will hate us and speak evil of us (**1 Jn. 3:13:** *"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you."*).
- (2) They will think we are strange, we are "religious nuts," we are fanatics.

B. ****** The Christian should expect ridicule, scorn, and mockery.

Jn. 15:18-20: *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'"*

- (1) We cannot allow such treatment by the world pressure us into conformity.
- (2) The world will try to pressure us to do as they do so their consciences might be pacified (**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."*)
- (3) But, let us never compromise our faith! **2 Tim. 4:10:** *"for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world,"*

- (4) **** Remember Heb. 11:13-16:** “*confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*”

4. **7 True joy is in Christianity, not worldliness:**

A. God knows better than we do how to best enjoy life.

- (1) The Bible was given not only to get us to heaven, but to teach us how to enjoy life, how to experience true fulfillment (Jn. 10:10).
- (2) The Bible was not given to keep us from having fun (2 Pet. 1:5-11; esp. vs. 10 & 11).

2 Pet. 1:10-11: “*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

B. **** Contrary to conventional wisdom all that is “fun” is not sin!**

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.*”

Eccl. 9:7-10: “*Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. 8 Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil. 9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.*” (cf. 12:13-14!)

C. **** God’s perspective is better than ours; He knows that sin ensnares, enslaves, and destroys! Sin’s pleasure is only “for a season,” while Christianity is enduring:**

1 Tim. 4:7-8: “*But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having 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. 4:7-8: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*”

D. **** What truly defines you? What is your life all about? Eccl. 12:13-14**

- (1) That is what life is really all about!
- (2) Without Christ people wander aimlessly through life, in a void, never knowing why they are here and what life is really all about.

III. CONCLUSION: 8

1. Life is really quite simple; life offers us two choices: God or the world.
2. But, the 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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