

Love Not the World

Series 1-20

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VerseQuest Ministries





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Love Not the World

A 20-Part Bible Study Series

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Love Not the World

Series Introduction

There are some Bible commands that modern Christianity has not erased from the page, but has practically erased from the pulpit. “Love not the world” is one of them. The verse is still there, sitting in plain English, sharper than a razor and clearer than a bell: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). God did not stutter. John did not mumble. The Holy Ghost did not leave the believer guessing. The command is not, “Be mildly cautious about the world.” It is not, “Use wisdom while remaining attached to the world.” It is not, “Love the world just enough to stay relevant.” It is, “Love not the world.” That is the command this series is built on, and it comes at the exact point where much of modern Christianity has lost its backbone, its discernment, its separation, and its affection for the Father.

This series, **Love Not the World**, is not about teaching Christians to hate God’s creation, despise honest labor, abandon responsibility, live in a cave, reject every lawful tool, or act like holiness means being useless. That is not Bible separation. The Christian lives in this world. He works in it, buys and sells in it, raises children in it, pays bills in it, uses tools in it, runs businesses in it, communicates through it, and witnesses to sinners in it. Jesus Christ Himself prayed, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). That is the balance. The believer is in the world, but he is not supposed to be of the world. He can use earthly things for God’s glory, but he must never let earthly things possess his heart. The issue is not whether the Christian lives here. The issue is whether this world lives in him.

The “world” in 1 John 2 is a system. It is not the mountains, rivers, flowers, oceans, family, work, or lawful provision. It is the organized, satanic, anti-God order of this present age. It is the machinery of lust, pride, covetousness, rebellion, false religion, false glory, spiritual blindness, and self-exaltation that stands against the Father. John defines it when he says, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). That is the world’s trinity. The lust of the flesh feeds appetite. The lust of the eyes feeds covetousness. The pride of life feeds self-exaltation. Every generation changes the packaging, but the bait is the same. Eden had it. Babylon had it. Rome had it. Laodicea has it. America has it. The modern church has it sitting in the choir loft, standing in the pulpit, glowing from the screen, and smiling on the book cover.

That is why this series matters so much in the Laodicean age. The church in Laodicea said, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). That is the spirit of the age. Rich. Increased with goods. Comfortable. Self-satisfied. Impressed

with itself. Blind to its own poverty. Laodicea is not lying in a gutter with a bottle in its hand. Laodicea is sitting in a religious building with money, resources, programs, branding, comfort, and confidence, while Christ is outside the door knocking. That is modern Christianity in one picture. It has buildings, budgets, screens, stages, conferences, celebrity preachers, worship brands, publishing empires, social media platforms, polished productions, and endless religious noise, but it often lacks the one thing that matters: clean affection for Christ and obedience to the words of God.

This series is going to uncover how the world does not always attack the believer by open wickedness. Sometimes it attacks by comfort. Sometimes by applause. Sometimes by respectability. Sometimes by money. Sometimes by entertainment. Sometimes by religious success. Sometimes by “ministry growth.” Sometimes by soft preaching. Sometimes by the fear of man. Sometimes by the desire to be liked. Sometimes by the need to look successful. Sometimes by the subtle craving to be praised, quoted, followed, admired, and accepted. The world does not have to make every Christian a drunkard or a blasphemer. Sometimes it only has to make him busy, distracted, impressed with himself, afraid of rejection, addicted to approval, and too comfortable to obey God.

A major target in this series will be the prosperity gospel, because few movements expose the love of the world more plainly. The prosperity preacher has taken the very things John warned about and turned them into a sermon series. The lust of the flesh becomes “God wants you to enjoy your best life now.” The lust of the eyes becomes “Name it, claim it, see it, possess it.” The pride of life becomes “You are favored, elevated, promoted, and destined for greatness.” Then the preacher flies private, lives behind gates, wears watches worth more than a working man’s vehicle, and tells poor people that their breakthrough is locked inside another offering. That is not Bible faith. That is the golden calf gospel. It is gain dressed up as godliness. Paul already named that crowd: “men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5).

But this series will not only point at the obvious wolves. It will also put the searchlight on the ordinary Christian heart. It is easy to rebuke the prosperity preacher with the mansion and the jet. It is harder to ask whether the same spirit of worldliness has a smaller apartment in our own affections. Do we love comfort more than obedience? Do we love praise more than truth? Do we love entertainment more than Scripture? Do we love being liked more than being faithful? Do we love our plans more than God’s will? Do we love our image more than holiness? Do we love our platforms more than the people we claim to serve? Do we love our possessions, titles, influence, and opportunities more than we realize? Worldliness is not always measured by how much a man owns. Sometimes it is measured by what owns him.

The series will trace the world's pull through multiple Bible lenses. It will begin with the forgotten command: "Love not the world." It will expose the devil behind the curtain, because the Bible calls Satan "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). It will explain how to be in the world but not of the world. It will deal with setting affection above, because the battle is not merely outward behavior but inward desire. It will examine the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It will confront the love of praise, the bondage of mammon, the golden calf gospel, and the forgotten doctrine of contentment. It will deal with friendship with the world as spiritual adultery, conformity to the age, the pilgrim life, Egypt in the heart, Demas loving this present world, the cares of this world choking the word, the passing fashion of the world, and the practical balance of using the world without abusing it.

The aim is not to produce artificial poverty, religious weirdness, or useless isolation. The aim is to produce Bible discernment. A Christian can use money without serving mammon. He can use technology without being disciplined by it. He can run a business without worshipping profit. He can use a platform without becoming a slave to applause. He can own a house without making comfort his god. He can work hard without becoming an empire-builder. He can enjoy lawful blessings without turning them into idols. The line is not always found in the object itself. The line is often found in affection, mastery, motive, and obedience. A tool in the hand is one thing. A throne in the heart is another.

This series will also press the temporary nature of the world. John says, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:17). That is the funeral announcement over the entire system. The world's beauty fades. Its money flies. Its celebrities age. Its empires crack. Its applause dies. Its fashion changes. Its idols rot. Its proud men become dust. Everything the world brags about is already passing while men admire it. The world is a parade marching toward a graveyard. Why would a saved man sell eternal reward for temporary glitter? Why would he trade the praise of God for the praise of men? Why would he build his identity in a burning world? Why would he envy a system that cannot keep what it promises?

The final burden of this series is to drive the believer back to eternal things. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). That is not poetry. That is warfare. The world spends every day trying to reset the heart downward. It teaches men to crave, compare, envy, display, purchase, perform, and pursue. The Bible calls the Christian to look above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The Father wants the heart. Christ bought the believer with His blood. The Holy Ghost indwells him. The Bible governs him. The judgment seat awaits him. The Lord is coming for him. That man has no business letting the world own his affection.

So **Love Not the World** is a warning, a rebuke, a doctrinal study, a practical examination, and a call back to clean Christian loyalty. It is for the believer living in Laodicea, surrounded by luxury religion, entertainment Christianity, prosperity preaching, soft doctrine, fear of man, social media vanity, and a thousand polished idols. It is for the Christian who knows he must live in this world, but refuses to let the world live in him. It is for the pilgrim who uses what he can for God's glory, but keeps his grip loose because the fashion of this world passeth away. It is for the Bible believer who wants to pass through this world as a witness, not settle down in it as a worshipper.

The command still stands: "Love not the world." The reason still stands: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). The warning still stands: "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:17). And the promise still stands: "but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17). That is the whole series in one sentence: the world is passing, God's will is abiding, and the Christian had better decide which one gets his heart.

1 of 20: Love Not the World – The Command Modern Christianity Forgot

The command is not hard to understand. It is hard to obey. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). There is no Greek scholar needed to rescue that verse from its plain meaning. There is no seminary fog machine needed to explain it away. There is no modern preacher with a soft voice, a tight suit, a million-dollar smile, and a building campaign who needs to stand up and tell you John meant something other than what he said. He said, "Love not the world." That is a command. It is not a suggestion, not a devotional thought, not a poetic exaggeration, not a mystical ideal for monks and hermits. It is a command to Bible-believing Christians living in a world that is hostile to God, governed by the devil, drunk on lust, puffed up with pride, and dressed up to look harmless. The trouble with modern Christianity is not that the verse is unclear. The trouble is that the verse is unwanted. Folks want a Christianity that lets them keep their worldly affections, worldly idols, worldly ambitions, worldly music, worldly celebrities, worldly applause, worldly respectability, worldly greed, worldly entertainment, and worldly measuring stick, while still claiming they are walking with God.

Now let us get one thing straight at the start. When the Bible says "the world," it is not talking about God's creation as though the trees, rivers, flowers, mountains, oceans, and blue sky are evil. God made the earth, and the earth itself bears witness to His handiwork. It is not talking about honest labor, feeding your family, buying groceries, paying bills,

running a business, using a phone, driving a car, owning a house, using a platform, or living responsibly in the place where God put you. Jesus said of His disciples, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). That settles the balance. God did not save you so you could disappear into a cave and pretend you are spiritual because you do not know how to live among men. The Christian is in the world. He works in it, travels through it, buys and sells in it, raises children in it, pays taxes in it, preaches in it, witnesses in it, suffers in it, and serves God in it. But he is not supposed to be of it. He is not supposed to love its system. He is not supposed to drink in its spirit. He is not supposed to measure success by its trophies. He is not supposed to bow before its idols.

The world in 1 John 2 is a system. It is an organized, satanic, anti-God arrangement of values, desires, ambitions, lusts, philosophies, religions, entertainment, money, pride, status, and rebellion that stands against the Father. John defines it in the same passage: “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” (1 John 2:16). There is the trinity of worldliness: fleshly appetite, visual covetousness, and proud self-exaltation. That is the devil’s old bait, and he has never changed it because it still works. He used it in Eden. He used it in Babylon. He used it in Rome. He uses it in Hollywood. He uses it in politics. He uses it in religion. He uses it in pulpits. He uses it in prosperity preaching, celebrity Christianity, soft compromise, social media applause, luxury religion, and every church that wants to be liked by the same system that crucified the Son of God. The modern church has not lost the verse. It has lost the stomach to preach it.

1. The World Is a System, Not Merely a Place

The first thing that must be settled is the definition of the word “world.” A man who does not define that properly will either become a monk on one side or a compromiser on the other. The world is not merely the planet beneath your feet. It is not the dirt God formed Adam from. It is not the flowers in the field, the birds in the air, the fish in the sea, or the stars above your head. God made those things, and they declare His glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1). The world John warns you about is not God’s creation as creation. It is the fallen order of man’s rebellion under satanic influence. It is society organized without God, pleasure pursued without holiness, knowledge exalted without truth, religion practiced without Scripture, money chased without contentment, power exercised without righteousness, and beauty admired without worship of the Creator. That world is not innocent. It has a prince, a spirit, a course, a god, and a destination.

Paul called Satan “the god of this world” in 2 Corinthians 4:4. That does not mean the devil owns creation by rightful title. The earth is the Lord’s. But it does mean that this present evil system is under his blinding influence. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Corinthians 4:4). That is why the world can educate a man and still leave him a fool. It can polish him, promote him, entertain him, enrich him, flatter him, platform him, and still send him to hell blind. The world has universities that cannot find truth, churches that cannot find the gospel, politicians that cannot find righteousness, celebrities that cannot find modesty, billionaires that cannot find contentment, and philosophers that cannot find God. That is not because men lack information. It is because the system is spiritually rigged against the light of Christ. The devil does not need every man to be a devil worshipper. He just needs him blinded from the gospel, pleased with himself, distracted by toys, drunk on pride, and comfortable without God.

That is why the command “Love not the world” is so crucial. You are not being warned against a harmless playground. You are being warned against enemy territory. You are not being told to dislike grass, flowers, food, family, honest work, or ordinary life. You are being told not to love the organized rebellion of this age. The system wants your affection before it wants your behavior. It knows that if it can win your heart, your feet will follow. A man does not fall in a day. He starts admiring what he should have judged. He starts laughing at what he should have rebuked. He starts envying what he should have pitied. He starts excusing what he should have separated from. He starts calling worldliness “balance,” compromise “wisdom,” cowardice “kindness,” greed “vision,” and fame “influence.” That is how the system works. It changes your vocabulary before it changes your life.

2. The Command Is Against Affection, Not Existence

John says, “Love not the world.” He does not say, “Do not exist in the world.” He does not say, “Do not work in the world.” He does not say, “Do not buy, sell, build, provide, labor, plan, use tools, or handle responsibility.” The issue is love. The issue is affection. The issue is what the heart clings to, admires, craves, envies, trusts, and worships. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). That is not soft language. That is a dividing line. The Father and the world are not two friendly neighbors. They are opposed. The world says, “Please yourself.” The Father says, “Deny yourself.” The world says, “Exalt yourself.” The Father says, “Humble yourself.” The world says, “Store up treasures here.” The Father says, “Lay up treasures in heaven.” The world says, “Chase applause.” The Father says, “Seek my approval.” The world says, “Follow your heart.” The Father says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).

A Christian can live in this world and use things in this world without loving the world. There is a difference between using money and serving mammon. There is a difference between owning a house and worshipping comfort. There is a difference between wearing clothing and worshipping image. There is a difference between using a platform and needing applause. There is a difference between working hard and being possessed by ambition. There is a difference between enjoying a meal and being ruled by appetite. There is a difference between providing for your family and measuring your worth by your possessions. This distinction matters because the devil works both extremes. On one side, he produces religious fakirs who think spirituality is measured by artificial poverty, gloomy faces, and useless isolation. On the other side, he produces smooth-talking compromisers who use “liberty” as a cloak for worldliness. The Bible gives you the right line: use the world without loving it, handle earthly things without letting earthly things handle you.

Jesus made this balance plain in John 17. He said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). But He also said, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:18). There it is. Not of the world, but sent into the world. That is Bible Christianity. You are not supposed to be worldly, but you are supposed to be useful. You are not supposed to be absorbed by the system, but you are supposed to witness inside it. You are not supposed to be hidden under a bushel, but you are not supposed to borrow the devil’s oil to keep your lamp burning either. Modern Christians stumble right here. They think being sent into the world means imitating it. They think relevance means compromise. They think the church has to look like a nightclub, talk like a talk show, market like a corporation, and entertain like Hollywood in order to reach people. That is not missions. That is surrender.

3. The World’s Three Weapons Are Still the Same

John gives you the anatomy of the world in one verse: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Those three things explain the system from Eden to the last days. The lust of the flesh is appetite without God. It wants pleasure, comfort, sensation, indulgence, and ease. The lust of the eyes is covetousness awakened by sight. It wants what it sees, whether God gave it or not. The pride of life is self-exaltation. It wants to be seen, admired, praised, envied, followed, and treated as important. You can take every worldly temptation and place it under those headings. The devil has newer packaging, but the bait is ancient. The hook has not changed because men have not changed.

Look at Eve in Genesis 3. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,” there is the lust of the flesh. “And that it was pleasant to the eyes,” there is the lust of the eyes. “And a tree to be desired to make one wise,” there is the pride of life. The same pattern

appears when Achan saw the Babylonish garment, the silver, and the gold. The same pattern appears when David looked from the roof. The same pattern appears when Nebuchadnezzar walked in pride and said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built” (Daniel 4:30). The same pattern appears when Satan offered Christ the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. The devil has always understood that the flesh can be tempted through appetite, the eyes can be tempted through desire, and the ego can be tempted through glory. The only Man who ever stood against all three perfectly was the Lord Jesus Christ, and He did it with the written word of God.

That is why worldliness is not limited to cigarettes, liquor, dance halls, and dirty movies, though those things certainly fit under the flesh. Worldliness can wear a clerical collar. Worldliness can preach in a stadium. Worldliness can sing worship songs under colored lights. Worldliness can sit on a deacon board, run a ministry, write Christian books, speak at conferences, and build a personal brand. If the heart is ruled by appetite, covetousness, and pride, it is worldly no matter how religious the clothing looks. A preacher with three private jets, a mansion like a Pharaoh, a watch worth more than a widow’s yearly income, and a seed-faith scheme designed to empty the pockets of desperate people is not a man of great faith. He is a golden calf salesman. He may say “Jesus” every third sentence, but John already told you what spirit is at work: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. It is not of the Father. It is of the world.

4. Modern Christianity Has Learned to Baptize Worldliness

One of the great scandals of this age is not that the world is worldly. That is expected. Dogs bark, pigs wallow, goats butt, and the world acts like the world. The scandal is that professing Christianity has learned to baptize worldliness and call it ministry. The church no longer simply tolerates the spirit of the age. It studies it, imitates it, hires consultants from it, borrows its music, copies its marketing, envies its celebrities, measures success by its numbers, and bows before its approval. If the world says the church is hateful, the church apologizes. If the world says doctrine is divisive, the church hides doctrine. If the world says preaching is too negative, the church brings in motivational speeches. If the world says holiness is outdated, the church calls compromise “relevance.” This is not revival. This is surrender with a fog machine.

Romans 12:2 says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” That verse assumes the world has a mold. It presses people into its shape. It molds how they think about success, morality, truth, beauty, money, sex, power, religion, and identity. The world is not content to let the Christian believe differently. It wants him to think differently, speak differently, laugh differently, spend differently, dress differently, vote differently, worship differently, and eventually read the Bible differently.

Conformity does not happen all at once. It happens by repetition. Hear a lie enough times, and it starts to sound normal. Watch sin enough times, and it stops looking shocking. Admire worldly men enough times, and holiness starts looking dull. Sit under soft preaching long enough, and plain Bible truth starts sounding harsh.

This is how modern Christianity forgot the command. It did not erase 1 John 2:15 from the Bible. It simply built a church culture where the verse feels embarrassing. Say “Love not the world” today, and someone will instantly accuse you of being extreme, legalistic, unloving, outdated, narrow, or negative. That is how far we have fallen. A direct Bible command now sounds strange to Bible readers because the world has trained them to hear Scripture through worldly ears. But the verse still stands. “Love not the world.” It does not matter how many churches ignore it, how many preachers soften it, how many singers contradict it, how many authors explain it away, or how many Christians roll their eyes at it. The command remains where God put it, and the Christian who fears God had better take it seriously.

5. The Love of the World Crowds Out the Love of the Father

John does not merely say that loving the world is unwise. He says, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). That is a frightening statement. It means worldly affection and the love of the Father do not occupy the same throne. A man may talk about God, sing about God, post about God, argue about God, and still have a heart dominated by the world. The question is not whether a person has religious vocabulary. The question is what he loves. What excites him? What grieves him? What satisfies him? What does he envy? What does he fear losing? What does he spend his mind on? What does he protect when Scripture confronts it? A man’s real god is often discovered not by what he says, but by what he refuses to surrender.

This is where the matter gets personal. A Christian can say he loves the Father while secretly loving the world’s approval. He wants the world to think he is intelligent, respectable, balanced, successful, fashionable, and not one of those “fanatics.” He wants to be known as Christian, but not too Christian. He wants to be identified with Christ, but not rejected with Christ. He wants enough Bible to soothe his conscience and enough world to satisfy his flesh. He wants the crown without the cross, the blessing without the reproach, the Father’s house without the Father’s holiness. That mixture is poison. James said, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:4). That is not a friendly warning. That is a courtroom indictment.

The love of the Father is not a sentimental feeling you can keep in a corner while your affections run loose with the world. It is a governing love. It changes what you admire. It

changes what you laugh at. It changes what you tolerate. It changes what you pursue. It changes what kind of preaching you want. It changes what kind of religion disgusts you. When the love of the Father is alive in a man, he begins to see the world for what it is: a passing system under judgment. He can still work, serve, build, provide, and use earthly tools, but he does not bow. He does not envy the wicked. He does not measure himself by their glitter. He does not confuse wealth with blessing or popularity with truth. He knows the world can give a man a throne and still leave him damned.

6. The Christian Must Use the World Without Being Used by It

A Bible believer must learn how to handle earthly things without being handled by them. Paul said, “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Corinthians 7:31). That is the practical balance. Use it, but do not abuse it. Use money, but do not love money. Use a house, but do not worship comfort. Use technology, but do not let technology disciple your soul. Use a platform, but do not become addicted to applause. Use business, but do not make profit your god. Use education, but do not let proud scholars talk you out of plain Scripture. Use influence, but do not become a slave to being liked. Use earthly tools for eternal purposes, and keep your hand open because the whole fashion of this world is passing away.

That balance is needed because some people confuse separation with uselessness. A Christian is not more spiritual because he is incompetent, broke by laziness, isolated by foolishness, or ignorant of how to function. God can use a skilled man, a diligent worker, a wise businessman, a faithful mother, a strong father, a bold preacher, a writer, a tradesman, a teacher, a farmer, a merchant, or a man with a public platform. The question is whether the thing is used for God or whether the thing uses the man. There are men who own nothing and are still worldly because they covet everything. There are men with money who are not ruled by it. There are men with platforms who use them as pulpits, and there are men with pulpits who use them as platforms. God is looking at the heart.

This is the line that must be drawn. The Christian may live in the world, but he must not let the world live in him. He may handle money, but mammon must not handle him. He may speak to crowds, but applause must not own him. He may use social media, but he must not become a dancing monkey for likes. He may own possessions, but possessions must not possess him. He may build something useful, but he must not build a Babel tower to his own name. He may enjoy God’s lawful blessings, but he must not turn blessings into idols. The world is always trying to turn tools into chains. The Bible believer must keep the knife sharp and the grip loose. Everything down here is temporary. Everything down here can become an idol. Everything down here must remain under the authority of the Book.

7. The World Is Passing Away

John ends the passage with the reason the command makes sense: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17). That is the funeral notice for the entire system. The world is not merely wicked. It is temporary. Its fashions pass. Its stars fade. Its empires rot. Its beauty wrinkles. Its applause dies. Its money changes hands. Its monuments crumble. Its geniuses are buried. Its celebrities are forgotten. Its trends become jokes. Its mansions become someone else’s property. Its kingdoms become dust. Men spend their lives chasing a parade that is marching toward a grave. They fight, lie, cheat, compromise, flatter, sell out, and betray truth for things that cannot last. That is insanity with a soundtrack.

The devil never tells you that part. He shows you the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but he does not show you the judgment. He shows you the gold, but not the grave. He shows you the applause, but not the silence after death. He shows you the mansion, but not the casket. He shows you the private jet, but not the judgment seat. He shows you the bright lights, but not the outer darkness. He shows you the pleasures of sin, but not the wages. The world is a liar because its god is a liar. It promises fullness and leaves emptiness. It promises freedom and creates bondage. It promises identity and produces confusion. It promises glory and ends in corruption. “The world passeth away” is God’s verdict over the whole glittering mess.

But John gives the contrast: “But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17). There is the eternal side. The man who lives for the will of God is not wasting his life, even if the world thinks he is. The mother raising children in the fear of God is not wasting her life. The preacher standing on the Book while the crowd mocks him is not wasting his life. The Christian refusing compromise is not wasting his life. The believer giving, witnessing, praying, studying, suffering, and serving for Christ is not wasting his life. The world will call him narrow, strange, severe, outdated, and extreme. Let it talk. The world is dying. Its opinion has an expiration date. The will of God abides.

Conclusion

The command modern Christianity forgot is still in the Book: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). That verse is not complicated. It is only hated by the flesh. It cuts across entertainment, religion, money, ambition, reputation, comfort, fashion, politics, education, and every hidden idol that wants to sit on the throne of the heart. It does not forbid a Christian from living responsibly in the world. It forbids him from falling in love with the system that hates the Father. It does not forbid him from using earthly tools. It forbids him from becoming owned by earthly lusts. It does not forbid work,

provision, business, technology, or lawful blessings. It forbids worshipping the age, envying the wicked, chasing applause, and baptizing covetousness in religious language.

Modern Christianity needs this command again because the church has become too comfortable with the enemy's furniture. Too many Christians want a worldly church with Christian words painted on the sign. Too many preachers want the world's respect more than God's approval. Too many ministries have turned into brands, too many pulpits into stages, too many sermons into therapy, too many offerings into seed schemes, too many worship services into concerts, and too many believers into consumers. The line must be drawn again. The world is not your friend. It is not neutral. It is not harmless. It is not safe. It is a passing system ruled by the god of this world, built on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The Christian who forgets that will eventually be disciplined by the very system he was supposed to resist.

So the first word in this series is simple: do not love it. Use what must be used. Work where you must work. Buy what must be bought. Build what God allows you to build. Preach where God opens the door. Speak truth on whatever platform is available. Provide for your family. Be diligent. Be wise. Be useful. But do not love the world. Do not envy it. Do not court it. Do not bow to it. Do not measure success by it. Do not let it teach you what matters. Do not let it define beauty, truth, greatness, ministry, blessing, manhood, womanhood, worship, or Christianity. Set your affection above. The world is passing away, and the lust thereof, but the will of God stands when the whole system burns to ashes.

2 of 20: Love Not the World – The Devil Behind the Curtain

There is a reason the world does not look as dangerous as it really is. The devil is not a fool. He does not always come at a man with horns, smoke, blood, and a pitchfork. That is the religious comic-book version people use so they do not have to take him seriously. The Bible presents him as a deceiver, a liar, a murderer, a prince, a tempter, a dragon, an adversary, and an angel of light. He is not merely hiding in the gutter with the drunkard and the criminal, though he will gladly destroy them too. He is also hiding behind polished culture, respectable religion, refined education, glittering entertainment, political ambition, social approval, financial greed, and the proud intellectual systems that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. The world is not morally neutral. It is not just a big marketplace of harmless ideas where everyone chooses a lifestyle. It is a system, and that system has a ruler behind it. Paul said, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:4). That is not poetry. That is doctrine.

The modern Christian needs to get this settled or he will spend his life treating enemy propaganda like innocent scenery. The fashion industry is not neutral when it trains people to worship image and lust. The entertainment system is not neutral when it mocks holiness, normalizes perversion, glamorizes rebellion, and makes sin look funny, attractive, brave, and profitable. The corrupt religious system is not neutral when it replaces the gospel with sacraments, self-esteem, prosperity, moral reform, mystical experiences, political activism, or church loyalty. Academic arrogance is not neutral when it teaches men they are animals, accidents, chemical reactions, and enlightened fools who have outgrown God. Celebrity culture is not neutral when it trains millions to worship faces, bodies, talent, money, fame, luxury, and public image. Behind the curtain there is a spirit. Behind the machinery there is a prince. Behind the glitter there is a fallen cherub who still wants worship.

That is why the command “Love not the world” is not a small command. If the world were neutral, loving it would simply be a matter of taste. But the world is not neutral. It is organized blindness. It is the visible expression of an invisible rebellion. It has its own gospel, its own priests, its own idols, its own music, its own prophets, its own punishments, its own rewards, its own sacraments, and its own evangelists. The devil’s masterpiece is not always the man screaming blasphemy in an alley. Sometimes it is the calm professor with a PhD telling young people that Genesis is mythology. Sometimes it is the preacher with a Bible in his hand telling people that gain is godliness. Sometimes it is the celebrity with a perfect smile selling vanity as empowerment. Sometimes it is the politician promising salvation through government. Sometimes it is the religious system that mentions Jesus while hiding the gospel. The devil does not need every man to be openly wicked. He only needs men blinded from “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

1. The Bible Names the Ruler Behind the System

The first thing to notice is that the Bible does not speak about the world as if it were merely a collection of harmless human customs. The Bible names a ruler behind it. Paul calls him “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus calls him “the prince of this world” when He says, “for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). Paul calls him “the prince of the power of the air” and connects him with “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). That is a remarkable statement. It means the world has an atmosphere, a current, a spirit, a course, a direction, and a prince. Lost men think they are independent thinkers because they rejected the Bible, but the Bible says they are walking “according to the course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2). A dead fish can float downstream and imagine he is making progress.

This explains why the same anti-God spirit appears everywhere at once. It shows up in education, entertainment, politics, religion, business, media, and culture. One year the world suddenly discovers a new moral cause and every corporation, school, celebrity, news outlet, and soft preacher starts repeating the same phrases like parrots in a cage. That is not courage. That is conformity. That is the spirit of the age moving through the children of disobedience. The world has slogans instead of Scripture, emotions instead of doctrine, hashtags instead of truth, outrage instead of righteousness, and applause instead of judgment. It punishes anyone who refuses the script. That is because the world system is not a neutral debate hall. It is a kingdom, and kingdoms have rulers.

The Bible believer should not be shocked that the world hates the truth. Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). The world did not crucify Christ because He lacked compassion. It crucified Him because He bore witness that its works were evil. He said, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). That is still the issue. The world can tolerate a religious Jesus who heals feelings, affirms everybody, condemns nobody, and never mentions hell, sin, judgment, repentance, blood, or the new birth. But the Bible Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ who exposes sin and declares Himself the only way to the Father, is still hated. The prince of this world has no problem with religion as long as religion does not shine the gospel light.

2. Satan's Chief Work Is Blinding Men From the Gospel

Paul gives the devil's strategy in plain language: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Corinthians 4:3). Then he explains how it happens: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Notice that the battlefield is the mind. Satan blinds the mind. He does not always begin by ruining a man's body, wrecking his finances, destroying his family, or turning him into an open criminal. He blinds the mind so that the man cannot see the glory of Christ. A blind man may still be religious. A blind man may still be moral. A blind man may still be educated. A blind man may still be successful. A blind man may still have opinions, degrees, followers, wealth, confidence, and influence. But if he is blind to the gospel, he is lost.

That is why the devil has a thousand substitutes for the gospel. If a man does not believe the gospel of Christ, Satan does not care much which substitute he chooses. He can choose ritualism and trust water, wafers, priests, and sacraments. He can choose liberalism and trust social reform, human kindness, and religious sentiment. He can choose prosperity preaching and trust seed-faith manipulation and positive confession. He can choose intellectualism and trust his scholarship. He can choose atheism and trust his supposed reason. He can choose New Age mysticism and trust vibrations, energies, signs,

and inner light. He can choose morality and trust his decency. He can choose church membership and trust his denomination. Satan has a counterfeit gospel for every temperament. The issue is not whether a man is religious. The issue is whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ has shined unto him.

The gospel is the thing Satan hates. Not vague God-talk. Not religious entertainment. Not charity. Not moral improvement. Not family values. Not church growth. Not emotional worship. Not inspirational speeches. Satan hates the gospel because the gospel declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. It declares that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. It declares that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. It declares that the sinner is helpless and Christ is sufficient. It takes the glory from man and gives it to God. That is why Satan blinds men from it. A man can go to church every Sunday and still be blinded if he never sees Christ as his only Saviour.

3. The World's Glitter Is Designed to Hide Its Master

The world looks glittering because the devil knows how to decorate a trap. He does not hang a sign over sin saying, "This will destroy your soul." He presents it as freedom, beauty, power, success, romance, intelligence, courage, self-expression, personal truth, authenticity, or progress. He puts lights around it. He gives it a soundtrack. He pays celebrities to endorse it. He gets professors to justify it. He gets preachers to soften it. He gets politicians to protect it. He gets corporations to market it. Then he calls anyone who objects narrow, hateful, ignorant, outdated, or dangerous. That is how the world operates. It is not enough for the world to sin. It must also make sin look sophisticated.

Luke 4 shows this clearly. The devil took the Lord Jesus up into a high mountain and showed Him "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Luke 4:5). Then he said, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them" (Luke 4:6). Notice what he shows: power and glory. He does not show the graves, the blood, the broken homes, the addictions, the idolatries, the betrayals, the judgment, the hellfire, or the eternal loss. He shows the glory. That is the devil's method. He shows the attractive surface and hides the rotten foundation. He shows the music, not the bondage. He shows the mansion, not the misery. He shows the fame, not the emptiness. He shows the crown, not the compromise. He shows the kingdoms, not the lake of fire.

The same tactic is everywhere today. The world shows the young person the fame of the entertainer, not the emptiness behind the image. It shows the glamour of sexual sin, not the shame, disease, brokenness, and spiritual defilement. It shows the luxury of the prosperity preacher, not the widows he manipulated to fund it. It shows the applause of

compromise, not the judgment seat of Christ. It shows the pride of scholarship, not the blindness of a mind lifted up against Scripture. It shows the bright stage, not the dark soul. The devil is a master advertiser. He does not need to invent new bait because the old bait still works. He shows men the glory of the world and whispers, "All this can be thine."

4. The Devil Uses Religion as Well as Rebellion

One of the greatest mistakes people make is assuming the devil only works through obvious wickedness. That is childish thinking. Satan is more dangerous in a pulpit than in a barroom when the pulpit is corrupted. A drunkard knows something is wrong. A self-righteous religious man often thinks he is serving God while opposing the truth. The devil has always used religion. Cain brought religion without blood. Pharaoh had magicians. Israel had false prophets. The Pharisees had Scripture memorized and still plotted the death of the Son of God. Paul warned of false apostles and deceitful workers, and then said, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). If Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, then his ministers can dress up darkness in religious language.

That explains the corrupt religious machinery of this age. Some preach sacraments instead of salvation. Some preach signs and wonders instead of Scripture. Some preach prosperity instead of godliness. Some preach social justice instead of the gospel. Some preach self-esteem instead of repentance. Some preach kingdom-now politics instead of the blessed hope. Some preach tradition instead of the word of God. Some preach scholarship instead of faith in the Book. Some preach unity while sacrificing truth. Some preach love while denying holiness. The devil does not care which version a man chooses as long as Christ is obscured, the gospel is hidden, and the authority of Scripture is weakened. The best counterfeit is always close enough to fool the careless.

The prosperity preacher is one of the most obvious examples of Satan's religious worldliness. He takes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life and preaches them as divine favor. He points to houses, cars, watches, clothes, jets, jewelry, and bank accounts and calls it blessing. He tells poor people to sow into his luxury while pretending that greed is faith. Paul already nailed that spirit when he warned about men "supposing that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5). That crowd has not advanced beyond the golden calf. They simply upgraded the microphone. A man can say "Jesus" with diamond rings on his fingers while teaching covetousness to a congregation, and the devil will not oppose him. Why would he? That kind of religion keeps people worldly while making them feel spiritual.

5. The World Blinds Through Pride as Much as Lust

Many Christians understand that Satan uses lust, but they forget how much he uses pride. The devil himself fell through pride. Paul warned that a novice lifted up with pride could fall “into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). Pride is not a small thing. It is the original poison. It makes a man unteachable, uncorrectable, self-admiring, self-protecting, and resistant to the word of God. Lust may drag a man into the gutter, but pride can keep him dignified all the way to hell. Pride can wear a robe, sit in a seminary, write commentaries, hold office, build institutions, and mock simple faith in the words of God. It is one of the devil’s most refined tools.

Academic arrogance is one of the great blindness machines in this world. The devil convinces men that if they collect enough letters after their names, they can sit in judgment on the Bible. They approach Scripture like a specimen on a table instead of the words of the living God. They correct it, dissect it, doubt it, rearrange it, naturalize its miracles, question its history, and then call that unbelief scholarship. The lost professor may be as spiritually blind as the pagan witch doctor, only better dressed and more respected by the world. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). That is not ignorance speaking. That is the Holy Ghost’s judgment on human wisdom when it rises against God.

Pride also blinds through success, status, and celebrity. The world teaches people to worship platform. If a person has money, fame, followers, beauty, influence, or applause, the world assumes he must matter. That spirit has infected churches badly. Christians will listen to a celebrity butcher doctrine because he is famous while ignoring a faithful Bible preacher because he is not polished enough. They will follow a singer’s theology because they like his music. They will follow an actor’s moral opinion because he can pretend on camera. They will follow a millionaire preacher because they mistake wealth for wisdom. That is worldly blindness. God does not measure truth by applause. The devil does.

6. The Prince of This World Had Nothing in Christ

Jesus said, “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). That is one of the most powerful statements in the Bible concerning Christ’s separation from the world. The prince of this world came, examined Him, tested Him, tempted Him, opposed Him, and found nothing in Him. No lust answered Satan’s bait. No pride responded to Satan’s flattery. No covetousness reached for Satan’s kingdoms. No fear made Him compromise. No ambition led Him off the Father’s path. No desire for human praise pulled Him away from obedience. The world had nothing in Him because He was altogether separate from its spirit.

The temptation in Luke 4 proves it. Satan offered Christ the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He offered Him the crown without the cross, dominion without suffering, authority without Calvary, and glory without blood. That is always Satan's offer: take the shortcut, avoid the reproach, bow just a little, and get the prize now. Christ answered him with Scripture. "It is written" was enough. Not psychology, not debate, not compromise, not negotiation, not mystical experience. The written word of God was the sword in the hand of the Son of God. That ought to shame modern Christians who think the Bible is not sufficient until some scholar improves it, some counselor updates it, or some preacher softens it. Christ defeated the devil with the written word.

This matters because the Christian's victory over the world is in Christ, not in self-improvement. The believer is not stronger than the devil. He is not smarter than the devil. He is not more experienced than the devil. But he has a Saviour in whom the prince of this world has nothing. The more a Christian walks in fellowship with Christ and submits to the words of God, the less the world has to grab. The more fleshly he becomes, the more handles he gives the devil. Lust is a handle. Pride is a handle. Greed is a handle. Bitterness is a handle. Fear of man is a handle. Love of praise is a handle. The command to love not the world is not merely negative. It is protective. God is telling you not to give the prince of this world a place to lay hold of your heart.

7. The Christian Must See Through the Curtain

The great need in this hour is discernment. Not paranoia. Not foolish suspicion of everything. Not wild guesses and endless speculation. Discernment. The ability to look at the glitter and see the hook. The ability to look at religious language and test it by Scripture. The ability to look at popularity and not confuse it with God's approval. The ability to look at wealth and not call it holiness. The ability to look at education and not mistake it for wisdom. The ability to look at entertainment and ask what spirit it carries. The ability to look at a movement and ask whether Christ is being exalted, whether the gospel is clear, whether the Book is honored, and whether the Father is loved or the world is being dressed up in church clothes.

The devil behind the curtain does not want Christians thinking like this. He wants them passive, emotional, distracted, entertained, impressed, and dependent on the crowd. He wants them to respond to images, music, status, fear, and applause instead of Scripture. He wants them to think that if something is popular, it must be blessed. He wants them to think that if something is attractive, it must be good. He wants them to think that if a preacher says "Jesus," he must be sound. He wants them to think that if a church is big, it must be right. He wants them to think that if a scholar is confident, he must know better

than the Bible. He wants them to think that if the world approves something, Christians should not criticize it. That is how blindness works.

The Bible believer must pull the curtain back with the words of God. The entertainment system is not just entertainment when it trains the affections against holiness. The fashion system is not just clothing when it trains vanity, lust, and image-worship. The political system is not salvation when it trains men to put messianic hope in human rulers. The financial system is not harmless when it trains covetousness and fear. The academic system is not neutral when it trains unbelief. The religious system is not safe when it hides the gospel. Behind the curtain is a prince who wants worship, control, admiration, and souls. Once you see that, "Love not the world" stops sounding extreme. It starts sounding sane.

Conclusion

The world is not neutral. That is the great truth this essay is meant to drive into the ground. The world has a god, a prince, a course, a spirit, and a blinding power. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:4). That one verse explains the madness better than a thousand political speeches, academic papers, and religious conferences. Men are not merely confused. They are blinded. They are not merely choosing between harmless options. They are walking through a system arranged to keep them from the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Satan's work is not always ugly on the surface. Sometimes it is polished, respectable, educated, religious, wealthy, artistic, fashionable, and admired.

That is why the Christian must stop treating the world like a playground. It is a battlefield with decorations. It is a prison with music. It is a marketplace with idols in every booth. It is a theater with a dragon behind the curtain. It can offer power and glory, as it did in Luke 4, but it cannot offer truth, forgiveness, eternal life, or fellowship with the Father. The world can make a man famous and leave him blind. It can make him rich and leave him empty. It can make him religious and leave him lost. It can give him applause and take his soul. The devil does not care whether a man goes to hell drunk, moral, educated, rich, famous, religious, or admired, as long as he goes without Christ.

So when the Bible says, "Love not the world," it is not robbing you. It is warning you. It is not calling you to misery. It is calling you to sanity. Do not love the system that blinds men from Christ. Do not envy the kingdom ruled by the prince of this world. Do not imitate the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. Do not bow for the kingdoms and the glory of them. Do not be fooled by the glitter, the applause, the scholarship, the luxury, the religion, the fashion, the entertainment, or the smiling preacher who turns covetousness into faith.

Pull back the curtain. See the devil behind the system. Then take your stand with the written word of God, the gospel of Christ, and the Father who is worthy of a heart the world never gets to own.

3 of 20: Love Not the World - In the World, But Not of the World

The Lord Jesus Christ did not pray the way modern Christians talk. Modern Christians talk like the only two choices are either to crawl into a cave and call that holiness, or jump into the world's lap and call that ministry. The Lord did neither. In John 17, the Lord Jesus said, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). Then He said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). There is the balance. He did not ask the Father to remove His disciples from the world, and He did not ask the Father to make them comfortable in the world. He prayed that they would be kept from the evil while they were still living, working, witnessing, preaching, suffering, and serving right in the middle of it. That is Bible separation. It is not escape. It is not compromise. It is a sanctified man standing in an unsanctified place with the words of God in his mouth and the fear of God in his heart.

A Christian is not holy because he does not own a phone, does not have a bank account, does not drive a car, does not use electricity, does not run a business, and does not know how to function in society. That can be eccentricity, not spirituality. Bible separation does not mean you become useless. It does not mean you hide from sinners while pretending you care about their souls. It does not mean you dress up your lack of discipline, industry, wisdom, and usefulness as deep sanctification. The Lord Jesus ate among publicans and sinners without becoming one of them. Paul used Roman roads, Roman citizenship, public marketplaces, court systems, ships, letters, and every lawful door God opened to move the truth forward. The issue is not whether a Christian touches earthly tools. The issue is whether earthly tools begin shaping his affections, values, doctrine, and identity. The issue is not whether you live here. You do live here. The issue is whether this place lives in you.

That is the line that must be drawn in this essay. The Christian is in the world, but he is not of the world. He can have a house, but heaven is his home. He can have a job, but mammon is not his master. He can have a business, but greed is not his gospel. He can use technology, but the spirit of the age is not his teacher. He can speak on a platform, but applause is not his food. He can buy and sell, but he does not sell his soul. He can wear clothes, but image is not his god. He can vote, but politics is not his hope. He can enjoy

lawful blessings, but he does not confuse earthly comfort with spiritual power. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). That is the Christian’s true citizenship. He is a foreigner with an assignment, a pilgrim with a message, an ambassador with a commission, and a soldier with orders. He is not called to vanish from the battlefield, and he is not called to marry the enemy.

1. Christ Prayed for Preservation, Not Removal

The Lord’s prayer in John 17 destroys two errors at once. It destroys the error of worldly compromise, and it destroys the error of religious isolation. Jesus said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world” (John 17:15). That means the Christian’s calling is not to disappear. God could have saved every believer and immediately taken him to heaven. He did not. He left him here for a reason. He left him here to witness, preach, labor, suffer, grow, pray, serve, testify, raise children, stand for truth, and shine as a light in a crooked and perverse nation. If removal from the world were the highest form of holiness, then death would be the greatest discipleship program. But the Lord did not pray for removal. He prayed for preservation.

Then He said, “but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). That is the other side. The Christian is not taken out of the world, but he is kept from the evil. He is not supposed to become a spiritual sponge soaking up every rotten thing around him. He is not supposed to say, “Well, I live among sinners, so I might as well think like them, dress like them, laugh like them, entertain myself like them, and measure success like them.” That is not incarnation. That is contamination. The Lord prayed for His people to be kept. Kept from the evil one. Kept from the evil system. Kept from the evil spirit of the age. Kept from the evil affections that slowly make a saved man comfortable with what nailed his Saviour to the cross.

The Christian’s place in the world is therefore missionary, not matrimonial. He is sent into it, not joined to it. He is present, not possessed. He is visible, not absorbed. Jesus said, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:18). That is a commission. The believer is not here as a tourist. He is here as a witness. A tourist studies the world to enjoy it. A witness studies the world to reach men in it without being changed by it. A tourist wants comfort. A witness expects conflict. A tourist adapts until he blends in. A witness remains distinct because his message comes from another country. The Lord did not leave His people here so they could build little worldly kingdoms with Bible verses painted on them. He left them here to bear witness to the truth.

2. Separation Is Not Strange for the Sake of Strange

There is a false kind of separation that is nothing more than religious oddity. Some people think holiness means looking as unusual as possible, acting socially awkward on purpose, refusing every practical tool, and measuring godliness by how inconvenient they can make their life. That is not Bible holiness. That is flesh with a long face. The Bible says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Holiness means being set apart unto God, clean in doctrine, clean in affection, clean in conduct, clean in worship, clean in speech, and obedient to the words of God. It does not mean inventing man-made rules so you can feel superior to people who do not keep them.

The Pharisees were masters of outward separation without inward truth. They strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. They made broad their phylacteries. They loved chief seats. They looked religious and were full of dead men’s bones. That crowd could separate from the wrong dinner table while rejecting the very Christ who stood in front of them. So do not mistake mere oddness for holiness. A man can avoid every modern convenience and still be proud, bitter, covetous, self-righteous, and lost. A woman can dress plain and still be worldly in her heart. A preacher can thunder against outward sins while secretly worshipping his own reputation. The issue is not whether your habits make you look old-fashioned. The issue is whether your heart belongs to God and your life is governed by Scripture.

Bible separation is not weirdness for display. It is obedience to God. It separates from sin, false doctrine, corrupt fellowship, unclean worship, and the spirit of the world. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). That is not a call to become useless or foolish. It is a call not to yoke your spiritual life, worship, marriage, ministry, and obedience to those who do not belong to Christ. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). There is the principle. Light can shine in darkness, but light does not have communion with darkness. A Christian can speak to a lost man, work beside a lost man, sell to a lost man, buy from a lost man, and witness to a lost man, but he is not supposed to be spiritually yoked to him.

3. Use the Tools, But Do Not Adopt the Values

A Christian can use the world’s tools without adopting the world’s values. That is a simple statement, but many people cannot handle it. Some think if you use a tool, you have compromised. Others think because they use the tool, they may also drink the spirit that comes with it. Both are wrong. A printing press can print a Bible or pornography. A microphone can preach Christ or sell heresy. A building can house a faithful church or a dead religious show. A website can spread Scripture or vanity. A phone can be used to

witness or waste a life. Money can support missions or feed greed. The tool is not always the issue. The governing affection, purpose, and moral use are the issue.

Paul used the roads and systems available to him. He appealed to Caesar. He used his Roman citizenship. He preached in synagogues, marketplaces, schools, homes, prisons, and before rulers. He wrote letters that traveled through ordinary means. He did not say, “Rome is corrupt, therefore I cannot walk on Roman roads.” He used what providence allowed without becoming Roman in spirit. That is a critical distinction. A Bible believer can use modern tools to spread truth without letting those tools dictate his message. He can use a platform without letting algorithms become his god. He can use technology without letting technology train his children. He can run a business without letting business become his Bible. He can use money without letting money become his master.

The problem comes when the tool begins to shape the man. Social media is a tool until it teaches you to crave applause. Business is a tool until profit becomes your measuring stick for righteousness. Clothing is a tool until image becomes your idol. Education is a tool until human wisdom becomes your authority over Scripture. Entertainment is a tool until it becomes your escape, your counselor, your mood regulator, and your moral teacher. Government is a tool until politics becomes your saviour. The Christian must constantly ask whether he is using the thing or whether the thing is using him. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient” (1 Corinthians 6:12). “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). That is the test. Has it brought you under its power?

4. The Christian’s Citizenship Is in Heaven

Paul said, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). That word “conversation” has to do with citizenship, manner of life, and commonwealth. The believer’s true country is not this present evil world. His papers are from above. His King is not elected by sinners. His inheritance is not stored in a bank. His final hope is not in a constitution, court, economy, army, celebrity, preacher, party, or movement. He looks for the Saviour. That heavenly citizenship should change how he handles everything down here. He can be a good citizen on earth, but earth is not his final country.

This truth keeps a man from two ditches. It keeps him from worshipping earthly nations, and it keeps him from neglecting earthly duty. A Christian can love his family, act responsibly in his community, obey lawful authority, work hard, and seek peace where he lives without treating any nation as the kingdom of God. Earthly citizenship has responsibilities, but heavenly citizenship has supremacy. When the two collide, “We ought

to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). The believer must never forget that the world’s systems are temporary and polluted by sin. The best nation on earth is still not the New Jerusalem. The best government on earth is still run by sinners. The best human law is still inferior to the words of God.

Heavenly citizenship also changes what a believer expects. A pilgrim does not expect the foreign land to feel like home. He should not be shocked when the world misunderstands him, mocks him, misrepresents him, or hates him. Peter said, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). A stranger does not have to blend in to be faithful. A pilgrim does not unpack his soul in a land marked for judgment. The Christian’s life should make sense only if heaven is real, Christ is coming, the judgment seat is ahead, and the world is passing away. If a believer’s life makes perfect sense to the world, there may not be enough heaven in it.

5. Separation Must Be Doctrinal, Moral, and Affectional

Separation is bigger than avoiding a list of visible sins. It is doctrinal, moral, and affectional. Doctrinal separation means a Bible believer cannot join hands with false gospels, corrupt Bibles, sacramental systems, works salvation, prosperity heresy, liberal unbelief, or religious confusion that hides the gospel of Christ. “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:16). Doctrine matters because truth matters. The world loves religious unity as long as truth is sacrificed to get it. God never called Christians to unite around fog. He called them to stand in truth. A man who will not separate from false doctrine will eventually protect error in the name of love.

Moral separation means the believer cannot live like the world and claim he is simply being relatable. Grace does not make sin harmless. Liberty does not make filth clean. The Christian’s body belongs to God. His mouth belongs to God. His eyes belong to God. His relationships belong to God. His habits belong to God. The world says, “Express yourself.” The Bible says, “Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). That includes what a man watches, what he laughs at, what he permits in his home, what he feeds his mind, how he handles his body, and what he calls entertainment. You cannot spend six days drinking sewage and then wonder why your spiritual appetite is sick on Sunday.

Affectional separation may be the deepest of the three because it deals with what the heart loves. A man can separate outwardly from many things and still secretly admire them. He may not live like the world publicly, but he envies its applause, beauty, luxury, ease, recognition, and freedom from reproach. The command is not merely “touch not.” It is “love not.” That goes deeper. That means God is not satisfied with a Christian who merely avoids

worldliness while wishing he could have it. The Lord wants the heart. He wants the affections set above. He wants the believer to see the world's glitter as cheap, temporary, dangerous, and polluted. He wants His people to say no not only because the Bible forbids something, but because they love the Father more than the bait.

6. Witness Requires Contact Without Contamination

The Christian is sent into the world as a witness. That requires contact. You cannot witness to people you refuse to speak to. You cannot be salt if you never leave the shaker. You cannot be light if you hide under a bushel. The Lord Jesus was accused by religious hypocrites because He sat with publicans and sinners, yet He never became unclean in His doctrine, affection, or conduct. He went among sinners as a physician, not as a patient looking for a disease. That is the difference. Some Christians avoid all sinners and call it holiness. Others join sinners in their sins and call it outreach. Both miss the Lord's pattern.

A witness goes into the world with a message from outside the world. That message is not self-help, politics, emotional therapy, prosperity, moral improvement, or religious tradition. It is the gospel of Christ. If the Christian loses the distinction, he loses the message. If the church becomes just another entertainment center, social club, political machine, therapy lounge, or motivational platform, then it has nothing heavenly to say. The world does not need a baptized version of itself. It needs a witness from another country. It needs a Book that speaks with authority. It needs a gospel that saves sinners. It needs saints who are not for sale.

Contact without contamination requires vigilance. You can help a drowning man without letting him pull you under if your footing is secure. But if you are weak, careless, proud, or secretly drawn to the water, you had better fear. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). A Christian who goes into worldly places with a worldly appetite will not rescue anyone. He will be recruited. A preacher who studies the world to imitate it will not reach the world. He will become a religious copy of it. The believer must go with his Bible open, his conscience alive, his affections guarded, his purpose clear, and his fellowship with Christ warm. Otherwise, the mission field becomes a swamp.

7. The Question Is Whether the World Lives in You

The final test is not merely whether you live in the world. You do. The question is whether the world lives in you. Does it control your desires? Does it define your success? Does it shape your standards? Does it govern your spending? Does it train your children? Does it set your fashion? Does it determine your entertainment? Does it tell you what preaching should sound like? Does it decide which doctrines are acceptable? Does it make you

ashamed of plain Bible truth? Does it make you crave the praise of men? Does it make you soft toward sin and hard toward correction? Those questions reveal more than a man's public label.

The world living in a Christian looks like Egypt living in Israel after the exodus. Their bodies were out, but their appetites still looked back. They remembered the food and forgot the bondage. That is how many Christians operate. They claim deliverance, but they still admire the old country. They still envy the people who seem free to sin without conviction. They still want the world's approval, the world's laughter, the world's success, the world's music, the world's romance, the world's pride, and the world's rewards. That is dangerous. A man can be physically separated from a place while spiritually chained to it. Lot left Sodom, but Sodom had already done its work in his family.

So the issue must be pressed. Are you using the world for God's purpose, or is the world using you for its purpose? Are you sent into it as a witness, or absorbed into it as a convert? Are you a pilgrim, or are you building your soul's mansion in a burning city? Are you a light, or have you learned to love the darkness because it claps for you? The Christian is not called to be bizarre, useless, or self-righteous. He is called to be clean, useful, faithful, separated, and heavenly-minded while living right here in the dirt and noise of a fallen age. That is harder than hiding and holier than blending in.

Conclusion

"In the world, but not of the world" is not a slogan for compromise. It is a Bible truth with teeth in it. Jesus said His disciples were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. Then He sent them into the world. That means the believer stands in a difficult but glorious position. He is present among men but belongs to heaven. He works on earth but serves a heavenly King. He uses earthly tools but obeys eternal words. He speaks to sinners but refuses to be disciplined by sin. He lives in the world, but the world must not be allowed to live in him.

This balance is desperately needed because Christians keep falling into ditches. Some mistake separation for religious weirdness and become useless, proud, and isolated. Others mistake usefulness for worldliness and become compromised, entertained, and absorbed. The Bible gives neither permission. The Christian does not have to hide in the woods to be holy, and he does not have to imitate Hollywood to be effective. He does not have to reject every lawful tool, and he does not have to adopt the values attached to those tools. He can use the world without loving it. He can serve among sinners without joining them. He can run a business without worshipping mammon. He can use a platform without

needing applause. He can own things without being owned by things. He can be visible without being vain.

The Lord prayed the perfect prayer: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). That is the Christian’s path. Not removal, not compromise, but preservation. Not escape, not absorption, but witness. Not worldliness, not monkish foolishness, but sanctified usefulness. The believer’s conversation is in heaven, his feet are on earth, his Bible is in his hand, his gospel is on his lips, his Lord is coming, and his heart must be guarded. Use the world if you must, but do not love it. Walk through it, but do not bow to it. Speak to it, but do not let it teach you. Live in it, but never forget where you belong.

4 of 20: Love Not the World - Set Your Affection Above

The real battlefield is not first in the hands, the feet, the wallet, the closet, the calendar, or the church building. The real battlefield is affection. A man will eventually follow what he loves. He may restrain himself for a while by fear, habit, reputation, pressure, or religion, but sooner or later the heart will drag the life in the direction of its treasure. That is why the Bible says, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). That is not decorative language. That is a command aimed at the center of the man. God is not merely interested in polishing the outside while the inside still bows before the world. He is not impressed with a man who quits one outward sin but keeps the same worldly appetite dressed up in religious clothes. A cleaned-up exterior with a worldly heart is still a problem. The Pharisees had clean cups on the outside and corruption within. Modern Christianity is full of that same disease. It knows how to look spiritual, talk spiritual, market spiritual, brand spiritual, post spiritual, and perform spiritual, while the heart still burns for earthly applause, earthly treasure, earthly comfort, earthly admiration, and earthly success.

Paul does not say, “Let your affection wander upward if it happens to feel like it.” He says, “Set your affection.” That means the heart has to be ordered, aimed, corrected, disciplined, and fixed. Affection does not naturally climb heavenward. It naturally sinks earthward. The flesh loves what it can see, touch, taste, spend, wear, display, enjoy, and brag about. The world knows that and spends every day trying to reset your affection downward. It throws pictures in front of your eyes, songs into your ears, advertisements into your mind, anxieties into your schedule, ambitions into your chest, and applause into your pride. It tells you what to want before you ever stop and ask whether God wants you wanting it. It

teaches you to admire what God despises and ignore what God prizes. It makes a preacher envy a bigger platform, a Christian envy a richer neighbor, a woman envy another woman's beauty, a man envy another man's reputation, a young person envy the celebrities, and a church envy the crowd down the road with more lights, more noise, more money, and less doctrine. That is not harmless. That is affection being disciplined by the world.

The Christian life must get down to this question: what captures your imagination? Do heavenly things still move you? Does the appearing of Christ still stir you? Does the word of God still satisfy you? Does the thought of standing before the judgment seat of Christ still sober you? Does the gospel still thrill you? Does holiness still matter? Does prayer still pull at you? Does the Father still have your heart? Or has your affection been trained by screens, status, comfort, money, praise, luxury, vanity, and the constant noise of a world that cannot survive eternity? A man can preach against Hollywood and still worship applause. He can condemn prosperity preachers and still love money in quieter ways. He can denounce celebrity Christianity and still crave recognition. He can warn about worldliness and still secretly measure his worth by numbers, response, reputation, and influence. That is why the command must go deeper than outward separation. It must reach affection. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

1. Affection Is the Steering Wheel of the Soul

A man's affection will steer him even when his mouth is saying the right things. The heart is not a harmless passenger in the Christian life. It is a powerful force, and if it is not governed by Scripture, it will drag the man straight toward the world while he quotes Bible verses along the way. Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). That is not mystical fluff. That is practical truth. The issues of life come out of the heart. What a man loves affects what he sees, what he hears, what he excuses, what he pursues, what he protects, what he fears, what he envies, and what he refuses to surrender. A man can say God is first, but the heart will tell on him by what he keeps chasing when no one is pushing him.

That is why Colossians 3 does not begin with mere outward conduct. It begins with resurrection ground. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1). The believer is not just an improved sinner trying to behave better. He is a man connected to a risen Christ. His life is tied to another world. His Head is in heaven. His Saviour is seated on the right hand of God. His future is glory. His old man is judged. His new life is hid with Christ in God. Therefore his affection must be aimed where his life really is. A Christian whose life is hid with Christ has no business letting his heart be governed by the sewer pipe of this present world. That is beneath him, not because he is something in himself, but because he has been joined to Someone above.

The world understands affection better than most Christians do. It does not merely tell you what to do. It tells you what to love. It trains desire. It does not simply sell products. It sells identity, status, beauty, envy, fear, comfort, escape, rebellion, and pride. It tells young men what masculinity should look like. It tells young women what beauty should look like. It tells churches what success should look like. It tells preachers what influence should look like. It tells families what happiness should look like. Then after it trains the affection, the behavior follows naturally. That is why the Bible believer must stop acting like affection is a small matter. If the world gets your affection, it will eventually get your obedience.

2. The Heart Must Be Set Because It Naturally Drifts

Paul says, “Set your affection.” That word matters. Something that must be set is something that will not automatically stay where it belongs. The heart drifts. The mind drifts. The eyes drift. The imagination drifts. The appetite drifts. Nobody wakes up one morning accidentally full of heavenly affection after feeding on the world all week. You do not spend hours watching vanity, listening to filth, admiring pride, envying luxury, scrolling through covetousness, and then suddenly have a blazing appetite for holiness. That is not how the heart works. You become attached to what you feed. You develop appetite by repetition. The world knows this, which is why it never stops repeating itself.

The Christian who does not deliberately set his affection above will find it being set for him by the world. Screens will set it. Advertisements will set it. Celebrities will set it. News cycles will set it. Social media will set it. Music will set it. Friends will set it. Fears will set it. Ambitions will set it. The crowd will set it. And after a while, the man will still think he is making free choices, when in reality he has been trained. He will want what the world told him to want, admire what the world told him to admire, fear what the world told him to fear, and neglect what the world taught him to despise. That is why Romans 12:2 says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” If the mind is not renewed, affection will be conformed.

There is no neutral setting for the heart. It is either being drawn upward by truth or dragged downward by the flesh. That is why Bible reading is not optional decoration. Prayer is not optional decoration. Preaching is not optional decoration. Fellowship with God is not optional decoration. These are means by which the heart is corrected and aimed. The world is loud every day. If the word of God is a faint whisper in your life, do not be surprised when your affection starts listening to the louder voice. You cannot treat Scripture like a weekend vitamin and expect to resist a daily poison. The affection must be set, and it must be reset often. A compass can be bumped. A sight can be knocked out of alignment. A heart can drift before the man even admits it.

3. Earthly Treasure Reveals Earthly Affection

The Lord Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6:19). Then He said, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). Then He gave the principle that exposes everything: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). Men like to reverse that verse and imagine their heart is one place while their treasure is another. The Lord did not say that. He said your heart follows your treasure. Show me what a man treasures, and I will show you where his heart keeps going. His mouth may say heaven, but if his treasure is earth, his heart keeps making trips back to the dirt.

This does not mean a Christian cannot own anything. That is not the passage. The issue is not responsible provision, honest labor, saving wisely, taking care of family, or using resources for God’s work. The issue is treasure. What do you store in the vault of your soul? What do you count as wealth? What would crush you if you lost it? What do you daydream about? What do you sacrifice for? What do you protect from God’s hand? What do you display so others can admire you? A man’s treasure may be money, but it may also be reputation, beauty, platform, knowledge, influence, children, comfort, success, ministry, or being right. Earthly treasure is anything below that starts acting like the highest thing.

This is where the prosperity gospel reveals its rotten core. It teaches men to set their affection on things on the earth while pretending to be spiritual. It takes the very thing Paul warns against and builds a ministry around it. Houses, cars, money, watches, private jets, luxury, influence, and visible increase become the proof of God’s favor. That is not Colossians 3. That is baptized covetousness. That is Matthew 6 turned upside down. Christ says lay up treasure in heaven, and the prosperity preacher says sow a seed so you can lay up treasure in your garage. Christ says you cannot serve God and mammon, and the prosperity preacher says mammon is evidence that God is pleased. That crowd does not set affection above. It sells earthly affection to religious people and calls it faith.

4. Carnal Minds Cannot Enjoy Heavenly Things

Romans 8 draws a hard line. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5). Notice the word “mind.” The flesh has a mind. It has interests, appetites, preferences, pleasures, and priorities. The Spirit has His things as well. A man’s mind reveals his nature and walk. The carnal mind does not enjoy heavenly things because heavenly things do not feed the flesh. The flesh wants sensation, ego, appetite, control, pleasure, and ease. It does not want conviction, holiness, self-denial, Scripture, prayer, reproach, or obedience. That is why a worldly Christian gets bored with the things that should thrill him.

Paul continues, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). That verse ought to be preached until it burns through the fog. Carnal mindedness is not a harmless personality trait. It is death in operation. It deadens appetite for the Bible. It deadens prayer. It deadens conviction. It deadens compassion for souls. It deadens fear of God. It deadens joy in Christ. A carnally minded man may still be religious, but his spiritual nerves are numb. He can watch filth and feel little. He can skip Scripture and feel little. He can hear truth and feel little. He can see lost men going to hell and feel little. That is what the world does to the heart. It anesthetizes it.

This is why heavenly affection cannot be faked for long. A man can perform Christianity publicly, but what he minds privately will tell the truth. What does the mind run to when it is free? What does it feed on when no one is watching? What does it replay? What does it envy? What does it fear? What does it love? The Spirit of God turns the mind toward Christ, Scripture, holiness, truth, eternity, and the will of God. The flesh turns it toward self, pleasure, pride, anger, lust, worry, and earthly things. The world is constantly supplying material for the carnal mind. The Bible believer must starve what wars against God and feed what looks above.

5. Outward Separation Without Heavenly Affection Becomes Religious Pride

A man can clean up the outside and still have a worldly heart. This is one of the most dangerous truths in the Christian life because religious people hate admitting it. It is possible to separate from visible sins and still be eaten alive with pride. It is possible to dress modestly and still crave attention. It is possible to preach against worldliness and still love power. It is possible to avoid corrupt entertainment and still feed on bitterness, gossip, self-righteousness, and envy. It is possible to carry a King James Bible and still have a heart that is cold toward the God who preserved it. Outward standards matter when they come from obedience, but they cannot substitute for affection.

The Pharisees prove the danger. They had separation without love for God. They tithed mint, anise, and cummin, but omitted judgment, mercy, and faith. They made long prayers, but devoured widows’ houses. They looked clean outside, but the Lord said they were full of extortion and excess. That is what happens when religion polishes behavior without setting affection above. The man becomes proud of what he does not do. He starts measuring holiness by comparison. He becomes harsh toward sinners and blind toward himself. He loves being known as separated more than he loves the Father. That is worldliness in religious clothing because pride of life does not care whether it is standing in a barroom or behind a pulpit.

Heavenly affection protects separation from becoming mere performance. When a man truly loves the Father, he separates because he wants fellowship, not because he wants applause from other separated people. He avoids sin because it grieves God, not merely because it damages reputation. He rejects false doctrine because truth matters, not because argument gives him a platform. He preaches hard because souls are at stake, not because he enjoys sounding tough. He uses standards as guards, not as trophies. The heart must be set above or separation can become another earthly idol. A man can be proud of not loving the world while secretly loving the praise he gets for saying so.

6. Heavenly Affection Is Fed by Seeing Christ Where He Is

Colossians 3 begins with Christ. “Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). The center of heavenly affection is not clouds, harps, golden streets, or abstract religious feeling. It is Christ. He is above. He is seated. He is at the right hand of God. He is the risen Head of the body. He is the believer’s life. Paul says, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). That means the Christian’s affection is set above because Christ is above, and his future is tied to Christ’s appearing. A believer who loses sight of Christ will soon set his affection on lesser things.

This is why doctrine matters. A shallow Christ produces shallow affection. If Christ is merely a helper for your dreams, then your affection remains on your dreams. If Christ is merely a therapist for your feelings, then your affection remains on your feelings. If Christ is merely a ticket out of hell, then your affection may never rise much beyond relief. But when Christ is seen as the risen Lord, the Head of the church, the coming Saviour, the One seated at the right hand of God, the One in whom your life is hid, the One who will appear and bring you with Him in glory, then affection has something worthy to climb toward. The heart rises when Christ is magnified.

Psalms 73 gives a beautiful example of affection being corrected. Asaph looked at the prosperity of the wicked and nearly slipped. He saw their ease, their strength, their pride, their abundance, and their success. His eyes were pulling his affection downward. Then he went into the sanctuary of God and understood their end. That changed everything. Then he said, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psalm 73:25). That is affection restored. He stopped envying the wicked when he saw their end and saw God rightly. A Christian who spends too much time staring at the world’s prosperity will start envying fools. He needs the sanctuary view. He needs eternity. He needs Christ above.

7. The Appearing of Christ Purifies the Direction of the Heart

The hope of Christ's appearing is one of the great purifiers of affection. Paul says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). John says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). The Christian who is looking for Christ cannot comfortably live with his heart glued to the world. The thought of seeing the Lord has a way of burning the cheapness out of earthly idols. A man who expects the trumpet does not want to be found kissing the world when the Lord calls him up.

The judgment seat of Christ also sobers affection. A saved man is not working to stay saved, but he will answer for his life and service. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). That means earthly applause is not the final review. The world's likes, shares, compliments, salaries, titles, awards, invitations, and admiration will not matter if the work burns. A preacher can be famous down here and ashamed up there. A Christian can be ignored down here and rewarded up there. A mother can labor unseen down here and shine up there. A faithful witness can be mocked down here and honored up there. The appearing of Christ rearranges the value system. It teaches the heart to ask, "What will this look like when I see Him?"

This is the cure for much of the world's spell. Set your affection above by remembering that Christ is coming, your life is hid with Him, and this world is not your final stage. The world wants you consumed with now. Christ points you to then. The world says, "Get your reward now." Christ says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me" (Revelation 22:12). The world says, "Be seen now." Christ says the Father sees in secret. The world says, "Be admired now." Christ says, "Well done" is what matters. The world says, "Take the kingdoms and the glory of them." Christ says, "Seek those things which are above." The heart that lives before His appearing will not be easily bought by the world's glitter.

Conclusion

The command to set your affection above is one of the most necessary commands for a Christian living in this present world. The battle is not merely whether a man can avoid certain outward sins. The battle is what he loves. What does his heart prize? What does his imagination return to? What does he envy? What does he fear losing? What does he sacrifice for? What does he admire? What does he secretly wish he could have? That is where the war is fought. The world spends every day trying to train the heart downward, and the Bible commands the believer to set it upward. Affection must be governed, corrected, fed, guarded, and fixed on Christ.

This is why the modern church is so weak. It has learned to manage appearances while letting the world disciple affection. It can produce Christians who know how to perform

spirituality while loving the same things the world loves. It can produce preachers who denounce sin but crave applause. It can produce churches that talk about heaven while measuring success by earthly numbers. It can produce believers who know the vocabulary of separation but still envy the wicked, admire the famous, crave luxury, and feed on vanity. That is not a small defect. That is the heart drifting toward the earth. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). If the treasure is down here, the heart will keep coming down here to sit beside it.

So the call is simple and severe: set your affection above. Do it deliberately. Do it biblically. Do it daily. Put the word of God in your mind until it corrects your desires. Look at Christ seated at the right hand of God until earthly glory looks cheap. Remember His appearing until applause loses its charm. Remember the judgment seat until temporary success loses its authority. Remember Psalm 73 until you stop envying prosperous fools. Remember Romans 8 until you fear the deadening effect of the carnal mind. Remember Colossians 3 until your heart knows where your life really is. Your life is hid with Christ in God. This world is not worthy of your affection. The Father is. Christ is. Eternity is. Set your affection where your Saviour is, and the world will never own what belongs above.

5 of 20: Love Not the World - The Lust of the Flesh

The Bible does not flatter the flesh. It does not rehabilitate it, educate it, baptize it, crown it, excuse it, pamper it, or pretend it is misunderstood. The Bible nails it to the wall and tells you exactly what it is. John says, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh...” (1 John 2:16). That is the first part of the world’s threefold trap. The world has a god, a spirit, a course, a glitter, a philosophy, a religion, and a bait box, but the hook closest to a man is his own flesh. That is why the devil does not have to create something new every generation. He simply keeps feeding the same old appetites with new packaging. The flesh wants comfort, pleasure, ease, lust, food, sleep, indulgence, praise, entertainment, control, and immediate gratification. It wants what it wants when it wants it, and it does not care what God said, what the Bible says, who gets hurt, what testimony gets ruined, what fellowship gets broken, or what chastening comes after. The flesh is not your friend. It is not a wounded child that needs more understanding. It is a rebel that needs the cross.

The modern church has become dangerously soft on the flesh because it has learned to rename fleshly living with respectable words. Gluttony becomes “enjoying life.” Laziness becomes “rest.” Vanity becomes “confidence.” Covetousness becomes “vision.” Sensuality becomes “authenticity.” Rebellion becomes “freedom.” Pride becomes “self-worth.” Lust

becomes “struggle.” Worldly pleasure becomes “balance.” Self-indulgence becomes “self-care.” And every spoiled demand of the old man gets dressed up in the language of therapy, destiny, favor, blessing, or personal peace. But the King James Bible still says, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). It does not say, “Manage the flesh.” It does not say, “Negotiate with the flesh.” It does not say, “Understand the flesh until it behaves.” It says do not fulfil it. The flesh has lusts, and those lusts must be denied. That is not popular preaching in a generation that wants Christianity without a cross, liberty without restraint, grace without holiness, and Jesus without self-denial.

The lust of the flesh is especially dangerous because it is not outside the gate. It is inside the camp. A Christian can separate from a corrupt crowd, turn off a filthy program, leave a bad church, reject false doctrine, and still carry the flesh with him everywhere he goes. The flesh goes to work with him. The flesh rides in the car with him. The flesh sits in church with him. The flesh opens the refrigerator with him. The flesh scrolls the phone with him. The flesh listens to preaching with him. The flesh hears correction and gets offended. The flesh sees holiness and calls it extreme. The flesh sees compromise and calls it liberty. The flesh sees temptation and calls it opportunity. The world provides the menu, but the flesh places the order. That is why this essay has to be plain. A man can blame the world, the devil, the culture, the internet, the music, the women, the men, the stress, the childhood, the church, the pastor, the spouse, the job, and the times, but sooner or later he has to face the thing living under his own skin. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

1. The Flesh Is Not Improved by Religion

The first thing to learn is that the flesh does not get better because a man becomes religious. The flesh can sing hymns, attend church, quote verses, argue doctrine, carry a Bible, post Scripture, pray in public, and still remain flesh. Religion may teach the flesh to behave in company, but it cannot convert it. The old man is not slowly becoming holy. He is to be reckoned dead. Paul said, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). He did not say the old man is being coached into a better attitude. He said crucified. That is God’s estimation of the flesh. God did not put it in rehab. He put it on a cross.

This is why so many religious people are shocked when their flesh shows up after years of church activity. They assumed time in religion meant the flesh had weakened. It had not. It was waiting. It was learning the vocabulary. It was adapting to the environment. It learned how to be proud of separation. It learned how to be offended in the name of conviction. It learned how to enjoy argument in the name of defending truth. It learned how to crave recognition in the name of ministry. It learned how to desire luxury in the name of blessing.

It learned how to demand comfort in the name of peace. The flesh is a sneaky religious actor. It can wear a choir robe, sit in a pew, stand behind a pulpit, and still be flesh to the bone.

That is why Galatians 5 is so direct. Paul does not say the works of the flesh are only found in bars, brothels, and prisons. He lists adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Notice how many of those can show up in religious circles. Hatred can sit in a church. Variance can split a congregation. Emulations can poison a ministry. Wrath can be disguised as zeal. Strife can be called standing for truth. Seditions can organize under the banner of reform. Heresies can be preached from a pulpit. Envyings can grow between preachers, singers, teachers, and churches. The flesh does not need a nightclub. It can start a fight after a Sunday morning service.

2. The Flesh Craves Immediate Gratification

The flesh hates waiting. It wants satisfaction now. It does not care about harvest, consequences, chastening, testimony, future judgment, spiritual dullness, or broken fellowship. It wants the bowl of pottage today. It wants the forbidden fruit today. It wants the thrill today. It wants the comfort today. It wants the purchase today. It wants the revenge today. It wants the praise today. It wants the pleasure today. The flesh lives in the present tense. It does not care about the judgment seat of Christ because it wants to feel better before dinner. That is why it is so dangerous. It trades eternal things for immediate sensations.

This is how the world feeds it. The world is built to remove delay. Food now. Entertainment now. Lust now. Anger now. Shopping now. Attention now. Approval now. Escape now. Everything is designed to satisfy appetite quickly, repeatedly, and privately. The old man loves that arrangement. He does not want discipline. He does not want patience. He does not want prayer. He does not want Scripture. He does not want fasting. He does not want self-denial. He does not want to bring the body under subjection. He wants the quick fix, the easy path, the comfortable choice, the sensual pleasure, and the emotional release. The world hands him a plate and says, "You deserve this."

Romans 13:14 says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." That verse is a bombshell. It tells you the flesh has lusts, and it tells you not to make provision for them. Provision means you can set up the conditions for sin before the sin happens. You can stock the pantry for the old man. You can arrange the schedule, feed the imagination, choose the company, open the door, keep

the secret, justify the excuse, and call it harmless before the fall ever happens. Many Christians do not fall because temptation was so strong. They fall because they spent weeks making provision and then acted surprised when the flesh ate what they had stored.

3. The World Knows How to Feed Every Appetite

The world is a giant feeding system for the flesh. It has something for every appetite. If the flesh wants sensuality, the world has images, music, entertainment, fashion, advertising, and stories designed to inflame it. If the flesh wants gluttony, the world has abundance without discipline. If the flesh wants laziness, the world has endless distraction and comfort. If the flesh wants anger, the world has outrage machines running every hour. If the flesh wants pride, the world has platforms where a man can display himself and wait for applause. If the flesh wants envy, the world has curated images of everyone else's supposed perfect life. If the flesh wants greed, the world has luxury worship and prosperity religion. If the flesh wants escape, the world has a thousand ways to numb the soul.

This is why a Christian who casually feeds on the world should not pretend to be shocked when his flesh gets stronger. You cannot keep feeding a dog and then wonder why it keeps coming back. You cannot keep feeding lust, vanity, anger, pride, envy, covetousness, and appetite and then wonder why prayer feels dead and Scripture feels dry. The flesh grows where it is fed. The Spirit is grieved where the flesh is indulged. A believer who feeds the flesh all week and then wants spiritual strength on Sunday is like a man who poisons himself every day and complains that the medicine is not working fast enough. He needs to stop drinking poison.

The world's feeding system is especially powerful because it presents fleshly living as normal. It makes restraint look repressed, modesty look outdated, contentment look unambitious, holiness look legalistic, and self-denial look unhealthy. It teaches people to think every appetite deserves expression. That is the language of rebellion. The Bible teaches the opposite. "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). They do not merely annoy the soul. They war against it. Fleshly lusts are not pets. They are enemy soldiers. They do not want to coexist peacefully with your spiritual life. They want to take territory, silence conviction, dull the conscience, weaken prayer, spoil testimony, and make the believer useless.

4. The Flesh Baptizes Its Desires in Spiritual Language

One of the most disgusting tricks of the flesh is that it learns to talk spiritually. The flesh says, "God wants me happy," when it means, "I want permission to disobey." It says, "I deserve it," when it means, "My appetite is my authority." It says, "It is my season," when it means, "I want the world's luxuries with God's name stamped on the invoice." It says, "I

have peace about it,” when it means, “I have silenced enough conviction to proceed.” It says, “Do not judge,” when it means, “Do not shine Scripture on my sin.” It says, “That is legalism,” when it means, “I hate restraint.” It says, “I am under grace,” when it means, “I want liberty to feed the old man.”

This is why the prosperity gospel is such a perfect example of flesh with religious vocabulary. It takes greed, comfort, luxury, display, covetousness, and pride and calls them favor. It tells people the proof of faith is more earthly stuff. It turns prayer into a transaction, giving into gambling, preaching into salesmanship, and worship into an appetite factory. A man stands up with diamonds, designer clothing, a mansion, and a private jet, then tells poor people to sow into his anointing so they can get their breakthrough. That is not Bible faith. That is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life wearing cologne. Paul called out that crowd when he spoke of men “supposing that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5).

But it is too easy to point at the prosperity preacher and miss the quieter version in the ordinary Christian. The same spirit can appear in a man who just wants comfort more than obedience. It can appear in a woman who wants attention more than modesty. It can appear in a believer who wants entertainment more than holiness. It can appear in a preacher who wants admiration more than faithfulness. It can appear in a church that wants crowds more than truth. Flesh does not always demand a jet. Sometimes it demands one more hour of distraction, one more secret indulgence, one more bitter conversation, one more purchase for image, one more compromise to avoid discomfort, one more excuse to skip prayer. The flesh has expensive versions and cheap versions, but the nature is the same.

5. Walking in the Spirit Is the Only Answer

Paul gives the answer plainly: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Notice what he does not say. He does not say, “Walk in willpower.” He does not say, “Walk in personality.” He does not say, “Walk in religious tradition.” He does not say, “Walk in public reputation.” He does not say, “Walk in fear of getting caught.” He says walk in the Spirit. The lust of the flesh is not defeated by making big promises to yourself after you have already failed. It is defeated by a living walk under the power, direction, and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is not mystical nonsense. It means yielding to the Spirit of God through the words of God, obeying truth, judging sin, refusing the flesh, feeding the new man, praying, watching, and moving through the day under God’s authority. The Spirit of God will never lead a man contrary to the Book He inspired. He will not lead a man into

uncleanness, pride, covetousness, rebellion, drunkenness, bitterness, heresy, or worldliness. He produces fruit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23). Temperance is especially hated in this age because temperance tells appetite, “No.” The flesh hates that word. The Spirit produces it.

Many Christians fail because they try to fight the flesh while feeding it. That is like praying for victory over a fire while pouring gasoline on it. A man says he wants purity but keeps feeding his eyes. He says he wants peace but keeps feeding his outrage. He says he wants contentment but keeps feeding envy. He says he wants humility but keeps feeding his need for applause. He says he wants spiritual appetite but keeps feeding on entertainment until Scripture tastes bland. Walking in the Spirit means the believer stops making provision for the flesh and starts feeding the life God put in him. The flesh will not voluntarily starve. It must be denied.

6. The Flesh Wars Against the Soul

Peter says, “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). That verse strips away every soft excuse. Fleshly lusts are at war. They are not neutral desires looking for healthy expression. They are enemies. They war against prayer, faith, holiness, conscience, testimony, joy, discernment, and usefulness. They war against marriage, family, ministry, preaching, Bible reading, church unity, and spiritual strength. They war against the soul because the soul belongs to God, and the flesh wants practical control. The flesh is not content to be present. It wants to reign.

This war language is necessary because many Christians treat fleshly lusts like minor weaknesses. They pet them, excuse them, laugh about them, build habits around them, and assume they can stop when they need to. That is foolish. Sin does not stay the size it was when you first invited it in. Appetite grows. Tolerance grows. Secrecy grows. Boldness grows. Hardness grows. A man who once trembled at a sin can eventually defend it. A believer who once wept over compromise can eventually mock the preacher who rebukes it. The flesh hardens the conscience by repeated indulgence. That is war, and the casualties are everywhere.

The soul suffers when the flesh rules. It loses sensitivity to the Holy Ghost. It loses hunger for Scripture. It loses hatred for sin. It loses joy in Christ. It loses spiritual courage. It loses clarity. It loses clean fellowship with God. The man may still function outwardly. He may still go to church, talk doctrine, work, provide, and appear normal. But inside, the soul is being warred against. That is why the warning is urgent. Abstain. Do not negotiate. Do not make peace treaties with lust. Do not keep enemy weapons in the house and call them

decorations. Do not give the old man a room and then complain that he keeps walking through the house. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. Treat them like enemies.

7. The Flesh Must Be Denied Daily

The flesh never gets converted, never becomes holy, and never improves into a trusted friend. It must be denied daily. The Lord Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). That is the opposite of modern self-worship. The world says express yourself. Christ says deny yourself. The world says trust yourself. Christ says deny yourself. The world says reward yourself. Christ says deny yourself. The world says follow your heart. Christ says deny yourself. That one command cuts the throat of a thousand modern religious slogans.

Daily denial means the Christian life is not lived on yesterday's victory. The flesh you denied yesterday will show up again today with a new argument. It may come through appetite, anger, laziness, lust, envy, bitterness, pride, fear, or comfort. It may come dressed as a reasonable request. It may come saying, "You have earned this." It may come saying, "Just this once." It may come saying, "Nobody will know." It may come saying, "Other Christians do worse." It may come saying, "You are too tired to fight." It may come saying, "God understands." The flesh is a lawyer for sin, and it never runs out of arguments.

The answer is not to trust the flesh, reform the flesh, pamper the flesh, or explain the flesh. The answer is the cross applied in daily practice. "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). Starve it. Deny it. Judge it. Refuse it. Bring the body under. Feed the new man. Walk in the Spirit. Keep the Bible open. Keep prayer alive. Keep short accounts with God. Keep the eyes guarded. Keep the heart watched. Keep the appetites under authority. The Christian who expects the flesh to behave without discipline is a fool. The Christian who treats the flesh like a defeated enemy still capable of ambush is wise.

Conclusion

The lust of the flesh is not a small matter. It is one of the three great categories John uses to define what is in the world. The flesh wants comfort, pleasure, appetite, ease, sensuality, indulgence, and immediate gratification. The world is perfectly designed to feed it, and the devil knows how to advertise its menu. The danger is not only that lost men live after the flesh. That is expected. The danger is that Christians can begin excusing fleshly living with religious language. They can call indulgence blessing, lust struggle, vanity confidence, greed vision, laziness rest, and compromise liberty. But God's Bible is not fooled by new names for old sins.

The flesh must be seen for what it is. It is not a friend. It is not a harmless weakness. It is not the real you trying to heal. It is the old nature that wars against God. It lusts against the Spirit. It wars against the soul. It makes provision for sin. It seeks immediate gratification. It can even use religion to protect itself. That is why the Bible gives clear commands: walk in the Spirit, make not provision for the flesh, abstain from fleshly lusts, and deny yourself daily. Those commands are not optional for serious Christians. They are survival instructions for pilgrims moving through a world that knows exactly how to feed the old man.

So do not love the world, and do not trust the flesh that loves it. The world may provide the menu, but the flesh places the order. Shut the menu. Push back from the table. Refuse the appetite. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Walk in the Spirit. Set your affection above. Keep your body under. The flesh will scream, argue, sulk, accuse, bargain, and pretend it is dying from neglect. Let it scream. It was never called to rule you. The Lord Jesus Christ is your Master, the Spirit of God is your strength, the word of God is your sword, and the cross is God's verdict on the old man. Love not the world. Feed not the flesh. Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

6 of 20: Love Not the World - The Lust of the Eyes

The eyes are not innocent little windows sitting in a man's head with no responsibility attached to them. They are gates. They are doors. They are scouts. They are messengers. They go out, gather information, bring it back to the heart, and then the heart decides whether to build an altar or burn the thing before God. That is why John includes "the lust of the eyes" in his great definition of the world. "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" (1 John 2:16). The world knows how to preach through the eye. It knows how to turn sight into desire, desire into imagination, imagination into covetousness, covetousness into action, and action into destruction. The devil does not need to drag a man by the neck if he can lead him by the eyes. He just has to put the right picture in front of him, the right shine, the right body, the right lifestyle, the right applause, the right luxury, the right ministry platform, the right forbidden object, and the old heart starts building a case for rebellion.

This is not merely about sexual sin, though that is certainly included. The lust of the eyes is bigger than that. It includes the craving awakened by seeing what God has not given you and deciding you must have it anyway. It includes material envy, lifestyle comparison, religious image-building, platform jealousy, fashion obsession, luxury lust, status hunger,

and the constant itch to possess what belongs to another man, another family, another ministry, another calling, another season, or another life. The eye sees the car, the house, the body, the spouse, the bank account, the clothes, the vacation, the platform, the crowd, the watch, the pulpit, the position, the influence, the beauty, the applause, and then the heart whispers, “Why not me?” That is where the rot begins. The object may not even be evil in itself. The sin begins when the eye turns a thing into bait and the heart turns bait into treasure. A house is not evil. A car is not evil. Beauty is not evil. Money is not evil. Ministry is not evil. But when the eye begins to lust, the thing seen becomes a hook.

The modern world is the most eye-driven generation in history. A man now carries a covetousness machine in his pocket. He does not have to go looking for temptation in some back alley. It lights up in his hand. Social media teaches envy all day long. Advertising baptizes discontent. Luxury culture tells working people they are failures unless they live like celebrities. Fitness culture can become body worship. Fashion culture can become vanity. Ministry culture can become platform jealousy. Even religious circles are full of people curating images, posing as deeper, stronger, holier, richer, happier, more blessed, more successful, and more anointed than they really are. The eye takes it in, the heart compares, and the soul begins to rot. The Bible warned about this long before a screen ever existed. Eve saw. Achan saw. David saw. Lot lifted up his eyes. The issue is ancient. Only the device has changed.

1. The Eye Becomes the Doorway to Desire

Genesis 3:6 says, “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes.” There it is at the beginning. Before Eve took, she saw. Before she ate, she looked. Before she disobeyed, the object was made pleasant to the eyes. The devil understood the route. He did not begin by forcing the fruit into her mouth. He began by altering how she looked at it. God had already spoken. The command was clear. But once the eye began treating the forbidden thing as desirable, the heart began entertaining what the word of God had forbidden. That is how temptation often works. It does not begin with the hand. It begins with the look.

The danger of the eye is that it can make forbidden things appear harmless, beautiful, reasonable, and necessary. Eve did not look at the tree and say, “There is death.” She looked and saw something good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desired to make one wise. The devil’s trick is to separate the appearance of the thing from the word of God about the thing. The eye says, “It looks good.” The Bible says, “It leads to death.” The eye says, “It seems pleasant.” The Bible says, “God said no.” The eye says, “This could benefit me.” The Bible says, “The commandment is clear.” When the eye becomes the authority, the man is already in danger. The eye was never meant to overrule the Book.

This is where many Christians fall. They do not start by rejecting doctrine openly. They start by looking too long at something God told them to judge. They look at the world's pleasure until holiness seems dull. They look at someone else's life until their own blessings seem small. They look at corrupt success until faithfulness seems unprofitable. They look at sensual images until purity seems restrictive. They look at luxury until contentment seems like failure. They look at big ministries built on compromise until a small faithful work seems insignificant. The eye brings the report, and if the heart is not ruled by Scripture, desire begins to preach. That is why the eye must be governed by the word of God.

2. Achan Saw Before He Took

Joshua 7 gives one of the clearest examples of the lust of the eyes. Achan said, "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them" (Joshua 7:21). Notice the order. "I saw." "Then I coveted." "And took." That is the anatomy of the fall. Sight led to covetousness, and covetousness led to action. The sin did not begin when his hand picked up the garment. It began when his eye took possession of it before his hand ever moved. He saw the Babylonish garment, the silver, and the gold, and something inside him decided God's command was less important than the thing in front of him.

Achan's sin is especially instructive because the objects looked valuable. This was not some obviously disgusting thing. It was a goodly garment, silver, and gold. The lust of the eyes often works through things that appear profitable, beautiful, refined, and useful. The Babylonish garment looked better than obedience. The silver looked more practical than holiness. The wedge of gold looked more secure than the blessing of God. That is how covetousness lies. It presents disobedience as opportunity. It makes forbidden gain look like provision. It makes compromise look like advancement. It makes the thing God banned look like the thing you cannot afford to miss.

But Achan did not merely ruin himself. His sin affected Israel. That is another lesson modern Christians need badly. The lust of the eyes is never as private as it pretends to be. One man sees, covets, takes, hides, and then others suffer. His family suffers. His church suffers. His testimony suffers. His ministry suffers. His children suffer. His brethren suffer. Sin always tries to convince a man that what he sees and wants is his own private matter. But Achan's hidden treasure became public judgment. What he buried in the earth eventually came out under the eye of God. That goodly Babylonish garment was not worth the trouble it brought. The things men covet rarely are.

3. The Eye Feeds Covetousness

Proverbs 27:20 says, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” That verse is a spiritual diagnosis of the human condition. The eyes of man are never satisfied. They always want another look, another object, another possession, another comparison, another image, another pleasure, another upgrade, another achievement, another body, another house, another stage, another audience, another proof of success. The flesh says, “Just one more,” but “one more” never fills the appetite. The eye is a doorway, but it is also a furnace. If it is not governed by God, it keeps burning through what it sees and demands more fuel.

This is why advertising is so powerful. Advertising is not merely information. It is often engineered discontent. It shows you what you do not have, makes you feel incomplete without it, and then sells the cure. It trains the eyes to become servants of covetousness. The man did not know he was deprived until the image told him. The woman did not know she was lacking until the picture preached to her. The teenager did not know he was uncool until the screen disciplined him. The pastor did not know his church was a failure until he stared at another man’s crowd. The business owner did not know his life was small until luxury culture told him everyone successful lives at a higher level. The eye receives the sermon, and covetousness gives the invitation.

The Bible does not treat covetousness lightly. Paul calls covetousness idolatry. That means when the eye feeds covetousness, it is not merely creating dissatisfaction. It is creating worship disorder. The heart begins to bow toward what it lacks. It says, “If I had that, I would be satisfied. If I had that, I would be secure. If I had that, I would be admired. If I had that, I would matter.” That is idolatry talking. The lust of the eyes turns the thing seen into a false saviour. It tells the soul that the missing object can do what only God can do. That is why the eyes of man are never satisfied. They are trying to fill an eternal hole with temporary pictures.

4. The Modern Screen Is a School of Envy

This generation carries a device that trains the lust of the eyes every day. A phone can be a useful tool, and a Christian can use it for work, communication, preaching, learning, and spreading truth. But the same device can also become a school of envy, lust, vanity, distraction, outrage, comparison, and covetousness. The issue is not the glass and metal in your hand. The issue is what comes through it and what it does to your heart. The eye takes in more images in one day than many previous generations saw in a month. That changes people. It trains attention. It trains appetite. It trains comparison. It trains dissatisfaction.

Social media is especially dangerous because it rarely shows real life. It shows edited life, posed life, filtered life, staged life, selected life, exaggerated life, and sometimes

completely fake life. One man posts the one angle that makes his life look perfect. Another posts the one quote that makes him look profound. Another posts the one room that looks clean while the rest of the house is chaos. Another posts ministry numbers to look powerful. Another posts luxury to look blessed. Another posts family moments to look whole. Another posts controversy to look bold. The eye sees these fragments and begins comparing them to the full weight of ordinary life. That is madness. You are comparing your entire book to someone else's polished cover.

This also happens in ministry. A preacher can begin looking at other men's platforms and become sick with envy. He sees the crowd, the conference, the book sales, the followers, the invitations, the polished production, the expensive building, the applause, and suddenly the work God gave him seems small. That is the lust of the eyes in religious clothing. The same spirit that makes a worldly man envy a mansion can make a preacher envy another man's pulpit. The same spirit that makes a woman envy another woman's beauty can make a teacher envy another teacher's influence. The screen did not create covetousness, but it feeds it constantly. A wise Christian must decide whether the thing in his hand is serving his calling or schooling his flesh.

5. The Eye Can Turn Blessings Into Bitterness

The lust of the eyes does not only make a man want evil things. It can also make him despise good things God has already given him. That is one of its cruelest effects. The eye sees what someone else has, and suddenly the man becomes blind to his own mercies. He has food, clothing, shelter, salvation, Scripture, family, health, opportunity, and daily grace, but one look at another man's portion turns gratitude sour. The eye becomes a thief, not because it steals the other man's possession, but because it steals joy from the one who looked wrongly.

This is why comparison is so deadly. The man who compares constantly cannot enjoy anything cleanly. If he has a good house, someone has a bigger one. If he has a good car, someone has a newer one. If he has a good ministry, someone has a larger one. If he has a good family, someone's pictures look happier. If he has beauty, someone looks younger. If he has money, someone has more. If he has influence, someone has a louder name. The eyes of man are never satisfied. Comparison keeps moving the finish line. It teaches a person to feel poor while surrounded by blessings. It teaches a preacher to feel useless while being faithful. It teaches a Christian to feel neglected while being cared for by God.

Psalms 73 shows this battle. Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked and said his feet were almost gone. The sight of their ease, pride, and abundance nearly made him stumble. He began to question whether cleansing his heart had been worth it. That is how powerful sight

can be. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, he understood their end. Eternity corrected what his eyes had distorted. That is the answer. The eyes must be brought into the sanctuary. They must learn to see with the light of Scripture. Without eternity, the wicked look enviable. With eternity, they look pitiful. Without Scripture, the world looks successful. With Scripture, it looks condemned.

6. The Eye Must Be Covenanted and Governed

Job said, “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). That is a remarkable statement. Job understood that the eye and the mind are connected. What the eye entertains, the mind begins to think upon. What the mind thinks upon, the heart begins to warm toward. What the heart warms toward, the will eventually pursues. Job did not treat his eyes like independent agents free to roam. He made a covenant with them. He brought them under moral government. That is not legalism. That is wisdom.

A Christian who does not govern his eyes is volunteering for trouble. This applies to sexual temptation, but it does not stop there. Govern the eyes from lust. Govern the eyes from envy. Govern the eyes from vanity. Govern the eyes from covetousness. Govern the eyes from luxury worship. Govern the eyes from religious comparison. Govern the eyes from constant news outrage. Govern the eyes from images that feed fear, pride, anger, and discontent. The eye is not just collecting harmless data. It is feeding the inner man either poison or truth. “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Psalm 101:3). That verse is not old-fashioned extremism. It is spiritual hygiene.

This means some things have to be shut off, unfollowed, avoided, deleted, limited, or judged. Not because the Christian is weak in the wrong sense, but because he is honest about the flesh. A man who knows a stove is hot is not a coward for refusing to lay his hand on it. A man who knows a road leads to a cliff is not legalistic for refusing to drive it. A man who knows certain images inflame his flesh is a fool if he keeps staring at them in the name of liberty. A woman who knows certain feeds make her bitter, vain, envious, or dissatisfied is not spiritual for continuing to consume them. Govern the eyes, or the eyes will govern the heart.

7. The Word of God Must Teach the Eye How to See

The final answer to the lust of the eyes is not blindness. It is biblical sight. God does not call the Christian to walk around with no eyes, no awareness, no discernment, and no ability to recognize beauty, danger, or opportunity. He calls him to see rightly. The word of God must retrain the eyes. Scripture teaches a man that the world’s glory is temporary. It teaches him that the wicked’s prosperity is slippery. It teaches him that beauty without holiness is vain.

It teaches him that riches make themselves wings. It teaches him that the fashion of this world passeth away. It teaches him that the hidden man of the heart matters more than outward display. It teaches him that the judgment seat of Christ matters more than earthly applause.

When the Bible governs the eyes, the Christian starts seeing through the glitter. He can see a luxury preacher and not envy him. He can see a celebrity and not worship him. He can see a beautiful temptation and remember death under the paint. He can see another man's success and not despise his own calling. He can see wealth and not assume blessing. He can see popularity and not assume truth. He can see a big platform and not assume God is behind it. He can see a simple faithful life and recognize value the world cannot measure. Scripture changes the eye because it changes the scale. The world measures by appearance. God measures by truth.

This is why the eyes must be filled with the right things. Look unto Jesus. Look into the perfect law of liberty. Look for the Saviour. Look at the fields white unto harvest. Look at the end of the wicked. Look at the judgment seat. Look at eternity. Look at Calvary. Look at the empty tomb. Look at the promises of God. The lust of the eyes is weakened when the eyes are trained to behold better glory. The world's shine loses power when the heart sees the glory of Christ. The devil's bait looks cheaper when the word of God turns the lights on. The eyes can be missionaries for the flesh, but under Scripture they can become servants of faith.

Conclusion

The lust of the eyes is one of the world's oldest weapons. Eve saw the tree. Achan saw the Babylonish garment, the silver, and the gold. David saw Bathsheba. Lot lifted up his eyes toward the well-watered plain. Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked and nearly slipped. Again and again, the Bible shows that what a man sees can awaken desire, and desire can become a chain if it is not brought under the authority of God. The eye becomes the doorway, the heart becomes the warehouse, and the will eventually goes shopping. That is why this matter is not small. It is not harmless looking. It is not innocent curiosity when the heart is ready to covet. The eye must be governed.

In the modern world, this danger has multiplied because the eyes are constantly fed. Screens, advertisements, social media, entertainment, fashion, luxury culture, and religious image-building all preach to the eye. They tell the heart to want more, envy more, compare more, display more, and feel deprived. But Proverbs 27:20 still says, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." If the eyes are not governed by Scripture, they will keep demanding more until gratitude dies, contentment

dries up, holiness looks dull, and the world looks beautiful. That is exactly what the devil wants. He does not need to force the believer into ruin if he can simply keep showing him the right bait.

So the command remains: love not the world. Do not let the eye make treaties with the enemy. Do not stare at what God told you to flee. Do not envy what God has not given you. Do not measure your life by someone else's edited picture. Do not let a screen disciple your desires. Do not let a Babylonish garment look better than obedience. Do not let silver and gold make you forget the fear of God. Make a covenant with your eyes. Set no wicked thing before them. Bring them into the sanctuary of Scripture. Teach them to see the end of the wicked, the vanity of riches, the passing fashion of this world, and the glory of Christ. The world preaches through the eye, but the Bible teaches the eye how to see.

7 of 20: Love Not the World - The Pride of Life

The pride of life is one of the ugliest things in the world because it can dress itself in the cleanest clothes. A man can put away the bottle, throw out the cigarettes, stop watching filthy movies, separate from obvious sins, carry a Bible under his arm, speak in religious phrases, and still be eaten alive with pride. That is why John does not merely warn about the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. He adds "the pride of life" and says it "is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). There is a kind of worldliness that does not look like a drunk staggering out of a bar. It looks like a preacher enjoying his own name. It looks like a religious man keeping careful count of who respects him. It looks like a church turning a pulpit into a stage and a congregation into a fan club. It looks like a man talking about humility while managing his public image like a Hollywood agent. It looks like a Bible teacher who wants to be quoted more than he wants Christ to be obeyed. That thing is worldly to the bone.

The pride of life is not always loud. Sometimes it is polished, smiling, smooth, educated, respectable, and covered in Scripture. It does not always scream, "Look at me." Sometimes it says, "To God be the glory," while making sure the camera angle is right, the applause is strong, the name is large, the title is honored, the platform is protected, and the followers know who the important man is. The flesh does not care whether it is praised in a nightclub or praised in a church building as long as it gets praised. The old man is perfectly willing to trade barroom applause for pulpit applause if the room is cleaner and the praise lasts longer. That is why religious pride can be more dangerous than open worldliness. At least

the drunkard may know he is low. The proud religious man thinks he is high, and he thanks God he is not as other men are.

Proverbs says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). That verse is not a suggestion. It is a law. Pride does not merely make a man unpleasant. It puts him on the road to ruin. Nebuchadnezzar walked in his palace and said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built” (Daniel 4:30), and before the sentence was finished, God cut him down like a beast in the field. The Pharisee in Luke 18 stood and prayed with himself, thanking God that he was not like other men, and went home unjustified while the publican smote his breast and cried for mercy. Pride is the poison that makes a man admire himself while God resists him. It can build empires, ministries, reputations, systems, schools, platforms, and followings, but if the foundation is self-exaltation, the whole structure is rotten. The pride of life is the world’s incense offered before the idol of self.

1. Pride Is the World’s Original Religion

Pride did not begin in Hollywood, Rome, Washington, Wall Street, or some modern celebrity pulpit. Pride reaches back into the deepest rebellion against God. The devil’s sin was not that he lacked religion. He wanted exaltation. He wanted a throne. He wanted height. He wanted admiration. He wanted to be like the most High. Pride is the original religion of the creature trying to rise above his place. It is the spirit that says, “I will ascend.” It is the spirit that says, “I deserve recognition.” It is the spirit that says, “I must be seen.” It is the spirit that says, “I am not content to be what God made me and stand where God put me.” That spirit is not of the Father. It is of the world.

The pride of life is worldliness because it measures life by visible importance. It wants titles, rank, influence, admiration, respect, followers, degrees, appearance, position, platform, and reputation. It wants to be known. It wants to be feared. It wants to be complimented. It wants to be associated with important names. It wants to be treated as special. It wants a seat, a label, a credential, a spotlight, and a crowd. That is the world’s measuring stick. The world asks, “Who knows you? How many follow you? How much do you own? What have you built? What title do you carry? What room do you enter? Who quotes you? Who envies you?” God asks whether a man is humble, faithful, obedient, clean, truthful, and submitted to His word.

This is why pride can be so religious. Religion gives the flesh a stage where it can look sanctified while still seeking attention. A man can be proud of his knowledge, proud of his separation, proud of his preaching, proud of his suffering, proud of his humility, proud of his sacrifices, proud of his doctrine, proud of his church, proud of his influence, and proud of

being less worldly than others. Pride is a shape-shifter. If it cannot boast in sin, it will boast in righteousness. If it cannot boast in worldliness, it will boast in separation. If it cannot boast in money, it will boast in poverty. If it cannot boast in popularity, it will boast in being persecuted. The flesh is clever enough to turn almost anything into a mirror.

2. The Pride of Life Builds Around Image

The pride of life is obsessed with image. It is not satisfied with being faithful. It must be perceived as faithful. It is not satisfied with knowing truth. It must be recognized as a truth-teller. It is not satisfied with serving. It must be seen serving. It is not satisfied with preaching. It must be praised for preaching. It is not satisfied with holiness. It must be admired as holy. That is why the Lord Jesus warned about men who did their alms before men, prayed to be seen of men, and disfigured their faces while fasting so men would notice their supposed spirituality. They had their reward. The reward was human attention, and they got what they wanted.

Modern image-management has only made the disease worse. Now a man can curate a life, edit a ministry, polish a persona, and present an image that looks deeper, stronger, busier, holier, more successful, more persecuted, more fruitful, and more important than reality. He can turn every sermon into a branding moment, every prayer into content, every controversy into platform growth, every act of service into a photograph, and every trial into a public performance. The pride of life loves that arrangement. It gives the old man a thousand mirrors and calls them ministry tools. It lets him say, “I am just trying to reach people,” while secretly checking whether people are reaching back with praise.

This is not a call to hide every good work or refuse every public responsibility. A preacher must preach publicly. A teacher must teach. A witness must speak. A leader must lead. A man with a platform can use it for truth. The issue is not visibility. The issue is vanity. The issue is whether the man wants Christ seen or himself seen. The issue is whether he is willing to be forgotten if truth is remembered. The issue is whether he can serve without being praised. The issue is whether correction offends him because Scripture was violated or because his image was touched. The pride of life turns useful visibility into self-worship. God can use a public man, but a public man had better fear the mirror.

3. Nebuchadnezzar Shows the Madness of Self-Exaltation

Nebuchadnezzar is one of the Bible’s greatest warnings against the pride of life. Daniel 4:30 records him walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon and saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built.” Look at the language. “I have built.” “My power.” “My majesty.” The man looked at a kingdom and saw himself. He looked at buildings and saw his greatness. He looked at power and saw his own glory. He forgot that the most High ruleth in

the kingdom of men. He forgot that a king's breath is in God's hand. He forgot that the throne beneath him could be turned into a field beneath him in a moment. Pride always makes a man forget dependence.

God answered him immediately. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven" (Daniel 4:31). That is frightening. Before the boast could cool in the air, judgment came. Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men, ate grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. That is God's opinion of human greatness when it exalts itself against Him. One minute he is admiring Babylon. The next he is acting like a beast. Pride had made him beastly before the judgment ever manifested it. God simply exposed outwardly what pride had made inwardly.

This is a warning to every man who builds something and starts smelling himself. A business, a ministry, a church, a following, a house, a reputation, a body of work, a platform, a degree, a title, a family, or a name can all become Babylon in the heart if the man starts saying, "Look what I have built." A Christian should work hard. He should be diligent. He should use his gifts. He should build what God allows him to build. But he had better remember that everything he has came through mercy. His breath is borrowed. His mind is borrowed. His opportunity is borrowed. His open doors are borrowed. His strength is borrowed. His next heartbeat is not guaranteed. If God can put Nebuchadnezzar in the grass, He can put any proud man on his face.

4. The Pharisee Shows Religious Pride at Prayer

Luke 18 gives another picture of the pride of life, and this one is more subtle because it happens in a religious setting. The Pharisee stood and prayed "with himself" (Luke 18:11). That phrase is devastating. He was standing in a posture of prayer, but his prayer was not real communion with God. It was self-admiration spoken in religious language. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are" (Luke 18:11). There is the smell of religious pride. He compared himself downward. Extortioners, unjust men, adulterers, and even that publican became the measuring stick by which he admired himself. He was not broken before a holy God. He was posing before a mirror.

He listed his religious achievements. "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:12). Those acts were not wrong in themselves. Fasting and giving can be right when done unto God. But in that man's mouth they became trophies. He was using religious activity as evidence that God should be impressed. That is the danger. The flesh can turn obedience into self-exaltation. It can take a good thing and corrupt the motive until the man is no longer grateful for grace but proud of performance. He stopped seeing

himself as a sinner needing mercy and started seeing himself as a superior man deserving recognition. That is religious worldliness.

The publican, by contrast, stood afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, smote upon his breast, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Jesus said that man went down to his house justified rather than the other. That should terrify religious pride. The man with the impressive record went home unjustified. The broken sinner crying for mercy went home justified. Why? Because God does not justify self-admiration. He justifies the ungodly who come by mercy. The pride of life makes a man compare himself to other men. The fear of God makes a man compare himself to God's holiness and cry for mercy.

5. Pride Turns Pulpits Into Stages

The pride of life does not stop at personal reputation. It can infect ministry itself. A pulpit is supposed to be a place where the words of God are declared, Christ is exalted, sin is rebuked, saints are edified, sinners are warned, and the flock is fed. But pride turns pulpits into stages. It turns preaching into performance. It turns shepherds into personalities. It turns congregations into audiences. It turns doctrine into branding. It turns ministry into empire-building. It turns a church into a fan club where the central question is not, "What saith the Scripture?" but "What does the important man say?"

This is one of the great diseases of modern Christianity. Celebrity preaching has trained people to evaluate men by polish, charm, production value, wealth, crowd size, storytelling ability, emotional manipulation, and public image. The faithful preacher with a Bible, a spine, and a small congregation is treated like a nobody while the polished compromiser with a massive platform is treated like a prophet. That is worldly thinking. God never told His people to measure truth by crowd size. Noah was not wrong because he was outnumbered. Jeremiah was not wrong because he was unpopular. Paul was not wrong because he was in prison. Christ was not wrong because the multitude cried, "Crucify him." The pride of life loves numbers because numbers can be used as mirrors.

A preacher must fear becoming a brand more than he fears being ignored. The moment a man's image becomes more important than God's message, his ministry is in danger. The moment he cannot be corrected, he is in danger. The moment he must always be central, he is in danger. The moment he uses people to build his name instead of using his name to point people to Christ, he is in danger. The moment he loves being quoted more than he loves being faithful, he is in danger. The moment his pulpit becomes a stage, his church becomes a theater, and his people become spectators, the pride of life has moved into the sanctuary and hung curtains.

6. Pride Can Hide Behind Humility Language

One of pride's cleverest tricks is learning the language of humility. A proud man may say, "I am nothing," while being furious if others treat him like nothing. He may say, "All glory to God," while secretly craving the compliments that follow. He may say, "I am just a servant," while demanding servant status with executive privileges. He may say, "I do not care who gets the credit," while carefully making sure his contribution is noticed. He may say, "I am humbled," while posting the evidence for everyone to admire. That is not humility. That is pride wearing a mask.

True humility is not thinking you are worthless in a dramatic way so people will reassure you. True humility is agreeing with God about what you are and what He is. It is not self-hatred. It is not theatrical lowliness. It is not fishing for praise by insulting yourself. It is sober judgment. It knows that anything good in the believer came from God. It knows that salvation is grace. It knows that gifts are given. It knows that opportunities are mercy. It knows that knowledge can puff up if charity is absent. It knows that the man who thinks he stands must take heed lest he fall. It knows that God can set up and put down in a moment.

Humility language without humility is especially dangerous in ministry. A man can constantly tell people he is unworthy while building a whole system around his own importance. He can say he is just a vessel while making sure nobody forgets the vessel's name. He can preach against pride while being impossible to challenge. He can claim to serve Christ while collecting loyalists to himself. This is why motives must be judged under Scripture. The heart is deceitful. The pride of life does not vanish because a man uses the right phrases. Sometimes the most dangerous pride in the room is the one that learned to say "humble" at the right moments.

7. The Cure Is Godward Fear and Cross-Bearing Humility

The cure for the pride of life is not insecurity. It is not pretending you have no gifts. It is not refusing responsibility. It is not hiding from useful work. It is not becoming weak, timid, or silent. The cure is Godward fear and cross-bearing humility. A man must see God high enough that self shrinks to its proper size. Nebuchadnezzar was restored when he lifted up his eyes unto heaven and blessed the most High. He learned that God's dominion is everlasting and that "those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37). That is the cure. Look up. Remember who rules. Remember who gives breath. Remember who can abase.

The cross also destroys pride. A man standing at Calvary has no room to boast. The cross says your sin was so bad that the Son of God had to bleed, and God's grace was so great that He did. The cross strips man of self-glory. Salvation is not by works. It is not by merit. It

is not by religious performance. It is not by reputation. It is not by church status. It is not by education. It is by the blood of Christ. The ground is level at Calvary. The preacher, the publican, the scholar, the beggar, the businessman, the mother, the prisoner, the respectable sinner, and the ruined sinner all come the same way or they do not come at all. That truth will humble a man if he lets it get below his neck.

The judgment seat of Christ also sobers pride. A man may be praised here and lose reward there. He may be ignored here and honored there. He may be quoted here and corrected there. He may have a large platform here and wood, hay, and stubble there. He may look small in the eyes of men and shine in the eyes of the Lord. The pride of life lives for present recognition. Faith lives for future approval from Christ. If a man remembers that he will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give account, he will stop being so impressed with earthly applause. He will serve, preach, work, build, and fight, but he will do it with trembling hands and a bowed heart.

Conclusion

The pride of life is one of the most dangerous forms of worldliness because it can look religious while remaining completely worldly. It does not have to smell like liquor or look like open immorality. It can smell like cologne, wear a suit, hold a Bible, lead a ministry, preach a sermon, write a book, run a church, build a platform, and still be nothing but the old flesh demanding praise. John says it plainly: "the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). That means religious pride is not better because it uses Bible language. If the heart is seeking image, ego, titles, reputation, admiration, and self-exaltation, the spirit is worldly no matter how clean the outside looks.

Nebuchadnezzar warns the powerful man. The Pharisee warns the religious man. Proverbs warns every man. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). God knows how to bring a proud king into a field, and He knows how to send a proud Pharisee home unjustified. He knows how to abase the man who has become too impressed with his own Babylon. He knows how to resist the man who uses prayer as a mirror. He knows how to expose the preacher who turns a pulpit into a stage and the church member who turns separation into self-admiration. No man is safe from pride by position, doctrine, history, gifts, or reputation. The higher a man stands, the more he had better fear the fall.

So love not the world, and do not love the world's opinion of you. Do not love applause. Do not love titles. Do not love the seat of recognition. Do not love the feeling of being admired. Do not love being quoted more than being obedient. Do not love ministry success more than Christ. Do not love your own image. Do not build Babylon in your heart and write God's

name on the gate. Let God be true, Christ be exalted, the Book be honored, and self be kept under the sentence of the cross. The old flesh does not care whether it gets praised in a nightclub or a church building, as long as it gets praised. Deny it. Judge it. Fear God. Walk humbly. The pride of life is not of the Father. It is of the world, and the world passeth away.

8 of 20: Love Not the World - They Loved the Praise of Men

There is a verse in John 12 that explains a mountain of cowardice in modern Christianity. It is not complicated. It does not require a seminary to decode it. It does not need a scholar to rescue it from the plain English. The Bible says, “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue” (John 12:42). Then the Holy Ghost gives the diagnosis: “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43). There it is. They believed something true about Christ, but they would not confess Him openly because the religious crowd might cost them their place, name, seat, reputation, influence, respectability, and public standing. That is not an intellectual problem. That is not a lack of evidence. That is not uncertainty about Greek tenses or manuscript readings. That is love of praise. They wanted Christ without reproach, truth without cost, faith without confession, and approval from God without disapproval from men.

The religion of applause is one of the most powerful forms of worldliness because it does not have to offer a man a bottle, a prostitute, a gambling table, or a filthy movie. Sometimes the world does not pull a man away from God with gross sin. Sometimes it simply offers applause in exchange for silence. It says, “Keep your Bible, but do not preach that verse. Keep your faith, but do not confess that doctrine. Keep your convictions, but do not make them public. Keep your Christ, but do not offend the synagogue. Keep your ministry, but trim the edges. Keep your platform, but lower the heat. Keep your followers, but soften the truth. Keep your invitation list, but stop naming error. Keep your respectability, but stop being so clear.” That is how the fear of man works. It does not always demand that you deny Christ with your mouth. Sometimes it only asks that you fail to confess Him when confession would cost you something.

This essay must press the issue where it hurts. A man who must be liked is already chained. A preacher who needs applause will eventually edit the sermon. A teacher who needs approval will eventually trim the doctrine. A Christian who needs the world’s respect will eventually be ashamed of the Book. A man who lives by compliments will die by criticism. The Bible says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Proverbs 29:25). A snare does

not have to kill a man immediately. It only has to catch him. Once he is caught, he stops moving freely. The fear of man catches his tongue, catches his convictions, catches his preaching, catches his witness, catches his boldness, catches his conscience, and makes him ask, “What will they think?” before he asks, “What did God say?” That is the religion of applause. It is worldly to the core, even when the applause comes from religious hands.

1. Believing Privately Is Not the Same as Confessing Publicly

John 12 is a frightening passage because it shows men who had enough light to believe, but not enough courage to confess. “Among the chief rulers also many believed on him” (John 12:42). Those words are remarkable. These were not ignorant pagans on the far side of the empire. These were chief rulers. They had access to the Scriptures, the temple, the synagogue, the testimony of Christ’s miracles, and the witness of His words. They knew enough to recognize something true. But when the pressure came from the Pharisees, they folded. The problem was not that Christ had failed to reveal Himself. The problem was that confession carried a price tag.

The Bible says they did not confess Him “lest they should be put out of the synagogue” (John 12:42). That was social cost, religious cost, community cost, family cost, and status cost. To be put out meant exclusion, shame, loss of standing, loss of respect, and loss of influence. They wanted the truth, but they wanted their seat too. They wanted Christ, but they wanted the synagogue’s approval. They wanted inward belief, but they did not want outward identification. That is the old coward’s bargain. “I believe it, but I do not want to say it too loudly.” “I agree, but I cannot be associated with that.” “I know the Bible says it, but we have to be careful.” Careful often means cowardly when the issue is plain truth.

Modern Christianity is full of this kind of secret agreement. Men know the King James Bible is being attacked, but they keep quiet because the scholarly crowd might laugh. Preachers know the prosperity gospel is filthy, but they soften the rebuke because famous names are attached to it. Teachers know Rome preaches another gospel, but they dodge the issue because ecumenical people will call them divisive. Christians know sodomy, fornication, drunkenness, greed, false doctrine, and worldliness are condemned in the Bible, but they whisper where they should speak. Private belief does not excuse public cowardice when God requires confession. Truth hidden to preserve reputation is truth betrayed at the point of pressure.

2. The Praise of Men Can Become a False God

John 12:43 says, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Notice the language. It does not merely say they feared criticism. It says they loved praise. Fear of man and love of praise are twins. A man fears losing what he loves receiving. If he loves the

praise of men, he will fear their disapproval. If he loves their applause, he will fear their silence. If he loves their invitations, he will fear being excluded. If he loves their respect, he will fear being labeled. The praise of men becomes a false god because it begins to govern obedience. Whatever a man must have before he obeys God has become an idol.

The praise of men is intoxicating because it feels clean compared to other sins. A man knows lust is dirty. He knows drunkenness is shameful. He knows theft is wrong. But praise feels good. Respect feels good. Admiration feels good. Being thought wise, balanced, kind, brave, intelligent, successful, or important feels good. That is why it is dangerous. It does not feel like rebellion when people are clapping. It feels like confirmation. A preacher can mistake applause for anointing. A teacher can mistake popularity for truth. A Christian can mistake being liked for being useful. But applause is not the voice of God. Crowds clapped for many devils and cried against many prophets.

The praise of men becomes especially dangerous in religious work. A preacher may begin by wanting to help people and end by needing them to admire him. A writer may begin by wanting truth spread and end by needing his name attached to everything. A teacher may begin by wanting doctrine understood and end by needing to be regarded as the authority. A church may begin by wanting souls saved and end by wanting the community to view it as respectable. Praise is a subtle drug. Once a man is addicted, he will adjust the dose of truth to keep the applause coming. He may not deny everything at once. He will simply shave off the sharp corners until the message no longer cuts.

3. The Fear of Man Is a Snare

Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.” A snare is not a harmless inconvenience. It is a trap designed to catch and hold. The fear of man catches a man before he even opens his mouth. He begins calculating reactions. “Will they be offended? Will they unfollow? Will they stop inviting me? Will they call me extreme? Will they think I am uneducated? Will they say I am hateful? Will they leave the church? Will they stop giving? Will they laugh? Will they attack me?” By the time he is finished asking what men might do, he has forgotten to ask what God already said.

This snare is everywhere. It catches pastors who preach around controversial texts instead of through them. It catches parents who know their children are wrong but fear losing friendship with them. It catches Christians at work who never witness because they fear awkwardness. It catches social media believers who post safe religious sayings but avoid plain doctrine. It catches churches that remove the bloody hymns, the hard preaching, the Bible words, and the unpopular truths so visitors will feel comfortable. It catches scholars

who know where unbelief leads but fear being mocked by other scholars. It catches men who once had backbone until they started enjoying the benefits of being liked.

The only safe place is trust in the Lord. Proverbs gives the contrast. The fear of man brings a snare, but trust in the Lord brings safety. That does not mean safety from criticism, rejection, slander, or loss. It means safety from the trap. The man who trusts the Lord can be hated and still be free. He can lose invitations and still be free. He can be mocked and still be free. He can be misunderstood and still be free. He can be put out of the synagogue and still be free. The man who fears men may keep his seat, but he loses his liberty. He lives in a cage furnished with compliments.

4. Paul Refused to Preach as a Man-Pleaser

Paul asked a question that every preacher, teacher, writer, and public Christian should keep before his face: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?” (Galatians 1:10). Then he said, “for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). That verse is a sword. It does not say a servant of Christ should be rude, careless, needlessly offensive, or foolish. But it does say that pleasing men cannot be the controlling aim of a servant of Christ. A preacher who must please men has already changed masters.

Paul’s ministry proves the point. He did not preach to be liked. He preached to be faithful. Sometimes men received him. Sometimes they stoned him. Sometimes they wept with him. Sometimes they called him mad. Sometimes they supported him. Sometimes they forsook him. Sometimes churches loved him. Sometimes brethren questioned him. Sometimes enemies hunted him. But Paul did not adjust the gospel to fit the temperature of the room. He preached Christ crucified. He rebuked Peter publicly when Peter’s conduct compromised the truth of the gospel. He named names. He warned churches. He charged Timothy to preach the word in season and out of season. He knew that the preacher’s duty is not to keep everyone comfortable. It is to tell the truth under God.

This is where modern preaching has collapsed. Too many men enter the pulpit like politicians reading polls. They know what not to say. They know which verses will make the rich uncomfortable, which doctrines will offend the visitors, which sins will make the youth restless, which truths will anger the women, which rebukes will disturb the deacons, which warnings will shrink the crowd, and which subjects will get them labeled. So they become experts at trimming. They keep the sermon smooth, general, positive, therapeutic, and safe. That may please men, but Paul already said what it means: “if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” The pulpit is not a customer-service desk. It is a place for the word of God.

5. Religious Leaders Often Love Applause Most

Matthew 23 exposes religious applause better than almost any chapter in the Bible. Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, “But all their works they do for to be seen of men” (Matthew 23:5). There is the motive. They enlarged their phylacteries, lengthened the borders of their garments, loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, the chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, “Rabbi, Rabbi.” They were not irreligious men. They were very religious men. But their religion had an audience problem. They wanted to be seen, honored, greeted, titled, and admired.

That spirit has not died. It just changed clothes. Today it loves titles, platforms, conference introductions, special seating, honorary degrees, professional branding, photo opportunities, ministry celebrity, and constant affirmation. A man can say he is serving God while quietly building a throne in the minds of people. He wants to be “the voice,” “the authority,” “the apostle,” “the prophet,” “the scholar,” “the defender,” “the man of God,” “the movement leader,” or “the one everybody listens to.” That is Matthew 23 with better lighting. The old flesh still loves chief seats. It still loves greetings in the marketplace. Now the marketplace is digital, and the greetings come as likes, shares, follows, reposts, praise comments, and invitations.

Jesus cut through all of it. “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). Biblical greatness is not measured by how many men call your name. It is measured by faithfulness before God. The man who needs titles has a sick heart. The preacher who needs constant affirmation is in danger. The teacher who cannot stand being questioned has already started smelling himself. The Christian who does right only when people notice is not serving Christ. He is serving an audience. That audience may be religious, but it is still an idol if its praise controls him.

6. Applause Buys Silence

The world does not always persecute truth first. Sometimes it first rewards silence. That is more effective with certain men. It gives them access, respectability, invitations, money, institutional approval, academic acceptance, denominational safety, business opportunities, followers, and friendly relationships. Then when a hard truth needs to be spoken, the man looks at everything he might lose and decides to be “wise.” That word “wise” has covered a multitude of cowardly sins. There is a Bible wisdom that speaks rightly at the right time. But there is also a worldly wisdom that means, “I love my seat too much to risk it.”

The chief rulers in John 12 knew what they would lose. They feared being put out of the synagogue. That was the price. Today the synagogue may be a denomination, a university, a

platform, a ministry circle, a business network, a family system, a friend group, a social media audience, or a respectable public identity. The principle is the same. Confess Christ clearly, and you may be put out. Stand on the Book, and you may be laughed out. Name false doctrine, and you may be pushed out. Refuse the world's moral insanity, and you may be cast out. Expose religious fraud, and you may be shut out. The praise of men is often paid in advance so your silence can be purchased later.

This is why the Christian must decide before the pressure comes. If you wait until the room is hot to decide whether truth matters, you will likely wilt. Daniel purposed in his heart before the king's meat touched the table. The believer must settle it ahead of time: God's praise is worth more than man's approval. The Book is worth more than a seat. Christ is worth more than a synagogue. Truth is worth more than invitations. Faithfulness is worth more than applause. A man who has settled that can still feel pressure, but pressure will not own him. A man who has not settled it will be for sale the moment the crowd offers him enough approval.

7. The Praise of God Must Matter More

John 12:43 gives the contrast: the praise of men versus the praise of God. The issue is not whether praise exists. The issue is whose praise matters. A Christian should not live as if approval itself is evil. The Lord Himself speaks of future commendation: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Paul speaks of every man having praise of God in the proper judgment. The problem is not wanting God's approval. The problem is preferring man's approval. The problem is living for the temporary applause of sinners instead of the eternal commendation of the Lord.

The praise of God is often delayed. That is why men choose the praise of men. Human praise is immediate. It can be heard, counted, displayed, screenshotted, quoted, and enjoyed now. God's praise is often hidden until the judgment seat. The faithful preacher may be ignored now. The bold witness may be mocked now. The separated Christian may be misunderstood now. The mother raising children in truth may be unseen now. The man who refuses compromise may lose now. The servant who obeys quietly may receive no applause now. But God sees. The Father who seeth in secret knows how to reward openly. The question is whether a man can wait.

The Christian who lives for the praise of God becomes hard to control. Not arrogant, not reckless, not needlessly harsh, but free. He does not need the synagogue to clap. He does not need the Pharisees to approve. He does not need the academy to respect him. He does not need the world to call him balanced. He does not need the crowd to understand him. He needs God's approval. That man can preach plainly, witness boldly, separate cleanly,

stand firmly, and sleep soundly. The world has little power over a man who has already chosen whose praise he wants.

Conclusion

The religion of applause is deadly because it looks cleaner than many other sins. It does not always drag a man into the gutter. Sometimes it seats him among chief rulers, gives him a respected name, and teaches him how to keep quiet at the critical moment. John 12 shows men who believed, but did not confess because they feared being put out. The Holy Ghost's verdict was plain: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). That same spirit explains much of the weakness in modern Christianity. Men know truth but soften it. They know doctrine but trim it. They know the verse but dodge it. They know the gospel but blur it. They know the error but refuse to name it. They know the world is wrong but fear losing the world's approval.

The fear of man is a snare. It catches the tongue, the conscience, the pulpit, the witness, the writer, the parent, the teacher, and the church. It makes men ask what the crowd will think before they ask what God has said. It turns preachers into performers, teachers into diplomats, churches into customer-service centers, and Christians into silent spectators. Paul's words still stand: "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). A servant of Christ may care about men's souls, but he cannot make men's approval his master. The moment he does, he is chained.

So love not the world, and do not love the world's applause. Do not sell truth for respectability. Do not trade confession for a synagogue seat. Do not let compliments become a collar around your neck. Do not let fear of criticism silence the word of God. Do not let religious titles, chief seats, greetings, followers, invitations, or public praise become the reason you speak or the reason you stay quiet. The world does not always offer filth to corrupt a man. Sometimes it offers applause. Refuse the bargain. Better to be put out with Christ than kept in with cowards. Better to have the praise of God later than the praise of men now. Better to stand with the Book and lose the room than keep the room and betray the Book.

9 of 20: Love Not the World - God and Mammon Still Don't Share a Throne

The Lord Jesus Christ did not say money was hard to handle. He said a man cannot serve two masters. That is stronger than most modern Christians want it to be. "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” (Matthew 6:24). Then He names the rival master: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). That sentence ends the debate. It does not say, “Ye should not.” It does not say, “Ye ought not.” It does not say, “Ye may find it difficult.” It says, “Ye cannot.” God and mammon do not share a throne. They do not co-pastor the soul. They do not sit side by side in the temple of the heart. One rules, and the other is rejected. One commands, and the other is disobeyed. One is loved, and the other is hated. One is held, and the other is despised. That is the Lord’s doctrine, and no prosperity preacher with a white smile, an expensive watch, and a seed-faith gimmick can soften it without calling Christ a liar.

Now let the balance be plain. The Bible does not say money is evil. It says, “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). A man can work hard, provide for his family, run a business, pay his debts, use resources wisely, save prudently, give generously, and manage earthly things with sober judgment. There is nothing spiritual about laziness, debt from foolishness, or pretending that poverty automatically makes a man holy. Some men are poor and covetous. Some men are rich and generous. Some men have little and worship money because they constantly dream of it. Some men have much and hold it with an open hand under God. The issue is not the presence of money. The issue is the lordship of money. The question is not, “Do you have money?” The question is, “Does money have you?” The Bible does not condemn stewardship. It condemns slavery. It does not condemn provision. It condemns covetousness. It does not condemn lawful gain. It condemns filthy lucre, greed, and the rotten religion that supposes gain is godliness.

Mammon promises security, power, pleasure, comfort, respect, freedom, image, and control. It tells a poor man he will be happy when he finally has enough. It tells a rich man he cannot be happy unless he gets more. It tells a preacher he can build a bigger work if he trims the message to keep the donors pleased. It tells a church it must avoid hard doctrine because hard doctrine might hurt the budget. It tells a businessman he should compromise a little because profit justifies the method. It tells a family they need a lifestyle more than they need contentment. It tells a Christian that numbers in an account are more reliable than promises in a Book. Mammon is not just money. Mammon is money treated as master. It is wealth with a throne. It is provision turned into idolatry. It is a useful servant that becomes a cruel god. And Christ said you cannot serve it and serve God.

1. Money Is a Tool, But Mammon Is a Master

Money by itself is not evil. It is a tool of exchange in a fallen world. It can buy food, pay bills, support a family, fund gospel work, help the poor, maintain property, print Bibles, support missionaries, build useful things, and relieve suffering. A man who acts like every dollar is defiled simply because it exists has not read his Bible very carefully. Abraham had

substance. Job had substance. David gathered wealth for the temple. Lydia was a seller of purple. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man and used his tomb in connection with the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. The issue is not whether a believer may touch money. The issue is whether money touches the throne of his heart.

Mammon is money personified as a master. That is how the Lord presents it. He does not merely say, "You cannot have God and money." He says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Service is the issue. Mammon gives orders. Mammon makes demands. Mammon threatens. Mammon rewards. Mammon disciplines its servants with fear. Mammon says, "Do not preach that. It may cost you." Mammon says, "Do not give that. You may need it." Mammon says, "Do not obey that. It is bad for business." Mammon says, "Do not tell the truth. You may lose the client." Mammon says, "Do not trust God. Trust the account." When money becomes the voice a man obeys, it has become mammon.

A tool is held in the hand. A master holds the man. That is the difference. A hammer is useful when a man swings it. It is madness if the hammer starts directing the man's life. Money is useful when it is governed by truth, charity, wisdom, and obedience. It becomes destructive when it governs decisions, doctrine, relationships, ministry, priorities, family, and conscience. Many men do not own money. They are owned by it. They think about it constantly, fear losing it constantly, admire those who have more constantly, judge themselves by it constantly, and make excuses for disobedience because of it constantly. That is not stewardship. That is slavery with a bank statement.

2. Treasure Reveals the Heart

The Lord Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19). Then He said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). Then He gives the principle: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). That verse exposes the lie men tell themselves. A man says his heart is with God, but Christ says look at his treasure. What does he store? What does he guard? What does he fear losing? What does he sacrifice for? What does he daydream about? What makes him feel secure? What makes him feel important? What does he refuse to put under God's authority?

Earthly treasure is unstable by design. Moth eats. Rust corrupts. Thieves break through and steal. Markets fall. Currencies shift. Businesses fail. Houses decay. Cars break. Jewelry gets lost. Accounts can vanish. Health can fail. Death can take a man away from everything he spent his life collecting. God built decay into the system after the fall so that men would learn not to trust it. But instead of learning, men keep polishing their idols. They lay up

treasures in a world where every treasure has a death sentence written on it. The treasure may last longer than the man, but it will not save him. He will leave it behind, and someone else will spend what he worshipped.

Heavenly treasure is different. It is not touched by moth, rust, thieves, inflation, banks, courts, taxes, death, or decay. A cup of cold water given in Christ's name is safer than gold buried in a vault. A gospel tract handed out in faith is safer than a stock certificate. A prayer prayed in secret is safer than a public award. A child raised in truth is worth more than a luxury purchase. A faithful sermon preached under God is worth more than a thousand flattering speeches. A dollar used for God's glory is richer than a million used to feed pride. The heart follows treasure, and the wise man sends treasure ahead instead of chaining his heart to a sinking world.

3. The Love of Money Corrupts Both Poverty and Riches

Paul says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). He does not say the possession of money is the root of all evil. He says the love of it. That means the poor man is not automatically innocent and the rich man is not automatically guilty. Poverty can love money by envy. Riches can love money by trust. A poor man can worship money because he believes it would solve every problem, give him identity, make him respected, and finally make life worth living. A rich man can worship money because he believes it protects him, proves him, defines him, and secures him. The idol works both ends of the street.

Some men are ruined by lack because they become bitter, envious, resentful, dishonest, and obsessed. They look at others and feel cheated. They assume money would make them happy. They imagine that if they had more, they would be more faithful, more generous, more joyful, and more spiritual. That is often a lie. Money does not create character. It reveals and amplifies it. A covetous poor man often becomes a covetous rich man with better furniture. If a man cannot be faithful with little, he should not boast about how faithful he would be with much. The heart is the issue.

Other men are ruined by abundance because they begin trusting riches instead of God. Paul warned Timothy to "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches" (1 Timothy 6:17). Riches are uncertain. That is not opinion. That is Scripture. Proverbs says, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:5). A man can spend thirty years building financial security and discover in one season that wings were attached to what he thought was anchored. Riches are not wrong when held rightly. But they are deadly when trusted.

4. Mammon Tries to Buy the Conscience

Mammon is not content to sit quietly in the account. It wants influence over the conscience. It wants to tell a preacher what not to preach, a businessman what not to question, a worker what corners to cut, a family what priorities to keep, and a church what truths are too expensive to say out loud. Mammon says, “You can obey God as long as obedience does not cost anything.” But if obedience never costs anything, it has not been tested very deeply. The test comes when truth threatens income, comfort, reputation, relationships, position, or security.

This is where many men discover their true master. A preacher may thunder against sin until a major giver is involved. Then suddenly he becomes careful, nuanced, pastoral, and slow. A church may claim to love doctrine until doctrine threatens attendance. Then suddenly it becomes seeker-sensitive, softened, and vague. A businessman may speak of integrity until dishonesty appears profitable. Then suddenly he starts justifying small compromises. A Christian employee may claim loyalty to Christ until the workplace demands silence about truth. Then suddenly he decides witness must be private. Mammon does not always demand a man commit open scandal. Sometimes it only asks him to remain silent, adjust slightly, and protect the stream of money.

This is why Christ’s words are so severe. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). If money can buy your silence, it is your master. If money can buy your compromise, it is your master. If money can make you disobey Scripture, it is your master. If money can keep you in a false church, quiet under corrupt leadership, tied to dishonest business, afraid to give, afraid to preach, afraid to witness, afraid to separate, or afraid to obey, then mammon has a collar around your neck. A servant of God may use money, but he cannot be purchased by it.

5. Contentment Breaks Mammon’s Spell

Paul gives the antidote to money worship in 1 Timothy 6: “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). That verse is the exact opposite of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity preacher says gain is godliness. Paul says godliness with contentment is great gain. Those are not the same message. One makes God a means to get more earthly stuff. The other says God and contentment are the real wealth. One feeds covetousness. The other crucifies it. One keeps the heart staring at earth. The other teaches the heart to rest in God.

Paul continues, “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7). That is the great equalizer. Every man enters naked and leaves without his possessions. The richest man in town and the poorest man in town both leave the world unable to carry one coin through the grave. The suit on the corpse has no pockets

for treasure. The hearse does not pull a trailer loaded with houses, cars, watches, bank accounts, and investment statements. Death strips mammon of its costume. It reveals how temporary the whole thing was. The man who lived for money spent his life chasing something that had to stay behind.

Then Paul says, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8). That verse is almost unintelligible to modern greed. Food and raiment? Content? The age says a man needs endless upgrades, lifestyle proof, luxury experiences, personal branding, constant comfort, and visible success. The Bible says food and raiment are enough for contentment when God is in His rightful place. That does not mean a Christian may never have more. It means he must not require more to be content. Contentment breaks mammon’s spell because a content man cannot be manipulated as easily. He can say no. He can give. He can obey. He can lose and still stand. Mammon loses power when a man’s soul is satisfied in God.

6. The Prosperity Gospel Is Mammon With a Bible Verse

The prosperity gospel is one of the clearest examples of mammon trying to sit on God’s throne. It uses Bible words to preach earthly greed. It takes promises out of context, confuses Israel’s kingdom blessings with church-age doctrine, turns giving into a slot machine, and teaches people to measure faith by visible increase. It tells the poor widow to sow into the preacher’s luxury so her breakthrough can come. It tells desperate people that if they give enough, speak enough, believe enough, and honor the anointed man enough, money will flow back to them. That is not Christianity. That is religious capitalism with a fake anointing.

Paul warned about men who are “destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5). That verse fits the prosperity crowd like a glove. They point to gain as proof. The mansion proves favor. The jet proves anointing. The Rolex proves kingdom living. The crowd proves blessing. The offering total proves faith. But Paul says such thinking comes from men destitute of the truth. The Holy Ghost does not flatter them. He exposes them. When gain becomes godliness, mammon has entered the pulpit wearing a robe. It is the golden calf all over again, only now the calf has a television studio and a donation number.

Biblical prosperity is not the same as the prosperity gospel. God can bless a man. God can provide. God can give increase. God can raise up a business. God can meet needs. God can entrust resources to faithful stewards. But biblical blessing remains under God’s authority and does not become a doctrine of covetousness. A faithful man with much should be humble, generous, sober, and careful. A faithful man with little should be content, diligent, thankful, and trusting. In both cases, God is God. Mammon is not. The

prosperity gospel does not merely teach people to expect God's provision. It teaches them to lust for earthly proof. That is why it is rotten.

7. Stewardship Keeps Money Under God

The Bible answer to mammon is not laziness, fear, or financial stupidity. It is stewardship. A steward understands that what he has is not truly his in the ultimate sense. He manages it under another Master. His time belongs to God. His body belongs to God. His gifts belong to God. His money belongs to God. His business belongs to God. His opportunities belong to God. His increase belongs to God. That changes everything. A steward does not ask, "How can I use God to get more money?" He asks, "How can I use what God has entrusted to me for His glory?"

Stewardship means money must be governed by Scripture. It means honest labor instead of theft. Provision instead of laziness. Generosity instead of greed. Contentment instead of covetousness. Wisdom instead of foolish debt. Integrity instead of crooked gain. Eternal priority instead of earthly display. It means a man can enjoy lawful blessings with thanksgiving, but he never treats them as his life. It means he can build, save, plan, and give without trusting riches. It means he can lose without losing his soul's anchor. It means he can have resources without resources becoming his ruler.

A steward holds money with an open hand because he knows God can redirect it. Sometimes God says provide. Sometimes God says give. Sometimes God says wait. Sometimes God says help. Sometimes God says invest. Sometimes God says walk away from gain because the gain is dirty. Sometimes God says preach the truth even if the money leaves. The servant of mammon cannot obey those commands freely because his god threatens him with loss. The servant of God can obey because his treasure is higher than his account. Stewardship keeps money in its place: useful, temporary, accountable, and beneath the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

God and mammon still do not share a throne. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24), and every generation of religious salesmen has tried to prove Him wrong. They have failed. A man may use money while serving God, but he cannot serve money while pretending to serve God. Money can be a tool, but mammon is a master. Money can feed a family, support work, relieve need, and serve useful purposes, but when it begins commanding the heart, controlling the conscience, silencing truth, shaping doctrine, feeding pride, and replacing trust in God, it has become an idol.

The Bible's issue is not possession, but affection and servitude. "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Some men are ruined by poverty because they envy.

Others are ruined by riches because they trust. Some never have much and still worship money every day in their imagination. Others have much and must fight constantly not to trust it. That is why contentment is so powerful. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). A content man is rich in a way mammon cannot understand. He is free to obey. He is free to give. He is free to preach. He is free to lose. He is free to stand. The world cannot easily buy a man whose treasure is in heaven.

So love not the world, and do not bow before its golden god. Use money, but do not serve mammon. Work hard, but do not worship gain. Provide for your family, but do not sell your conscience. Run a business, but do not let profit become your Bible. Give, but do not gamble with God. Save, but do not trust uncertain riches. Enjoy lawful blessings, but do not turn them into idols. Reject the prosperity gospel that paints covetousness gold and calls it faith. Keep God on the throne, mammon under your feet, and eternity in your eyes. The world says money is power, security, status, and freedom. The Bible says riches make themselves wings. Christ is the Master. Mammon is not.

10 of 20: Love Not the World - The Golden Calf Gospel

The prosperity gospel is not Bible Christianity with a little too much excitement. It is not harmless optimism. It is not simply strong faith with poor wording. It is not a preacher getting a little carried away while trying to encourage people. It is a golden calf with church clothes on. It takes covetousness and calls it faith. It takes greed and calls it vision. It takes manipulation and calls it ministry. It takes poor people's desperation and turns it into preacher luxury. It takes the name of God, attaches it to earthly lust, and then demands that people bow before a religious idol made out of money, emotion, promises, and fleshly desire. A man stands up with a Bible in his hand, diamonds on his body, a watch worth more than a working man's car, a mansion behind gates, a jet waiting at the airport, and tells widows, single mothers, desperate families, and broke people that their miracle is locked behind another offering. That is not faith. That is not Bible preaching. That is the golden calf gospel.

Exodus 32 is not just an ancient story about foolish Israelites and a weak priest. It is a mirror. Moses is up in the mount with God, and the people grow impatient. They want something visible, touchable, manageable, emotional, and exciting. They gather gold, hand it to Aaron, and he fashions a calf. Then comes one of the most outrageous religious statements in the chapter: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4). Then Aaron builds an altar before it and says, "To morrow is a

feast to the LORD” (Exodus 32:5). There it is. God-language attached to idolatry. A false object of worship with Jehovah’s name painted across the front. That is the essence of corrupt religion. It does not always deny God openly. Sometimes it uses His name to sanctify a lie. The golden calf did not come with a sign that said, “We now reject Jehovah.” It came with a feast to the LORD. That is exactly how false religion operates. It keeps enough Bible language to deceive people while redirecting their affection to an idol.

The prosperity gospel works the same way. It says “Jesus,” “faith,” “anointing,” “seed,” “harvest,” “breakthrough,” “favor,” and “kingdom,” but underneath the language is a golden calf. The idol is gain. The idol is increase. The idol is visible success. The idol is luxury. The idol is the preacher’s image. The idol is the crowd’s appetite. Paul warned about men “of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5). That verse names the thing. It does not need softening. It does not need rebranding. It does not need a public relations team. When a man supposes that gain is godliness, he is corrupt in mind and destitute of truth. The question is not whether God can bless a believer. Of course He can. The question is whether a preacher has turned blessing into bait, giving into gambling, faith into greed, and God into a machine for earthly increase. That is not biblical prosperity. That is filthy lucre dressed up as anointing.

1. The Golden Calf Was Built From Religious Impatience

Exodus 32 begins with the people getting restless because Moses delayed to come down from the mount. “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron” (Exodus 32:1). Impatience is fertile ground for idolatry. When people do not want to wait on God, hear from God, trust God, obey God, or walk by faith, they start demanding something visible. They want a religious shortcut. They want something they can see, touch, celebrate, and control. They do not want a holy God speaking from a mount. They want an idol they can carry, decorate, and dance around.

That is where the prosperity gospel finds its crowd. It preys on impatience. People do not want the slow work of godliness, contentment, prayer, obedience, suffering, stewardship, labor, and waiting on God. They want a shortcut to the blessing. They want the formula. They want the secret. They want the seed that forces the harvest. They want the preacher to tell them that if they give a certain amount by midnight, God is obligated to release the miracle. That is not faith. That is religious impatience. It is the same spirit that says, “Make us gods, which shall go before us” (Exodus 32:1). Give us something visible now. Give us something exciting now. Give us something that makes us feel like heaven is moving because we are tired of waiting.

Bible faith can wait. Bible faith can obey when the mount is covered in cloud and the answer has not come down yet. Bible faith can say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). Bible faith does not need a golden calf to keep it entertained while God is silent. But false religion thrives when people are impatient. The prosperity preacher knows that desperate people want immediate answers, immediate money, immediate healing, immediate promotion, immediate breakthrough, and immediate relief. He steps into that impatience and sells them an idol with God’s name attached. He does not teach them to endure. He teaches them to transact.

2. Aaron Used Gold to Make an Idol and Called It Worship

Aaron told the people to bring their golden earrings, and he “fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf” (Exodus 32:4). Notice the material. Gold. Something valuable became the substance of rebellion. The problem was not that gold existed. The problem was what they did with it. The same gold that could have been used in service connected with God’s tabernacle was turned into an idol because the hearts of the people were wrong. Money and material goods are not automatically evil. But once they are gathered around false worship, they become part of a corrupt system.

This is exactly what happens in money-preaching religion. The offering is not evil. Giving is not evil. Supporting ministry is not evil. Helping the poor is not evil. Funding the work of God is not evil. But when money becomes the center of the message, the measure of faith, the proof of anointing, and the tool of manipulation, the gold has been melted into a calf. What should have been a servant becomes an idol. What should have been used under God becomes a visible object of religious lust. The preacher keeps talking about God, but the whole service is arranged around extracting gold from the people.

Aaron’s sin was not merely that he made a calf. It was that he attached worship language to it. He built an altar before it. He proclaimed a feast to the LORD. That is the most dangerous part. The idol did not replace religious activity. It used religious activity. Modern prosperity preaching does not usually tell people to stop talking about God. It tells them to talk about God while worshipping increase. It tells them to shout, sing, dance, give, claim, decree, declare, and expect, while the real object before their eyes is money. That is golden calf religion. It takes a false center and wraps a worship service around it.

3. God-Language Does Not Sanctify Idolatry

Aaron said, “To morrow is a feast to the LORD” (Exodus 32:5). That line should frighten any Bible believer with discernment. Here is idolatry being given a Jehovah label. The people are not saying, “We reject all religion.” They are not claiming to be atheists. They are not throwing away spiritual vocabulary. They are using the LORD’s name while bowing before a

calf. That means religious language by itself proves nothing. A false preacher can say “Lord,” “Jesus,” “faith,” “Holy Ghost,” “anointing,” “blessing,” “kingdom,” and “breakthrough,” and still be leading people to an idol.

This is one of the great deceptions in modern Christianity. People assume that if a preacher mentions Jesus often enough, quotes a verse occasionally, and speaks with religious energy, the thing must be of God. That is childish. The devil quotes Scripture when it suits his purpose. False prophets use religious language. Wolves wear sheep’s clothing. A golden calf can stand under a banner that says “feast to the LORD.” The question is not whether religious words are present. The question is what is being worshipped, what is being preached, what is being produced, what is being hidden, and whether the message agrees with the words of God rightly divided.

The prosperity gospel uses God-language to sanctify covetousness. It says “seed” when it means pressure. It says “faith” when it means greed. It says “harvest” when it means personal enrichment. It says “favor” when it means luxury display. It says “honor the man of God” when it means fund the preacher’s empire. It says “kingdom” when it means the preacher’s brand. It says “breakthrough” when it means another offering. Bible words do not cleanse false motives. Religious language does not purify manipulation. A calf with the LORD’s name attached is still a calf.

4. The Prosperity Gospel Supposes That Gain Is Godliness

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:5 that corrupt men suppose “that gain is godliness.” That is the prosperity gospel in six words. It teaches people to look at visible increase and call it spiritual proof. More money means more faith. Bigger house means more favor. Better car means more anointing. Larger crowd means more blessing. Private jet means kingdom advancement. Expensive clothing means divine elevation. The whole rotten system takes earthly gain and turns it into a sacrament. It says, “Look at what I have, and you will know God is with me.”

Paul says the men who think that way are “men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth” (1 Timothy 6:5). That is not my insult. That is the Holy Ghost’s description. Destitute of the truth. Not slightly imbalanced. Not enthusiastic but sincere. Not just blessed in a way critics misunderstand. Destitute of the truth. When a preacher builds a doctrine that turns gain into godliness, he has departed from Paul’s teaching. Paul’s next statement is the opposite: “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). The prosperity preacher says gain is godliness. The Bible says godliness with contentment is gain. The two systems are enemies.

This is why the prosperity gospel cannot produce biblical contentment. It constantly stirs discontent and calls it expectation. It makes a man feel that ordinary provision is not enough. It makes a woman feel that if she is not moving into a higher lifestyle, something is wrong with her faith. It makes the poor feel guilty for being poor, the sick feel guilty for being sick, the struggling feel guilty for struggling, and the preacher feel justified in luxury because his excess supposedly proves God's favor. That is spiritual abuse. It is not good news. It is a religious treadmill powered by covetousness.

5. False Teachers Make Merchandise of the People

Peter warned, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Peter 2:3). That verse is as plain as daylight. Through covetousness. With feigned words. Make merchandise of you. That is exactly what happens when preaching becomes religious salesmanship. The people stop being sheep to feed and become customers to exploit. Their pain becomes a market. Their desperation becomes a revenue stream. Their hope becomes leverage. Their ignorance becomes opportunity. The false teacher looks at them and sees merchandise.

"Feigned words" are words shaped for effect, not truth. They are crafted words, sales words, manipulative words, emotional words, spiritual-sounding words designed to move people toward the desired transaction. "Someone watching right now needs to sow \$1,000." "God told me there are fifty people who must give tonight." "Your miracle is tied to this seed." "Do not miss this window." "The anointing is flowing for those who obey." "If you honor the prophet, you unlock the harvest." Feigned words. They sound spiritual to the desperate and disgusting to anyone with an open Bible. God already described that crowd.

The worst part is that the victims often think they are being faithful. That is what makes it so vile. A poor person gives beyond wisdom, not because the Bible commanded it, but because a religious salesman pressured him with fear and hope. A widow sends money she cannot afford because she has been told her healing, debt cancellation, or family restoration is tied to her seed. A desperate man gives because he believes refusal might show unbelief. That is not shepherding. That is making merchandise of souls. A true shepherd feeds sheep. A hireling fleeces them. The prosperity gospel has produced a whole industry of religious fleece merchants.

6. The Way of Cain and the Error of Balaam Still Run Through Religion

Jude warns of men who "have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 11). Cain represents religion without the right sacrifice, a way to approach God on man's terms instead of God's terms. Balaam represents the prophet for hire, the religious man who knows spiritual things but is willing to corrupt his gift for reward.

Those two spirits run through false religion everywhere. The prosperity gospel is full of both. It brings an offering-centered religion that often obscures the blood of Christ, and it produces Balaam-like men who know how to use spiritual language for profit.

Balaam is especially important because he was not ignorant of spiritual realities. He knew enough to talk about God, altars, sacrifices, prophecy, blessing, and cursing. But reward pulled at him. Money bent him. Honor attracted him. He wanted what Balak offered, and that appetite corrupted him. That is the danger of money in ministry. A man can begin with some truth and end up for sale. He may not admit it. He may still use the same Bible words. But when reward begins to govern the message, Balaam is in the room. When money determines which truths get preached and which truths get hidden, Balaam is in the room. When the preacher's lifestyle depends on keeping the crowd covetous, Balaam is in the room.

Jude says they "ran greedily." That is a strong phrase. False religion often does not limp reluctantly toward money. It runs greedily. It builds systems, conferences, networks, broadcasts, donation schemes, partner levels, miracle offerings, prophetic consultations, special seeds, and endless campaigns. The machine must be fed. The preacher's image must be maintained. The jet must be fueled. The mansion must be protected. The staff must keep the brand alive. That requires constant fundraising, and constant fundraising requires constant manipulation. That is the error of Balaam with better production value.

7. The True Gospel Points to Christ, Not a Calf of Gain

The true gospel is not an offer to make your flesh rich. It is the declaration that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. It points to the blood, the cross, the empty tomb, forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, reconciliation to God, eternal life, and the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not put earthly gain at the center. It does not make God a servant of human appetite. It does not turn giving into gambling. It does not make the preacher the gatekeeper of someone's miracle. It exalts Christ.

A true preacher may teach stewardship, generosity, labor, provision, contentment, giving, and God's ability to meet needs. Those are Bible truths. But he will not turn them into a carnival of covetousness. He will not promise what God did not promise. He will not prey on desperate people. He will not claim that every sickness is proof of weak faith or every financial struggle is proof of disobedience. He will not measure spirituality by possessions. He will not make himself rich by selling hope to the poor. He will point people to Christ, the Book, godliness, contentment, obedience, endurance, and eternal reward.

The cure for the golden calf gospel is not poverty worship. It is Bible truth. God can bless. God can provide. God can entrust resources. God can raise a man up. God can use money for His work. But God will not share His glory with mammon. A Christian must learn the difference between God's provision and fleshly covetousness, between stewardship and greed, between giving and manipulation, between faith and religious gambling, between blessing and bait. The true gospel makes Christ the treasure. The golden calf gospel makes earthly increase the treasure and uses Christ's name to sell it. That is the difference between Christianity and idolatry.

Conclusion

The golden calf was not built by atheists. It was built by religious people who wanted something visible, exciting, and manageable while using the name of the LORD. That is what makes Exodus 32 so relevant. Aaron made a calf, built an altar before it, and announced a feast to the LORD. God-language was attached to idolatry, and the people were deceived enough to dance around it. The prosperity gospel does the same thing. It uses the language of faith, seed, harvest, blessing, kingdom, favor, and anointing while redirecting the heart toward gain. It does not deny worship. It corrupts worship. It does not remove religion. It monetizes religion. It does not destroy desire. It baptizes covetousness.

The Bible already identified this crowd. Paul called them men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. Peter said that through covetousness and feigned words they would make merchandise of people. Jude said they ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. Those verses are not hard to understand. They describe religious men who use spiritual language for financial gain, who feed on the people instead of feeding the people, who turn the house of God into a marketplace, and who make the preacher's luxury the proof of divine favor. That is not the faith once delivered to the saints. That is a golden calf with a donation link.

So love not the world, and reject the golden calf gospel. Do not confuse God's provision with preacher greed. Do not confuse generosity with manipulation. Do not confuse faith with covetousness. Do not confuse blessing with luxury branding. Do not confuse anointing with expensive clothing, private jets, gated mansions, and polished religious salesmanship. The true gospel points to Christ crucified and risen. The false gospel points to gain. The true preacher feeds sheep. The false teacher makes merchandise of them. The true servant of God teaches contentment. The golden calf salesman stirs discontent and charges admission to the altar. Choose the Book over the brand, Christ over the calf, godliness with contentment over gain dressed up as godliness. The world's religious gold may shine, but God still knows a calf when He sees one.

11 of 20: Love Not the World - The Forgotten Doctrine of Contentment

Contentment is one of the most hated doctrines in a world built on dissatisfaction. The whole system depends on keeping men restless, hungry, jealous, anxious, and convinced that what God has given them is not enough. The world says gain is gain. The prosperity preacher says gain proves godliness. The advertiser says gain proves success. The celebrity says gain proves importance. The flesh says gain proves happiness. But the Holy Ghost says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). That verse is a direct assault on the entire spirit of this age. It takes the world's measuring stick and snaps it over its knee. It says the man who has God, truth, holiness, peace with the Lord, a clean conscience, food, raiment, and a heart not ruled by appetite is richer than the fool with a mansion, a jet, a watch collection, and a soul full of worms.

The modern church has nearly forgotten contentment because it has become infected with the world's restlessness. Christians are always being trained to want the next thing, the bigger thing, the newer thing, the better thing, the shinier thing, the more impressive thing, the thing someone else has. They scroll through comparison all day and wonder why gratitude feels weak. They listen to preachers who sell discontent and call it faith. They are told that if they are not increasing visibly, expanding outwardly, moving upwardly, and displaying blessing materially, something must be wrong with them. That is not Bible doctrine. That is spiritualized covetousness. Paul did not say, "Godliness with increase is great gain." He did not say, "Godliness with luxury is great gain." He did not say, "Godliness with applause, influence, fashion, comfort, and image is great gain." He said, "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Now let the balance be clear from the start. Contentment is not laziness. It is not poverty worship. It is not a man refusing to work while claiming to be spiritual. It is not a businessman refusing diligence, a father refusing provision, a mother refusing care, a preacher refusing labor, or a Christian refusing opportunity. The Bible says, "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). A content man can work hard, build wisely, provide faithfully, plan prudently, save carefully, give generously, and improve what is under his hand. Contentment does not mean he lacks discipline or ambition in honest labor. It means his soul is not ruled by appetite. It means he can thank God for food and raiment without feeling cheated because another man has more. It means he can possess things without being possessed by things. It means he can lose and still stand. It means the world cannot keep him dancing by showing him another shiny object. A content man is hard to manipulate.

1. Contentment Is Great Gain Because It Breaks the World's Scale

Paul says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). That verse changes the definition of wealth. The world measures gain by accumulation. God measures gain by godliness and contentment. The world asks how much a man has. God asks what has the man. The world asks whether he can display success. God asks whether he can rest in Him. The world asks whether other men envy him. God asks whether he fears God, walks clean, loves truth, and refuses covetousness. That is a completely different scale.

This doctrine matters because the world’s scale is rotten. If gain is merely more money, more possessions, more status, more influence, more comfort, and more visibility, then the richest men in the world should be the happiest, holiest, most peaceful men alive. They are not. Many of them are miserable, addicted, paranoid, divorced, empty, restless, and terrified of losing what they have. They have more than most people will ever touch, yet they still need more. That proves the eye is never satisfied and the heart cannot be filled with things. A man can have enough to buy a city and still not have enough to quiet his soul.

God’s scale is sane. Godliness with contentment is great gain because it gives a man riches inside where thieves cannot break through and steal. Contentment means the appetite is not king. It means the soul has learned not to measure itself by another man’s portion. It means the heart can say, “God has been good,” without adding, “but He would be better if He gave me what He gave him.” That is spiritual wealth. It is not flashy. It does not photograph well. It does not impress the world. But it makes a man free. The world can manipulate a greedy man, an envious man, a restless man, and a fearful man. It has a hard time controlling a content man.

2. Contentment Begins by Remembering What You Brought and What You Will Carry Out

Paul follows the doctrine with a fact no undertaker can deny: “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7). That is the great humiliation of every worldly dream. A man enters with nothing, leaves with nothing, and spends the middle pretending he owns everything. He comes in naked and helpless, and he goes out unable to carry one coin, one deed, one title, one award, one watch, one car, one house, one account, one trophy, or one compliment with him. Death is a brutal preacher. It strips the world’s glitter off the corpse and shows how temporary the whole arrangement was.

This truth should produce contentment because it reminds the Christian that earthly things are temporary tools, not eternal treasures. A man may use them, manage them, and thank God for them, but he must not build his soul around them. The house will be left. The bank

account will be left. The closet will be left. The vehicle will be left. The business will be left. The furniture will be left. The phone will be left. The jewelry will be left. The applause will be left. Even the body itself will be left until God raises it. If a man cannot carry it through death, he had better not let it carry his heart through life.

The world hides this fact because it ruins the sales pitch. It wants men thinking as though this present life is the main thing. It wants them storing, comparing, chasing, upgrading, envying, and displaying as if the grave will never interrupt. But Paul drags the grave into the conversation and says, “you brought nothing in, and you are carrying nothing out.” That one sentence should kill a thousand covetous fantasies. It should make the Christian ask, “What am I doing with what God gave me before I leave it?” not, “How can I get more so people will admire me before I die?” Contentment grows when eternity tells time to sit down and be quiet.

3. Food and Raiment Expose Our Ungrateful Expectations

Paul then says, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8). That verse is almost offensive to a spoiled generation. Food and raiment? Content? Most people today think contentment requires stable income, extra savings, reliable transportation, climate-controlled comfort, entertainment options, vacation possibilities, social approval, strong Wi-Fi, personal convenience, and the ability to buy things they do not need with money they should not spend. Paul says food and raiment. He brings the doctrine down to basic provision and says the soul should be able to thank God there.

That does not mean a Christian cannot have a home, savings, tools, conveniences, transportation, or lawful blessings beyond bare survival. The Bible never turns poverty into a sacrament. But it does mean the baseline of gratitude has been set far too high in the modern mind. We have been trained to think we are deprived when we are merely not indulged. We feel cheated when God gives provision but not luxury. We call ourselves struggling when we are actually being sustained. We compare ourselves to people with more and forget that many would thank God for what we complain about. That is a sick heart, and it needs Scripture, not sympathy.

Food and raiment expose whether gratitude is alive. Can a man thank God for daily bread? Can he thank God for covering? Can he rejoice that he is saved, clothed, fed, and kept? Can he see mercy in ordinary provision? Or has the world trained him to despise ordinary mercies because they are not glamorous? A Christian who cannot thank God for simple provision will not become thankful by receiving more. He will simply become an unthankful man with a larger inventory. Contentment does not begin when life becomes impressive. It begins when the heart learns to call God good in the ordinary.

4. Contentment Is Learned, Not Inherited From the Flesh

Paul said, “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11). That is important. He learned it. Contentment is not natural to the flesh. No child has to be taught to say, “mine.” No sinner has to be trained to want more. No old nature has to attend classes on envy. Discontent comes naturally. Contentment must be learned under God. Paul did not learn it in a palace of ease. He learned it through hunger, abundance, need, supply, prison, travel, rejection, labor, beatings, shipwreck, weariness, and the changing conditions of ministry. He learned that Christ is sufficient when circumstances are not stable.

Paul continues, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound” (Philippians 4:12). Both conditions require grace. Many people think only poverty is a test. It is not. Abundance is also a test. A man can be ruined by lack through bitterness, and ruined by abundance through pride. He can dishonor God when hungry by murmuring, and dishonor God when full by forgetting. Paul had learned how to be low without despairing and how to abound without worshipping the abundance. That is spiritual maturity. The condition changed, but Christ remained enough.

Then Paul says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). That verse is often ripped out of context and turned into a slogan for ambition, sports, success, and personal achievement. In context, it is about enduring every state under Christ’s strength. It is strength to be abased without bitterness, to abound without pride, to suffer need without panic, and to be full without forgetfulness. That is the strength modern Christians need. Not strength to chase every dream the flesh invents, but strength to be content in whatever state God allows while remaining faithful, thankful, and obedient.

5. Contentment Cuts the Nerve of Covetousness

Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.” Then the verse gives the reason: “for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” That is the root of contentment. Not merely that you have enough things, but that you have Him. Covetousness says, “I need that to be secure.” God says, “I will never leave thee.” Covetousness says, “I need more to be satisfied.” God says, “I will never forsake thee.” Covetousness says, “What I have is not enough.” God says, “You have Me.” The presence of God is the death blow to the spirit of lack.

Covetousness is not just wanting something. It is a heart disorder that believes God’s present dealing is insufficient. It looks at what God has withheld and accuses Him without saying it plainly. It looks at another man’s portion and feels wronged. It says, “Why him and not me? Why them and not us? Why that house, that ministry, that spouse, that

opportunity, that account, that body, that platform, that calling?” That spirit is poison. It makes gratitude impossible because the heart is always on trial against God’s providence. Contentment ends the trial and says, “God is good, God is present, God is enough, and what He has given me today is not an insult.”

This is why contentment is spiritual warfare. It cuts the nerve of the world’s advertising system. Advertising often works by telling you that you are incomplete, behind, deprived, unattractive, unsafe, unsuccessful, or insignificant unless you buy, upgrade, display, or possess. Contentment says, “No.” The world says, “You need this to matter.” Contentment says, “Christ matters.” The world says, “You need more to be secure.” Contentment says, “He will never leave me.” The world says, “Compare yourself.” Contentment says, “God assigned my portion.” The world says, “You are missing out.” Contentment says, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). That kind of soul is hard to sell to.

6. Contentment Is Not Anti-Labor, But Anti-Slavery

Some lazy man will try to use contentment as an excuse for sloth, but the Bible will not let him. Contentment is not anti-labor. It is anti-slavery. A content man can work hard without being owned by gain. He can build without worshipping the building. He can improve his situation without despising his present mercies. He can pursue excellence without envying another man. He can save without trusting uncertain riches. He can give without fear. He can receive increase without making increase his god. That is the balance modern people miss. The Bible condemns both laziness and covetousness.

Proverbs is full of rebukes against sloth. Paul rebukes those who will not work. A man who refuses responsibility and calls it contentment is lying. Contentment does not make a father careless. It does not make a worker lazy. It does not make a business owner foolish. It does not make a preacher passive. It does not make a Christian indifferent to stewardship. Contentment means the heart remains free while the hands remain diligent. The man works unto the Lord, not unto the idol of more. He improves what he can without becoming restless over what he cannot control. He receives God’s provision without turning provision into pride.

The difference is mastery. Is the man using opportunity, or is opportunity using him? Is he managing money, or is money managing him? Is he working because it is right, or because he is terrified of not being admired? Is he building because God gave him something to steward, or because he cannot rest unless he feels superior to others? Is he seeking to provide, or seeking to prove? Contentment keeps diligence clean. It lets a man labor without selling his soul to the results. He can work, plan, build, and still sleep because God is God and mammon is not.

7. Contentment Prays for Enough, Not for an Idol

Proverbs 30:8-9 gives one of the wisest prayers in the Bible: “give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.” Then the reason follows: “Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” That prayer recognizes danger on both sides. Poverty has temptations. Riches have temptations. Lack can tempt a man to steal and dishonor God. Fullness can tempt a man to forget God and become proud. The wise man does not merely ask for more. He asks for what is convenient, fitting, suitable, and spiritually safe under God.

That is a different prayer than much of modern Christianity teaches. The prosperity preacher teaches people to ask for abundance as proof of faith. The covetous heart asks for more as proof of worth. The fearful heart asks for more as proof of security. But Proverbs teaches a man to ask with spiritual sobriety. “Lord, do not give me what will ruin me. Do not give me poverty that tempts me to sin, and do not give me riches that tempt me to forget Thee. Feed me with what is convenient for me.” That is not a small prayer. That is a heart that fears God more than it craves display.

Contentment can pray this because it trusts the wisdom of God. It believes God knows what amount is safe, what season is necessary, what lack will teach, what abundance will test, what door should open, and what door should remain shut. The discontented heart wants control. The content heart wants God. It can ask, work, plan, and receive, but it does not demand an idol. It does not accuse God for not giving another man’s portion. It does not treat every delay as neglect. It does not treat every “no” as hatred. It trusts the Father’s hand, even when that hand gives food convenient rather than luxury impressive.

Conclusion

Contentment is a forgotten doctrine because it rebukes the entire spirit of the world. The world survives by keeping people dissatisfied. It needs men comparing, envying, craving, purchasing, displaying, upgrading, and chasing. The prosperity gospel survives the same way. It keeps people restless by telling them that gain proves godliness and that their next breakthrough is tied to another seed, another declaration, another emotional transaction, another offering, another climb toward visible increase. But the Bible cuts across the whole system and says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). That is not poverty worship. That is spiritual wealth.

Contentment does not make a man lazy. It makes him free. He can work without worshipping work. He can provide without panicking. He can build without boasting. He can receive without becoming proud. He can lose without collapsing. He can have little without bitterness and much without idolatry. He can thank God for food and raiment. He

can live without covetousness because the Lord has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). That promise is worth more than the world’s entire storehouse. The man who has God and knows it is not poor, even if the world cannot understand his wealth.

So love not the world, and reject its restless appetite. Stop letting advertisements define your needs. Stop letting social media define your success. Stop letting prosperity preachers define blessing. Stop letting another man’s portion define your gratitude. Stop letting the flesh tell you that you cannot be thankful until you have more. Learn contentment. Learn it in abundance. Learn it in abasement. Learn it in provision. Learn it in delay. Learn it with food and raiment. Learn it under the shadow of eternity. You brought nothing in, and you will carry nothing out. But if you have Christ, godliness, truth, and contentment, you have great gain.

12 of 20: Love Not the World - Friendship With the World Is Spiritual Adultery

James did not whisper when he wrote James 4:4. He did not smooth the edges, lower the temperature, or dress the truth in soft religious velvet so the worldly crowd could keep feeling comfortable. He said, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:4). That is not gentle language. That is not the language of a modern pulpit trying to keep the donors smiling and the visitors unoffended. That is the Holy Ghost taking a sword to the heart of worldly religion. Friendship with the world is not called “balance.” It is not called “cultural engagement.” It is not called “being relatable.” It is not called “meeting people where they are.” James calls it enmity with God. Then he presses it harder: “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). That verse ought to make a man sit still and quit playing games with the world system.

The word “adulterers” is not thrown in there by accident. God uses marriage language because worldliness is betrayal language. The believer belongs to God. He is not his own. He is bought with a price. The Church is espoused to Christ. The soul that has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb has no business flirting with the system that hates the Father, blinds men from the gospel, exalts the flesh, celebrates sin, mocks holiness, and crucified the Lord of glory. The world is not a neutral acquaintance. It is God’s enemy. Therefore, when a Christian seeks the world’s friendship, he is not merely “loosening up” or “being practical.” He is stepping out on God to hold hands with the enemy. That is why

James uses the language he uses. Spiritual adultery is not a minor mistake. It is affectional treason.

Now again, let the balance be clear. The Bible does not condemn a Christian for living among lost people, working with lost people, buying and selling in a fallen world, using ordinary tools, paying bills, running a business, providing for family, or speaking kindly to sinners in order to reach them. Jesus Christ was the friend of publicans and sinners in the sense that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. But He never became the friend of their sin, their system, their values, their darkness, or their rebellion. The problem is not contact. The problem is communion. The problem is not witnessing to lost people. The problem is seeking the world's companionship, counsel, entertainment, fashion, humor, values, identity, applause, and approval at the cost of God's favor. A Christian can speak to the world as a witness. He cannot court the world as a lover.

1. James Calls Worldly Friendship What It Is

James 4:4 is one of those verses that exposes the weakness of modern Christianity because modern Christianity wants to explain it down instead of bowing under it. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses" is not therapeutic language. It is not seeker-sensitive language. It is not the kind of language that gets a preacher invited to soft conferences where everyone congratulates one another for being balanced. It is a divine accusation. God is not treating worldliness as a minor style difference. He is treating it as betrayal. The reason is simple: friendship with the world means affection for a system that is opposed to God.

The word "friendship" matters. It is not just the accidental presence of worldly surroundings. It is chosen association, chosen affection, chosen sympathy, chosen alliance. A man can live in the world without becoming its friend, just as a soldier can stand on foreign soil without joining the enemy army. Friendship means the heart has started enjoying the enemy's company. It laughs at the enemy's jokes. It listens to the enemy's counsel. It admires the enemy's heroes. It dresses by the enemy's standards. It learns the enemy's language. It feels embarrassed by God's rebuke because the enemy might be offended. That is where friendship becomes spiritual danger.

James does not say friendship with the world is a mild concern. He says it is "enmity with God" (James 4:4). Enmity means hostility. Opposition. A state of being against. That means the Christian cannot be spiritually neutral while seeking the world's friendship. He is choosing sides whether he admits it or not. The man who wants the world's embrace while claiming devotion to God is trying to do what Scripture says cannot be done. The world and God are not two parties needing better communication. They are opposed. The world loves

darkness. God is light. The world exalts self. God demands self-denial. The world loves sin. God judges sin. Friendship with one means opposition to the other.

2. The Believer Belongs to God

The charge of spiritual adultery only makes sense because the believer belongs to God. A lost man is already in the world. He is walking according to the course of it. He is under the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But the Christian has been purchased. He has been redeemed. He has been called out. He has been joined to Christ. Paul says, “For ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20). That means the believer does not have the right to give his affection wherever his flesh wants to give it. The heart is not a public park. It belongs to the Lord.

Second Corinthians 6 lays down the same principle in another form: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Then Paul asks a series of questions that leave no room for compromise. “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). “And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (2 Corinthians 6:15). “Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (2 Corinthians 6:15). “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:16). Those questions are not invitations to negotiate. They are walls. God is showing that certain things do not belong together.

The believer is the temple of the living God. That is not a figure to be handled lightly. God says, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16). If God dwells in His people, then the people of God cannot drag the idols of the world into the sanctuary and call it liberty. They cannot bring the world’s music, morals, humor, lust, pride, philosophy, greed, and values into their lives and say, “God understands.” God understands better than they do. That is why He says, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Separation is not cruelty. It is loyalty.

3. The World Offers Companionship at the Price of Compromise

The world does not always begin by demanding open blasphemy. Sometimes it begins by offering companionship. It says, “Be our friend. Laugh with us. Think like us. Dress like us. Admire what we admire. Avoid what offends us. Repeat our phrases. Share our outrage. Accept our standards. Join our causes. Do not be so severe. Do not bring doctrine into everything. Do not speak too plainly. Do not expose what we love.” The world offers fellowship, but the price is compromise. It may let you keep a private Jesus if you will stop bringing Him into public judgment of its sins.

This is why many Christians drift. They do not wake up one morning and decide to become enemies of God. They simply begin wanting the world to like them. They want coworkers to think they are normal. They want family to think they are not too serious. They want social media to think they are balanced. They want religious friends to think they are not divisive. They want lost people to think they are kind, modern, aware, and not “one of those Christians.” So they start trimming. They laugh when they should be quiet. They stay quiet when they should speak. They soften doctrine. They avoid unpopular verses. They call conviction “judgmental.” They call cowardice “wisdom.” The friendship deepens, and loyalty to God weakens.

The price of worldly companionship is always higher than advertised. First, the world asks for silence. Then it asks for approval. Then it asks for participation. Then it asks for defense. A Christian who first refuses to rebuke sin may later find himself defending the sinner’s right to be affirmed. A preacher who first avoids hard texts may later accuse faithful men of being too harsh for preaching them. A church that first tries to be friendly with the world may later become angry at any member who still believes separation. That is how friendship works. It does not merely sit beside you. It changes you.

4. Hosea Shows the Pain of Spiritual Betrayal

The book of Hosea gives one of the most painful pictures of spiritual adultery in the Bible. God uses the brokenness of marriage betrayal to show Israel’s unfaithfulness. Hosea 2:5 says, “For their mother hath played the harlot.” Then the verse exposes the heart of the betrayal: “I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink” (Hosea 2:5). Israel chased lovers because she thought they were the source of her provision. She attributed blessings to false lovers instead of the Lord who had actually provided them.

God answers in Hosea 2:8, “For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” That is the blindness of spiritual adultery. God gives the blessing, and the unfaithful heart credits the idol. God provides daily bread, and the worldly heart thanks the system. God gives ability, opportunity, health, mercy, and increase, and the compromised soul says, “My lovers gave me this.” The world loves that arrangement. It wants credit for what God permitted. It wants the heart to believe that comfort, security, provision, and happiness come from bowing to the system.

This passage should make a Christian tremble. How often has God been good while the heart gave credit elsewhere? A business prospers, and a man credits his cleverness. A family is fed, and he credits the economy. A door opens, and he credits networking. A need is met, and he credits his strategy. A ministry grows, and he credits the platform. The world

stands there like a false lover receiving affection for gifts God supplied. That is betrayal. Contentment and gratitude keep the heart faithful because they trace every good thing back to the Father, not to the world's system.

5. Ezekiel Shows the Danger of Trusting Beauty and Gifts

Ezekiel 16 is one of the most severe chapters in the Bible about spiritual unfaithfulness. God describes how He took Jerusalem from helplessness, cared for her, clothed her, adorned her, and made her beautiful. Then comes the tragedy: "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown" (Ezekiel 16:15). That is the danger of gifts becoming idols. God blesses, and the heart starts trusting the blessing. God gives beauty, reputation, wealth, influence, opportunity, and standing, and the recipient begins using those things for spiritual adultery.

This is not just Israel's problem. It is a human problem. A man may begin with nothing but mercy, and after God gives him something, he starts trusting the thing God gave. A preacher may start with zeal for truth, and after God gives him influence, he starts protecting the influence more than the truth. A church may start with prayer and preaching, and after God gives growth, it starts trusting methods, branding, and numbers. A Christian may start with gratitude, and after God gives increase, he begins admiring his own beauty, ability, intelligence, discipline, or success. That is Ezekiel 16 in another outfit.

Worldly friendship often begins when blessings become self-glory. The man thinks his beauty, money, talent, voice, intellect, or platform gives him the right to flirt with the world. He trusts his renown. He begins dressing compromise as influence. He says he is reaching people when he is actually preserving his image. He says he is being strategic when he is actually afraid of losing his beauty in the eyes of men. God gave the gift, and the heart used the gift to betray the Giver. That is spiritual adultery in one of its most refined forms.

6. Relevance Can Become a Mask for Betrayal

There is a legitimate sense in which a Christian should speak clearly to the people around him. He should not be deliberately confusing. He should not hide behind religious jargon when explaining the gospel. He should be wise, understandable, and compassionate in witness. But the word "relevance" has been used to excuse nearly every form of compromise. Churches want worldly music to be relevant. Preachers want soft doctrine to be relevant. Christians want worldly entertainment to be relevant. Ministries want celebrity culture to be relevant. The word often means, "We want the world to like us while we keep enough Bible vocabulary to feel spiritual."

The New Testament pattern is not relevance by imitation. It is witness by distinction. Light is relevant to darkness because it is different from darkness. Salt is useful because it is not

the same as corruption. A watchman is valuable because he warns, not because he sounds like the invader. When the church becomes a mirror of the world, it loses the very thing the world needs. The world does not need a Christianized copy of itself. It needs truth from outside the system. It needs the gospel. It needs holiness. It needs a Book that will not bend. It needs Christians who love sinners enough not to flatter their sin.

Relevance becomes betrayal when it requires disobedience. If being relevant means hiding Bible words, avoiding Bible doctrines, adopting worldly standards, softening sin, entertaining the flesh, and seeking applause from those who hate God, then relevance is just spiritual adultery with better public relations. The Christian is sent into the world as a witness, not absorbed by the world as a convert. He can use lawful tools, speak plainly, and show compassion without dressing like the enemy, laughing with the enemy, and asking the enemy to approve his ministry.

7. True Separation Is Loyalty, Not Self-Righteousness

The command to separate from the world is often mocked as self-righteousness. Of course, a proud man can turn separation into self-righteousness. The flesh can corrupt anything. But true Bible separation is not a man saying, “I am better than you.” It is a man saying, “God is worthy of loyalty.” It is not hatred of sinners. It is hatred of betrayal. It is not refusing to witness. It is refusing to join hands with what God calls darkness. It is not a lack of love. It is love rightly ordered toward God first.

Second Corinthians 6:17-18 gives both command and promise: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” Then God says, “and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” Separation is not merely negative. It is relational. God is not just saying, “Get away from them.” He is saying, “Come unto Me in clean fellowship.” The Christian does not give up the world and receive emptiness. He gives up the world’s corrupt fellowship and enjoys the Father’s fellowship. That is not loss. That is sanity.

A believer who sees separation as mere deprivation has not understood the Father. He thinks he is missing out because he measures fellowship by the world’s laughter. But what is the world’s friendship compared to God’s favor? What is a seat at the enemy’s table compared to the Father receiving you? What is applause from sinners compared to clean fellowship with the Lord? What is being thought normal by a crooked generation compared to being called a son or daughter by the living God? The world offers companionship and takes the heart captive. God calls for separation and gives Himself.

Conclusion

Friendship with the world is not a harmless weakness. James calls it spiritual adultery and enmity with God. That language is severe because the issue is severe. The believer belongs to God. He has been bought, cleansed, called out, and joined to Christ. Therefore, when his heart seeks companionship with the system that opposes God, he is not merely being relatable. He is betraying holy affection. The world is not a neutral friend with a few rough edges. It is a system under Satanic influence, full of lust, pride, covetousness, false religion, rebellion, and hatred of the Father. To seek its friendship is to court God's enemy.

The Christian must understand the difference between contact and communion. He can live among lost people, work among them, speak to them, serve them, love them in truth, and witness to them. But he cannot take the world as his counselor, entertainer, identity-maker, fashion-setter, humor-writer, moral guide, and approval-giver. Light can shine in darkness, but it does not have fellowship with darkness. Righteousness can speak to unrighteousness, but it does not yoke itself to unrighteousness. The temple of God can stand in a pagan world, but it cannot drag idols into the sanctuary and call it ministry.

So love not the world. Do not flirt with the system that crucified the Lord of glory. Do not sell God's favor for the world's friendship. Do not call compromise relevance. Do not call cowardice compassion. Do not call disobedience outreach. Come out from among them and be separate. Not as a proud Pharisee looking down on sinners, but as a redeemed sinner loyal to the One who bought him. The world will offer laughter, applause, companionship, approval, and a seat at its table. Refuse the bargain. Better clean fellowship with the Father than friendship with a dying world. Better to be received by God than admired by His enemies.

13 of 20: Love Not the World - Be Not Conformed to This World

The world is not satisfied with being watched, visited, used, or passed through. It wants to shape you. It wants to press you into its mold until you talk like it, think like it, laugh like it, dress like it, admire what it admires, hate what it hates, fear what it fears, and call its rebellion wisdom. That is why Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world." That is not a casual suggestion for extra-serious Christians. That is a command. The world has a pattern, a form, a mold, a style, a pressure, and a spirit, and the believer is warned not to be squeezed into it. The danger is not merely that the Christian might commit some obvious outward sin. The danger is that he might slowly become shaped by the age while still claiming to belong to Christ. He may still go to church, carry a Bible, sing the songs,

know the vocabulary, and post religious lines, while his mind is being trained by the world every day.

The world has a mold for everything. It has a mold for speech, where every fool repeats the same phrases and calls it thinking. It has a mold for dress, where modesty is mocked and vanity is sold as confidence. It has a mold for entertainment, where sin is made funny, rebellion is made heroic, and holiness is made ridiculous. It has a mold for ambition, where success is measured by money, platform, visibility, and applause. It has a mold for education, where man's wisdom sits in judgment on God's words. It has a mold for morality, where good is called evil and evil is called good. It has a mold for sexuality, where God's order is treated like bondage and perversion is treated like courage. It has a mold for politics, where men seek salvation from earthly rulers. It even has a mold for religion, where churches are expected to be therapeutic, entertaining, inoffensive, marketable, and careful never to wound the pride of sinners. That is the mold of the age, and Romans 12 says do not be conformed to it.

The answer is not shallow rebellion. A man is not spiritual simply because he is contrarian, loud, odd, angry, or difficult. A teenager can rebel against the world's mold and still be nothing but flesh in another costume. The Bible's answer is not mere reaction. It is transformation. "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). That renewed mind does not come from slogans, trends, political tribes, emotional impulses, social media outrage, religious branding, academic pride, or cultural pressure. It comes from truth. It comes from the words of God. The world disciplines by repetition. It says the same lie through movies, music, schools, news, influencers, corporations, advertisements, and even soft pulpits until people mistake familiarity for truth. The Bible renews by revelation. It tells the truth from above and breaks the mold from within. If the believer does not actively resist the world's mold, he will eventually call conformity wisdom, compromise compassion, and cowardice love.

1. The World Has a Mold for the Mind

Romans 12:2 begins with the command, "be not conformed to this world." Conformity is not always dramatic. It often happens quietly. It is not always a man waking up and deciding to reject God. Sometimes it is simply a man hearing the same worldly assumptions long enough until they begin to feel normal. The world repeats its doctrines constantly. It preaches through entertainment, education, advertising, politics, social media, music, fashion, and news. It does not always announce itself as doctrine, but it is teaching all the same. It teaches what is funny, what is shameful, what is admirable, what is hateful, what is brave, what is outdated, what is acceptable, and what is unthinkable.

That is why the battle is in the mind. The world wants to control definitions. If it can define love, it can call correction hatred. If it can define humility, it can call conviction arrogance. If it can define truth as personal, it can make Scripture sound oppressive. If it can define success as visibility and money, it can make faithfulness look like failure. If it can define compassion as affirmation, it can make holiness look cruel. If it can define relevance as imitation, it can make separation look useless. Whoever controls definitions controls the conversation. The world is constantly trying to rewrite the dictionary of the Christian mind.

The renewed mind begins by refusing the world's definitions and returning to God's words. Love is not whatever makes sinners feel approved. Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Success is not crowd size, wealth, influence, or applause. Success is faithfulness to God. Wisdom is not the ability to fit into the age. Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. Freedom is not the right to obey every appetite. Freedom is deliverance from sin's dominion to serve God. Compassion is not lying to people so they remain comfortable on the road to judgment. Compassion tells the truth because souls are at stake. A Christian whose mind is not renewed by Scripture will eventually speak the world's language while pretending to defend God's truth.

2. Conformity Begins With Small Permissions

A man usually does not become conformed to the world in one leap. He gives small permissions. He lets the edge down a little. He laughs at something he once would have judged. He watches what he once would have turned off. He repeats a phrase he once would have tested. He makes peace with a compromise because everyone around him says it is normal. He grows tired of being different. He starts thinking that maybe older convictions were too strict, too narrow, too severe, too embarrassing. He begins to call surrender "growth." That is how the mold begins to take shape.

The world is patient in its corruption. It does not need to make a Bible believer deny every doctrine in one day. It only needs to make him slightly embarrassed by plain truth. Then a little embarrassed becomes a little silent. A little silent becomes a little approving. A little approving becomes a little defensive of error. A little defensive becomes open opposition to those who still stand where he used to stand. That is how many compromisers are made. They did not start by hating the Bible. They started by wanting relief from the pressure of being different.

This is why Peter's warning matters: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" (1 Peter 1:14). The word "fashioning" connects directly with the idea of being shaped. The believer is not supposed to be fashioned according to the old lusts. The old pattern does not get to dictate the new life.

The Christian must not let the former life keep designing his present conduct. God says, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). Holiness is not a decorative doctrine. It is the new pattern. The world gives one pattern. God gives another.

3. The Renewed Mind Comes From Scripture

Romans 12 does not merely say, “Be not conformed.” It also says, “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The Christian life is not only resistance to the world’s mold. It is transformation by a new inward principle. The mind must be renewed because the old mind has been trained wrong. It has been trained by sin, family patterns, education, entertainment, pride, fear, lust, envy, and the course of this world. Salvation does not make every thought instantly biblical. The believer must learn to think under the authority of the words of God.

Ephesians 4 says, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk” (Ephesians 4:17). Then Paul describes “the vanity of their mind” (Ephesians 4:17), “having the understanding darkened” (Ephesians 4:18), and being alienated from the life of God through ignorance and blindness of heart. That is the world’s mind. It may be educated, celebrated, credentialed, and confident, but God calls it vanity and darkness when it is alienated from Him. The believer is not to walk like that anymore. He has “learned Christ” (Ephesians 4:20). That means the Christian has a new school, a new Teacher, a new Book, and a new way of thinking.

The renewed mind is not produced by emotional moments alone. It is not produced by religious music alone. It is not produced by conference excitement, online outrage, motivational speeches, or vague spirituality. It is produced as the words of God correct the categories of the mind. Scripture teaches the believer what is true, what is false, what matters, what is dangerous, what is eternal, what is temporary, what God loves, what God hates, what the flesh is, what the world is, what the devil does, what Christ has done, and what judgment is coming. A mind not filled with Scripture will be filled with something else. Empty heads become rented rooms for the age.

4. The World Conforms Through Repetition

The world is a master of repetition. It knows that if a lie is repeated long enough, loudly enough, emotionally enough, and through enough trusted voices, people will begin to treat it as obvious. The same moral insanity gets repeated in entertainment, schools, corporations, advertisements, politics, comedy, music, and social media until anyone who objects is made to look strange. The lie becomes the atmosphere. People stop noticing they are breathing it. That is conformity by repetition.

This is why a Christian must be careful about what he repeatedly consumes. Repetition builds assumptions. A man who constantly watches sin treated as normal will eventually feel less shocked by sin. A woman who constantly feeds on image-driven comparison will eventually feel dissatisfied with ordinary life. A young person who constantly hears rebellion presented as freedom will eventually see obedience as oppression. A church that constantly studies worldly methods will eventually think worldly methods are necessary. A preacher who constantly listens to soft, crowd-pleasing religion will eventually think plain rebuke is unloving. The mold forms through repeated pressure.

The Bible also uses repetition, but it repeats truth to renew. God tells His people again and again to remember, hear, meditate, teach, write, rehearse, and speak His words. Scripture is not ashamed to repeat because the mind needs washing. The world repeats lies. The Bible repeats truth. The question is which voice gets more access. If a believer gives the world six hours a day and gives the Bible six minutes in a rush, he should not be surprised when the world's mold feels more natural than God's mind. The renewed mind is not magic. It is formed by truth believed, received, meditated upon, and obeyed.

5. Conformity Often Masquerades as Compassion

One of the most deceptive forms of conformity in modern Christianity is the claim that compromise is compassion. The world says, "If you love people, you will affirm them." The Bible says love rejoices in the truth. The world says, "If you are kind, you will not mention sin." The Bible says faithful are the wounds of a friend. The world says, "If you are compassionate, you will not divide over doctrine." The Bible says mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine. The world says, "If you care, you will soften the message." The Bible says preach the word, reprove, rebuke, exhort.

This is how Christians begin calling conformity love. They are embarrassed by the sharp edge of Scripture, so they put a pillow over it and call that tenderness. They do not want the world to accuse them of being hateful, so they let the world define love for them. That is fatal. Once the world defines love, it controls the Christian's obedience. God's love sent Christ to die for sinners, but it did not pretend sinners were fine. God's love provides salvation, but it does not flatter rebellion. Christ loved sinners enough to tell them truth. A love that lies is not Bible love. It is cowardice dressed for church.

Titus 2 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Then it tells us what grace teaches: "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Titus 2:12). Modern conformity says grace teaches affirmation. The Bible says grace teaches denial. Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts is part of grace instruction. Then it says we should "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present

world” (Titus 2:12). That is the balance. In this present world, but not conformed to it. Compassion that refuses this is not grace. It is surrender.

6. Conformity Can Capture Religion Itself

The world has a religious mold too. It does not mind religion as long as religion stays harmless. The world can tolerate a church that entertains, motivates, affirms, counsels, serves the community, and avoids offense. It can tolerate religious music, religious branding, religious charity, religious celebrity, and religious sentiment. What it hates is a church that stands under the authority of Scripture, preaches the blood of Christ, exposes sin, names false doctrine, refuses the spirit of the age, and declares that no man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus Christ. The world’s religious mold is broad, smiling, vague, marketable, and powerless.

Many churches have already been squeezed into that mold. Their sermons sound like therapy. Their music sounds like entertainment. Their buildings feel like theaters. Their leaders talk like brand managers. Their doctrine is hidden, softened, or negotiable. Their outreach is built on making the world comfortable rather than making Christ clear. Their measure of success is attendance, budgets, influence, and reputation. They may still have crosses on the wall and verses on the screen, but the mold is worldly. The issue is not whether they use modern tools. The issue is whether the world’s values have become the blueprint.

A church conformed to the world will eventually persecute people who refuse to conform. That is always how compromise protects itself. The lukewarm resent the zealous. The soft resent the sharp. The worldly resent the separated. The crowd that wants peace with the age will accuse faithful men of being divisive, harsh, unloving, outdated, and bad for outreach. That is why the Christian must learn not to be intimidated by religious conformity. A church can have crowds and still be conformed. A ministry can have money and still be conformed. A preacher can have influence and still be conformed. The test is not the size of the room. The test is the authority of the Book.

7. Transformation Proves the Will of God

Romans 12:2 says the purpose of nonconformity and renewal is “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” A conformed mind cannot properly prove the will of God because it has been trained to think like the age. It will mistake cultural pressure for wisdom. It will mistake fear of man for prudence. It will mistake worldly success for divine approval. It will mistake emotional comfort for peace. It will mistake popularity for fruit. It will mistake compromise for love. The mind must be renewed so it can judge rightly.

The transformed life begins with Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” The body must be presented before the mind is renewed in practice. A man cannot keep his body for sin, pride, vanity, appetite, and comfort while claiming his mind is being transformed. The Christian is called to be a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is his reasonable service. That is not fanaticism. That is reasonable, considering the mercies of God. Christ gave Himself for you. Presenting yourself to God is not excessive. It is reasonable.

The transformed Christian becomes difficult for the world to mold because he belongs on the altar. His speech is under God. His body is under God. His money is under God. His entertainment is under God. His ambitions are under God. His mind is under God. His doctrine is under God. His relationships are under God. His future is under God. The world keeps pressing, but the sacrifice has already been offered. The believer says, “I am not available for your mold. I am already presented to God.” That is how transformation breaks conformity. The Christian does not merely refuse the world because he is stubborn. He refuses because he belongs to the Lord.

Conclusion

The command is plain: “Be not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2). The world has a mold, and it wants the Christian squeezed into it. It wants his speech, dress, humor, entertainment, politics, education, morality, sexuality, ambitions, religion, and definitions. It wants to disciple him through repetition until he calls worldliness normal and truth extreme. It wants him to be ashamed of plain Scripture and impressed with the age’s approval. It wants him to call compromise compassion, cowardice love, and conformity wisdom. The believer must see that pressure for what it is and resist it.

The answer is not shallow rebellion, personality-driven contrarianism, or religious oddity. The answer is transformation by the renewing of the mind. The mind must be brought under Scripture. The old patterns must be judged. The former lusts must no longer fashion the life. The believer must learn Christ. He must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. He must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That renewed mind comes from the words of God correcting the lies of the age. The world repeats lies until they feel normal. The Bible repeats truth until the Christian can see clearly.

So love not the world, and do not let it shape you. Do not let it define love, success, holiness, compassion, truth, identity, manhood, womanhood, worship, ministry, or wisdom. Do not let its mold press you into its form. Present your body a living sacrifice. Let the Book renew your mind. Let truth transform your thinking. Let Christ, not culture, define

your life. The world will keep pressing until the Lord returns, but the believer is not clay in the hands of the age. He belongs to God. Be not conformed to this world. Be transformed.

14 of 20: Love Not the World - Pilgrims in a Burning World

The Bible does not call the Christian a permanent settler in this present evil world. It calls him a stranger and a pilgrim. That one truth would cure half the sickness in modern Christianity if people believed it. Hebrews says of the faithful, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). They confessed it. They did not merely tolerate it. They did not accidentally feel out of place once in a while. They understood who they were and where they were. They were passing through. They had promises ahead of them, a better country beyond them, and a God who was not ashamed to be called their God. That is the pilgrim mind. It looks at the earth, uses what must be used, does what must be done, obeys God in the present, but refuses to make this world its final home.

The world hates that mindset because the world system is built on permanence, pride, image, ownership, status, and name-building. The world says, "Settle down. Build your name. Establish your empire. Make yourself great. Leave your mark. Chase legacy. Secure your place. Become somebody." The Bible says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). The world says, "This is your home." The Bible says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). The world says, "Invest your identity in what you can see." The Bible says, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10). Those are two entirely different ways of living. One builds a throne in a burning house. The other walks through the house warning people before the fire falls.

Now let the balance be understood. Being a pilgrim does not mean being useless, irresponsible, lazy, sloppy, detached from duty, careless with family, careless with work, or indifferent to earthly responsibility. A pilgrim still walks. A pilgrim still eats. A pilgrim still plans the next mile. A pilgrim still uses roads, tools, shelter, money, clothing, and provisions. He is not useless because he is passing through. He is purposeful because he is passing through. The difference is not that he owns nothing or does nothing. The difference is that nothing owns him. He can work hard without worshipping work. He can provide without making provision his god. He can build without making the building his

identity. He can engage the present without worshipping the present. He can live responsibly in the world while refusing to anchor his soul to a system God has already marked for judgment. The Christian is a pilgrim in a burning world, and a sane pilgrim does not fall in love with the firewood.

1. The Pilgrim Confesses He Is Not Home

Hebrews 11:13 says the faithful “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” That word “confessed” matters. They did not hide their identity. They did not pretend this world satisfied them. They did not speak as though the earth had given them their final inheritance. They lived with a confession that explained their whole life. They were strangers because they belonged to another country. They were pilgrims because they were moving toward promises not yet received in fullness. They saw them afar off, were persuaded of them, embraced them, and confessed who they were. That is faith with a backbone.

A stranger does not expect the foreign land to feel like home. That is where many Christians get confused. They keep trying to feel at home in a world that is hostile to their Father, their Saviour, their Bible, and their hope. Then when the world mocks them, pressures them, misunderstands them, rejects them, and calls them strange, they act shocked. Why? The Bible already told you what you are. A stranger is not strange because he failed to fit in. He is strange because he belongs somewhere else. If the world never finds anything unusual about your values, words, entertainment, priorities, doctrine, modesty, hope, or worship, you may have lost the pilgrim confession.

The pilgrim confession protects a man from despair. When the world goes mad, he remembers he is not home. When the culture decays, he remembers he is not home. When rulers lie, celebrities rot, religion compromises, money shifts, and morality collapses, he remembers he is not home. That does not make him passive. It makes him steady. He can stand, preach, work, provide, vote if he chooses, speak truth, raise children, and fight good battles without pretending this present world is the kingdom of God. He is not home yet. He is on the road.

2. The Pilgrim Looks for a Better Country

Hebrews 11:16 says, “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.” The pilgrim life is not merely about what the believer rejects. It is about what he desires. The Christian does not refuse the world because he hates beauty, joy, fellowship, life, or glory. He refuses the world because he has been promised something better. The world offers a corrupt country, a fading country, a dying country, a sin-cursed country, a temporary country. God offers a better country. Not merely better in degree, but better in kind.

Heavenly. Pure. Eternal. Ordered by God. Free from the curse. Ruled by righteousness. Centered in the Lord.

This desire for a better country is what separates biblical pilgrimage from religious misery. Some people think separation means walking around bitter, joyless, and angry that they cannot enjoy the world. That is not the pilgrim spirit. The pilgrim is not merely gritting his teeth and saying no to earth. He is saying yes to something higher. He has seen the promises afar off. He is persuaded. He has embraced them. The world looks less impressive because heaven has become more real. A man who has never seen anything better will cling to Babylon. A man looking for a better country can let Babylon go.

That is why the Christian must keep eternity in view. If he stares only at the present, the world begins to look larger than it is. Its pleasures look more necessary. Its threats look more powerful. Its applause looks more valuable. Its wealth looks more secure. Its rejection looks more frightening. But when the better country fills the horizon, the present age shrinks to its proper size. The believer can say, "This is not all there is. This is not my final home. This is not the end of the story. Christ is coming. Glory is ahead. God is not ashamed to be called my God." That is how pilgrims endure.

3. Heavenly Citizenship Changes Earthly Living

Philippians 3:20 says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The believer's citizenship is heavenly. His final commonwealth is not this present evil world. His King is not elected by sinners. His inheritance is not secured by banks. His hope is not guarded by armies. His future is not dependent on economies, presidents, courts, celebrities, markets, or religious institutions. His conversation is in heaven, and from there he looks for the Saviour. That should change how he lives down here.

Heavenly citizenship does not make a Christian a bad earthly citizen. It should make him honest, diligent, sober, useful, and faithful. He should pay what he owes, keep his word, work as unto the Lord, love his family, help where he can, and avoid being a needless burden. But heavenly citizenship means earthly systems do not own his soul. When earthly authority contradicts God, he obeys God. When earthly culture mocks Scripture, he stands with Scripture. When earthly parties demand blind loyalty, he remembers Christ is Lord. When earthly success demands compromise, he refuses the bargain. His first allegiance is above.

This is what keeps the Christian from political idolatry and cultural panic. He can care about what happens around him without believing politics is salvation. He can recognize wickedness in rulers without forgetting that God still rules. He can be grieved over national

decay without acting as though heaven has been shaken. He can speak against evil without becoming a slave to fear. His conversation is in heaven. He looks for the Saviour, not a saviour made of flesh. A pilgrim may travel through troubled lands, but his passport is from another country.

4. The Empire-Building Mind Is Worldly to the Core

The world trains men to build empires around themselves. It tells them to build their name, brand, image, influence, wealth, legacy, and visible monument. It tells them they are not important unless people know them, quote them, follow them, envy them, and remember them. That spirit can show up in business, politics, entertainment, academia, and religion. It can show up in a preacher who turns ministry into a personality cult. It can show up in a church that cares more about its name than God's truth. It can show up in a Christian who measures his life by what he owns, what he controls, and who admires him.

There is nothing wrong with building what God puts under your hand if you build as a steward. A man can build a business, a home, a ministry, a family, a body of work, or a useful project. But the empire-building mind is different. It builds to be seen. It builds to become somebody. It builds to secure identity in earth. It builds like Nebuchadnezzar walking in Babylon saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built" (Daniel 4:30). It looks at God-given opportunities and turns them into mirrors. It forgets that God can abase the proud in a moment.

The pilgrim mind builds differently. It builds tents, not Babel towers. It uses what God gives without worshipping what was built. It can labor diligently and still say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:15). It can produce fruit without needing a monument. It can serve faithfully without needing history to applaud. It can leave the results with God. The empire-builder says, "How can I make my name great?" The pilgrim says, "How can I be faithful before I leave?" That difference reveals whether a man is anchored in earth or moving toward heaven.

5. The Burning World Should Sober the Christian

Second Peter 3:10 says, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." Then it says, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." That is not symbolic self-help language. That is God's verdict on the present order. The world that men worship is marked for fire. Its towers, systems, treasures, monuments, governments, markets, museums, idols, fashions, and proud achievements are temporary. The same earth men kill each other to possess will be burned up. The same system men sell their souls to enter will be judged.

Peter draws the application immediately: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). That is the question. If all these things shall be dissolved, what kind of people should Christians be? Not worldly. Not covetous. Not proud. Not conformed. Not drunk on the present. Not obsessed with temporary things. Holy. Godly. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. The doctrine of coming judgment is not given to satisfy curiosity. It is given to produce holiness.

Why would a saved man build his identity in a place God has already marked for fire? Why would he sell truth for a seat in a burning theater? Why would he trade holiness for applause from people standing on kindling? Why would he envy the wicked when their mansion is temporary and their soul is in danger? Why would he let his heart be chained to possessions that cannot survive the fire? The burning world should sober the Christian. It should not make him useless. It should make him urgent, clean, generous, bold, and free.

6. Pilgrims Abstain From Fleshly Lusts

Peter says, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Notice the connection. Because you are strangers and pilgrims, abstain. Pilgrim identity demands pilgrim conduct. A man on the road cannot carry every weight. He cannot indulge every appetite. He cannot settle down in every pleasure house along the way. Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and a pilgrim cannot afford to give enemy troops a room in his tent.

This is where many Christians lose the pilgrim life. They may agree doctrinally that heaven is home, but practically their affections are camped in the world. They feed the same appetites, chase the same praise, laugh at the same filth, envy the same luxuries, and trust the same systems. They say they are pilgrims, but they pack like settlers. Peter says abstain. That means say no. Not negotiate. Not rename. Not baptize. Abstain. Fleshly lusts do not merely inconvenience the soul. They war against it. A pilgrim surrounded by enemies had better know what is trying to kill him.

Abstaining does not make the pilgrim miserable. It keeps him mobile. Sin weighs a man down. Lust clouds his vision. Covetousness clutters his hands. Pride makes him stop and admire himself. Comfort makes him forget the road. The pilgrim needs a clean walk because he is going somewhere. He is not abstaining because God hates joy. He is abstaining because God knows what wars against the soul. A pilgrim who feeds the enemy loses strength for the journey.

7. Pilgrims Live Responsibly Without Worshipping the Present

The pilgrim doctrine must not be twisted into laziness or escapism. The Christian who says, "This world is not my home," and then refuses to work, provide, serve, witness, or act responsibly is not spiritual. He is disobedient. Pilgrims still have duties on the road. They still raise children, care for family, work honestly, pay debts, speak truth, help others, pray, give, preach, and occupy till the Lord comes. Heavenly citizenship does not cancel earthly responsibility. It orders it under God.

The key is worship. The pilgrim lives in the present but does not worship the present. He uses the present as a field of obedience, not a throne of identity. He can plant a garden if God gives him ground, but he knows he may leave before harvest. He can build a house, but he knows heaven is home. He can run a business, but he knows mammon is not lord. He can use tools, but he knows tools are temporary. He can plan for tomorrow, but he knows tomorrow belongs to God. He can enjoy lawful blessings, but he knows no blessing down here is ultimate.

This is the mature balance. The pilgrim is neither a monkish hermit nor a worldly empire-builder. He is a responsible stranger. He is a heavenly citizen with earthly assignments. He is a witness in enemy territory. He is a steward of temporary things. He is a soldier waiting for orders. He is an ambassador with a message from the King. He has his hands in necessary labor, his feet on the road, his eyes on the horizon, and his heart set above. That is the Christian life in a burning world.

Conclusion

The Christian is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. That confession is not poetic decoration. It is a governing doctrine. Hebrews says the faithful saw the promises afar off, were persuaded of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. That is how the believer must live. Not as a permanent citizen of a condemned system, but as a man passing through with promises ahead and a better country in view. His conversation is in heaven. He looks for the Saviour. He belongs to another kingdom.

This pilgrim mindset rebukes the empire-building spirit of the age. The world says build your name, secure your place, chase permanence, and make yourself great. The Bible says the world is passing away and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The world says settle your identity here. The Bible says abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. The world says this present order is everything. The Bible says the day of the Lord will come. The Christian must therefore live soberly, work faithfully, provide responsibly, witness boldly, and serve diligently, while refusing to worship anything that belongs to the fire.

So love not the world. Do not drive your tent stakes too deep in a land marked for judgment. Do not build your soul's mansion in a burning city. Do not envy men whose treasure cannot

survive death. Do not sell your calling for applause from a world that will melt. Walk as a pilgrim. Labor as a steward. Speak as an ambassador. Abstain as a stranger. Hope as a heavenly citizen. The road may be hard, the country may be hostile, and the fire may be coming, but the better country is sure, the Saviour is coming, and God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who walk by faith.

15 of 20: Love Not the World - Egypt in the Heart

There is a terrible thing that can happen after deliverance. A man can be brought out of bondage, but still carry the old country in his affections. His feet may be out, his body may be out, his name may be out, his crowd may be changed, his location may be changed, and his outward direction may be changed, but somewhere down in the appetite, Egypt is still alive. That is what happened to Israel. God broke Pharaoh, split the Red Sea, drowned the army, led His people by a pillar of cloud and fire, fed them with manna from heaven, and still they found a way to complain because their hearts remembered Egypt better than it deserved to be remembered. “And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (Numbers 11:4). That is not just hunger talking. That is Egypt talking through appetite.

Then comes one of the most revealing statements in the wilderness: “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick” (Numbers 11:5). What a memory. Fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. But where are the whips? Where are the brick kilns? Where is Pharaoh murdering babies? Where are the taskmasters? Where are the tears? Where are the groans God heard from under bondage? Where is the misery that made them cry out for deliverance? That is how the world works. It edits the memory reel. It shows the flavor and hides the chains. It reminds you of the laughter and hides the shame. It reminds you of the thrill and hides the emptiness. It reminds you of the attention and hides the bondage. It reminds you of Egypt’s menu and hides Egypt’s master.

This essay is about worldliness after deliverance. It is about the Christian who has been saved by grace, washed in the blood, brought out from the old life, and yet still finds his heart looking back. He may not physically go back to the old places, but he keeps visiting them in his imagination. He remembers old sins with softness. He remembers old crowds with warmth. He remembers old music, old habits, old attention, old rebellion, old lusts, old ambitions, and old identity as though they were not connected to slavery. That is Egypt in the heart. God can take a man out of the world in a moment, but the believer must learn

to get the world out of his affections by walking with God. Salvation changes a man's standing instantly. Spiritual maturity changes his appetite over time as he yields to the Book, walks in the Spirit, and learns to hate what once held him.

1. Israel Was Out of Egypt, But Egypt Was Not Out of Israel

Exodus shows a mighty physical deliverance. Israel left Egypt by the power of God. Pharaoh did not release them because he became tenderhearted. God broke him. God judged Egypt. God put blood on the doors. God opened the sea. God led His people out with a high hand. The problem was not that God failed to deliver them. The problem was that deliverance from the land did not automatically remove affection for the land. Israel's bodies were marching toward Canaan, but many of their hearts still had Egyptian addresses. Their feet followed Moses, but their appetites kept writing letters back to Pharaoh's table.

This is one of the great pictures of the Christian life. A saved man has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. He is not what he used to be in standing. He is no longer under condemnation. He is redeemed. He is sealed. He belongs to Christ. But the old flesh still remembers Egypt. The old nature does not get saved. It does not become spiritual. It does not suddenly love holiness. It can sit in church and dream about the old country. It can hear preaching and think about what it used to enjoy. It can sing hymns with the mouth while the appetite rummages around in Egypt's pantry.

That is why the wilderness exposed Israel. Egypt showed what they were under Pharaoh. The wilderness showed what was still in them after Pharaoh. Pressure reveals appetite. Hunger reveals trust. Delay reveals loyalty. When the comforts disappeared and the journey became difficult, Egypt began to look good again. That is the danger. A Christian may talk separation while things are smooth, but when hardship comes, when loneliness comes, when desire wakes up, when the old crowd calls, when the old pleasures appear, when obedience feels costly, Egypt can suddenly look sweet. The issue is not whether God brought him out. The issue is whether his heart still wants to go back.

2. The World Edits the Memory Reel

Numbers 11:5 is one of the clearest examples of selective memory in the Bible. "We remember the fish." Of course they did. The flesh remembers flavor better than bondage. "The cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick." It is almost laughable if it were not so tragic. They could list Egypt's vegetables, but somehow forgot Egypt's violence. They could remember the menu, but forgot the misery. They

remembered what entered their mouths, but forgot what crushed their backs. That is how worldly nostalgia works. It is a liar with a soft voice.

The devil is a master editor. He does not replay the entire film. He clips the scene that helps his case. He shows the party, not the emptiness afterward. He shows the romance of sin, not the guilt. He shows the old friends laughing, not the path they were walking. He shows the music, not the spirit behind it. He shows the attention, not the pride it fed. He shows the money, not the compromise it required. He shows the pleasure, not the chain. He shows the forbidden fruit, not the exile from the garden. He shows Egypt's fish, not Pharaoh's whip.

That is why a believer must force memory to tell the truth under Scripture. Do not let the flesh narrate your past. The flesh is a dishonest historian. It will make bondage look like freedom and obedience look like deprivation. It will tell you the old life was exciting while leaving out the shame, fear, confusion, emptiness, and death that traveled with it. It will say, "Remember how good that was?" The Bible answers, "Remember what it cost." It will say, "Remember the pleasure?" The Bible answers, "Remember the wages." It will say, "Remember Egypt?" The Bible answers, "Remember Pharaoh."

3. Appetite Can Become a Road Back to Bondage

Israel's longing for Egypt began with appetite. "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" (Numbers 11:4). The appetite became a preacher. It preached against manna. It preached against Moses. It preached against God's provision. It preached Egypt as better than the wilderness. That is what an ungoverned appetite does. It takes a real desire and turns it into spiritual rebellion. Hunger itself was not sin. Desire for food was not sin. But when appetite began accusing God and romanticizing bondage, it became dangerous.

The flesh often uses legitimate needs as launching pads for sinful conclusions. A man is lonely, so the flesh tells him to return to old relationships. A man is tired, so the flesh tells him to stop obeying. A man is stressed, so the flesh tells him to seek old comforts. A man feels overlooked, so the flesh tells him to chase old attention. A man struggles financially, so the flesh tells him Egypt was safer. A man feels spiritually dry, so the flesh tells him the old music, old entertainment, old crowd, and old sins at least made him feel alive. Appetite becomes a road sign pointing backward.

This is why the Christian must not let appetite interpret reality. The body can be hungry and still wrong. The emotions can be loud and still wrong. The memory can be vivid and still wrong. The desire can be strong and still wrong. Israel's appetite told them Egypt was better than manna, but Egypt was bondage and manna was mercy. The Christian must learn to say, "My flesh wants this, but my flesh is not my shepherd." Appetite must be

brought under the authority of God's words. If it is not, the old country will start looking like home again.

4. Manna Was Mercy, But They Called It Nothing

Numbers 11:6 says, "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." That is an astonishing complaint. "Nothing at all, beside this manna." Manna was God's supernatural provision. Bread from heaven was lying on the ground, and they called it practically nothing because their appetite wanted Egypt's menu. This is what discontent does. It takes mercy and talks about it like an insult. It takes daily provision and treats it like deprivation. It takes God's faithfulness and says, "Is this all?"

This is a serious warning to Christians. A worldly heart can become bored with God's provision. It can become bored with the Bible. Bored with preaching. Bored with prayer. Bored with church. Bored with holiness. Bored with ordinary faithfulness. Bored with daily bread. Bored with clean living. Bored with simple obedience. Then it begins craving something seasoned with Egypt. It wants more excitement, more stimulation, more attention, more emotional rush, more fleshly flavor. It begins to call manna dry because Egypt had garlic. That is not discernment. That is a corrupted appetite.

The remedy is gratitude and spiritual taste. The believer must learn to recognize manna as mercy. The King James Bible in the hand is mercy. Prayer access to the Father is mercy. Salvation by the blood of Christ is mercy. A clean conscience is mercy. A faithful church is mercy. Daily provision is mercy. Deliverance from old bondage is mercy. If a man cannot taste mercy in these things, he does not need Egypt's spices. He needs his appetite healed. The problem is not that God's provision is bland. The problem is that the heart has been trained by Egypt to crave onions more than heaven's bread.

5. The Mixt Multitude Still Stirs Lust

Numbers 11:4 says, "And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again." The mixt multitude became the spark. They lusted, and Israel joined the crying. That is how bad company works. It does not always force a believer backward. It simply starts talking Egypt language until the appetite wakes up. It complains. It reminisces. It mocks manna. It magnifies what was left behind. It plants the thought that obedience has cost too much and bondage was not so bad. Then the people of God start weeping over what they should have judged.

The Christian must be careful who helps him remember. Some people are professional Egypt historians. They will remind you of old sins, old crowds, old pleasures, old rebellion, and old identity. They will make bondage sound funny, harmless, exciting, and romantic. They will not remind you of the spiritual damage. They will not remind you of conviction.

They will not remind you of the pit. They will not remind you of the mercy that brought you out. They will only bring up the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. If you listen long enough, you may start weeping for chains.

This is why separation matters. Not because a believer hates sinners, but because he knows his flesh. A man who has been delivered from Egypt should not keep counselors from Pharaoh's kitchen. A Christian who has left the old life must be careful about the voices that keep interpreting the old life for him. The wrong crowd can make obedience feel lonely and sin feel warm. The wrong music can bring Egypt back into the room. The wrong friendships can awaken an appetite God had been killing. The wrong nostalgia can become a doorway to backsliding. The mixt multitude still knows how to stir lust.

6. Acts 7 Shows That the Heart Can Turn Back Before the Feet Do

Stephen said of Israel, "To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:39). That phrase is one of the most important statements in the Bible about backsliding. "In their hearts turned back." Their feet were not yet back in Egypt, but their hearts were. That means a man can backslide internally before anything visible changes. He may still attend church. He may still use the right language. He may still be around God's people. He may still appear to be on the road. But inside, his heart has already packed its bags for Egypt.

This is where many Christians deceive themselves. They think because they have not physically returned to some old sin, the heart is safe. Not necessarily. The heart can return through imagination. Through longing. Through envy. Through softened memory. Through music. Through old friendships. Through secret resentment toward God's narrow path. Through growing boredom with spiritual things. Through the private thought, "Maybe the old life was not so bad." That is the danger zone. The visible fall may come later, but the inward turn came first.

A wise believer watches the heart before the feet move. He judges nostalgia before it becomes pursuit. He confesses wrong desire before it becomes action. He brings the imagination under the Book before it starts building roads. He refuses to let the past become an idol. He recognizes that the phrase "in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" can happen to church people, Bible readers, preachers, singers, teachers, and anybody still carrying flesh. The heart is the first battlefield. If Egypt wins there, the feet may eventually follow.

7. First Corinthians 10 Says These Things Were Written for Our Warning

Paul says of Israel's wilderness history, "Now these things were our examples" (1 Corinthians 10:6). Then he says they were written "to the intent we should not lust after evil

things, as they also lusted.” That means these events are not dead history. They are warnings. God wrote Israel’s failures in the wilderness so Christians would learn from them. A Bible believer who reads Numbers 11 and thinks only of ancient Jews missing vegetables has missed the point. The Holy Ghost says, “Look at them and fear. The same kind of lust can work in you.”

First Corinthians 10 continues, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). That warning is necessary because pride makes men careless. A man says, “I would never go back.” Be careful. A woman says, “That old life has no pull on me.” Be careful. A preacher says, “I have been too long in the ministry to be drawn by Egypt.” Be careful. Israel walked through the sea, drank spiritual drink, and still fell in the wilderness. Privilege does not make the flesh trustworthy. Experience does not make the heart immune. Knowledge does not make appetite harmless.

The right response is not fear without faith, but sober vigilance. Paul also says God is faithful and provides a way to escape temptation. The believer is not doomed to go back. He is warned so he will not go back. He has the Book. He has the Spirit of God. He has the blood of Christ. He has prayer. He has the new man. He has the examples written for admonition. But he must take heed. He must judge Egypt in the heart. He must refuse the edited memory reel. He must walk with God until the old country loses its fragrance and Canaan fills the horizon.

Conclusion

Egypt in the heart is one of the great dangers after deliverance. God brought Israel out by blood and power, but many still remembered Egypt with dangerous affection. They remembered the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic, but forgot the whips, tears, slavery, brick kilns, bondage, and death. That is how the world works. It edits memory. It shows the pleasures of sin and hides the wages. It shows the flavor and hides the chains. It shows the old crowd laughing and hides the road they were on. It shows the thrill and hides the emptiness. It shows Egypt’s table and hides Pharaoh’s cruelty.

The Christian must not let the flesh become the historian of the old life. The flesh will lie. It will romanticize what God delivered you from. It will make obedience look dry and bondage look exciting. It will make manna look boring and Egypt’s onions look like a feast. It will tell you that old sins were not so bad, old music was harmless, old crowds were fun, old attention was satisfying, and old identity was freedom. But the Bible tells the truth. Those things warred against the soul. They belonged to the world. They were part of the system God brought you out of. Do not let your heart go back where God already broke the chains.

So love not the world, and do not keep Egypt alive in your affections. Do not let appetite preach. Do not let nostalgia lead. Do not let the mixt multitude teach you how to remember. Do not call manna nothing because your flesh misses garlic. Do not turn back in your heart while your feet are still among God's people. Take heed lest you fall. Remember the examples written for your admonition. Walk with God until the old country loses its charm. Christ did not save you to let Pharaoh live in your imagination. He brought you out. Now let the Book, the Spirit, and the grace of God get Egypt out of you.

16 of 20: Love Not the World - Demas and the Tragedy of the Present World

There are few sentences in Paul's writings sadder than this one: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). That is not a long biography, but it is enough to preach a funeral over a man's usefulness. Demas was not some pagan philosopher who never heard truth. He was not a tavern blasphemer standing outside the work of God mocking the apostles. He was not an ignorant outsider who had never been near sound doctrine, sacrifice, prayer, preaching, persecution, or apostolic labor. Demas was close. He was named by Paul. He was in the circle of ministry. In Colossians 4:14, Paul says, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." In Philemon 24, Demas is listed among Paul's "fellowlabourers." That means this man had proximity to some of the strongest spiritual life and doctrine on earth. He had been around Paul, Luke, Mark, Aristarchus, and others. He had seen the cost. He had heard the truth. He had been associated with real gospel labor. And yet the present world got him.

That should scare every man who thinks being around truth is the same thing as loving truth. It should sober every preacher, teacher, church member, Bible student, online debater, ministry helper, and professing believer who assumes that strong surroundings automatically create a strong heart. A man can walk near Paul and still end up loving the present world. A man can hear the right doctrine and still drift. A man can be named among workers and still leave the work. A man can know the vocabulary of ministry and still have a heart warming itself at the world's fire. That is the tragedy of Demas. His danger was not distance from truth at the beginning. His danger was affection for the present age. He did not need to start as an enemy. He only needed to love the wrong world long enough.

The phrase "this present world" is the key. Paul did not simply say Demas loved sin, though sin may have been involved. He did not say Demas became an atheist, joined a cult, wrote a heresy book, denied the resurrection, or cursed Christ publicly. He said Demas loved "this present world." That phrase carries the pull of now. Comfort now. Safety now. Respect

now. Ease now. Money now. Pleasure now. Acceptance now. A quieter life now. A less costly path now. A seat outside prison now. A reputation not tied to Paul's chains now. The present world does not always come with a monstrous temptation. Sometimes it comes with relief. It says, "You have suffered enough. You have stood long enough. You have been associated with hard preaching long enough. Step away. Save yourself. Take the easier road." Demas proves a man can be near apostolic fire and still be cooled by the air of the age.

1. Demas Was Close Enough to Know Better

Demas is first seen in good company. That is what makes his fall so sobering. In Colossians 4:14, he is mentioned alongside Luke. In Philemon 24, he is listed among Paul's fellowlabourers. That means Demas was not introduced to us as a wolf, a heretic, or a known traitor. He was a man associated with ministry. He had a place near real work. He knew names worth knowing. He had seen sacrifice close enough to be affected by it. He had watched Paul endure hardship. He had been close to men who were giving their lives to the gospel. Yet the final word preserved about him in 2 Timothy 4:10 is not "faithful unto death." It is "forsaken me."

This teaches a hard lesson. Association is not consecration. A man can be near a faithful preacher without becoming faithful himself. He can be in a strong church and still have a weak heart. He can belong to a sound circle and still be drawn away by the world. He can know the right people, repeat the right phrases, share the right posts, hold the right Bible, attend the right meetings, and still have his affection captured by something below. Proximity to truth is a privilege, but it is not a substitute for personal obedience. Judas was near Christ and was still a devil. Demas was near Paul and still loved this present world.

That should kill spiritual presumption. Do not say, "I would never." Do not say, "I know too much." Do not say, "I have been around strong preaching too long." Do not say, "I have seen too much ministry to be pulled away." Demas could have said something like that too. The heart is not made safe by religious familiarity. Sometimes familiarity becomes dangerous because a man can sit near holy things until they no longer shake him. He can hear warnings until they become background noise. He can watch sacrifice until he grows tired of it instead of humbled by it. Demas proves that being close to the right men does not guarantee the heart is right with God.

2. The Present World Pulls With Immediate Rewards

Paul's phrase "this present world" points to the seduction of the immediate. The world Demas loved was not merely a geographical place. It was the age in its present advantages. This world offers visible rewards now. It offers comfort now, safety now, approval now, ease

now, money now, pleasure now, reputation now, and escape from reproach now. That is powerful because the Christian life often calls a man to wait. It calls him to endure. It calls him to suffer now and reign later. It calls him to be misunderstood now and rewarded later. It calls him to deny himself now and see Christ later. The present world hates waiting. It says, "Take your reward now."

That is how men are seduced. Not always by one dramatic scandal, but by the slow weariness of delayed reward. A man gets tired of being faithful without applause. He gets tired of truth costing him friends. He gets tired of carrying reproach while compromisers prosper. He gets tired of seeing worldly men praised and faithful men mocked. He gets tired of laboring while others play. He gets tired of prison language, suffering language, separation language, and judgment-seat language. Then the present world whispers, "You could have an easier life." That whisper has carried many Demases out of the work.

The devil knows how to use the word "now." He offered Christ the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them without the cross. That was a now-offer. Take the crown now. Avoid the suffering now. Bow now. The Lord refused. Demas, in his measure, faced a different kind of now-offer and lost. That is why the believer must learn to see past the present. If now becomes the ruling word, the world will win. The Christian must live by then: then the judgment seat, then the appearing of Christ, then the crown, then the better country, then the Lord's "well done." The present world loses some of its charm when eternity is allowed to speak.

3. Strong Preaching Does Not Immunize a Worldly Heart

Demas had been around Paul. Think about that. He had not been sitting under some soft prosperity clown promising breakthroughs for seed money. He had not been under a motivational speaker with a Bible verse taped to a self-help sermon. He had been around Paul, the apostle who preached Christ crucified, justification by faith, the mystery revealed to him, the body of Christ, the grace of God, the judgment seat, suffering, endurance, separation, and sound doctrine. If strong preaching alone could keep a man, Demas should have been kept. But strong preaching can be heard by a heart that does not finally submit to it.

This is one of the great dangers for Bible believers. A man can begin to mistake hearing hard truth for obeying hard truth. He can enjoy strong preaching the way some men enjoy a fight. He can admire the preacher's boldness and still not bring his own affections under the Book. He can say "Amen" when the world is rebuked and then quietly love the same world in his own private form. He can cheer when false religion is exposed and still be ruled by money, comfort, pride, lust, or fear. Hearing truth is a mercy. Obeying truth is the test.

The word of God must go beneath the ears. It must divide soul and spirit. It must judge the thoughts and intents of the heart. If a man hears strong preaching but never lets the Book expose his own present-world attachment, the preaching may only harden him. He becomes a connoisseur of rebuke but not a repentant hearer. He knows what a good sermon sounds like but does not become what a good sermon calls him to be. Demas warns the man who sits under truth but keeps a little room in his heart furnished for the world. Sooner or later, the room may become a house.

4. Forsaking the Work Often Begins Before Leaving the Work

Paul says Demas “hath forsaken me.” That was the visible action. But the inward departure began before the outward one. A man does not usually wake up one morning and abandon faithful labor without some prior cooling in the heart. The affection moves first. The imagination moves first. The desire moves first. The feet simply catch up later. Demas loved this present world before he forsook Paul. The love came before the leaving. That is the order. The heart signs the papers before the body walks out the door.

This is why the believer must judge early drift. When prayer becomes dull, judge it. When Scripture becomes dry because the world is more interesting, judge it. When the company of faithful Christians becomes irritating and the world’s company becomes comfortable, judge it. When sacrifice begins to feel unreasonable, judge it. When you begin envying men who are less faithful but more comfortable, judge it. When you start resenting the cost of truth, judge it. When you begin thinking about a life where obedience costs less, judge it. Those are not harmless thoughts. Those may be the first footprints toward Thessalonica.

Many backsliders leave internally while still present externally. They are still in the meeting, but not in the fight. Still around the work, but no longer carrying the burden. Still using the words, but no longer burning with the truth. Still associated with faithful people, but increasingly embarrassed by their plainness. Still close enough to be counted, but already negotiating with the present world. By the time everyone sees the departure, the heart has been gone for months or years. Demas teaches that visible forsaking often has an invisible history.

5. The Present World Uses Weariness as a Door

Faithful service can be tiring. That is not a sin to admit. Paul knew weariness. He knew pressure. He knew being forsaken, opposed, imprisoned, slandered, beaten, and burdened. The Christian life is not a sentimental picnic. The ministry is not a stage show for applause. Fighting the good fight has bruises in it. The present world knows how to approach a tired man. It does not always come first with lust or greed. Sometimes it comes with rest, relief, safety, quiet, and the suggestion that a man has done enough. It says,

“Step away. You deserve peace. You do not need all this conflict. Why keep suffering for people who do not appreciate you?”

There is a lawful rest in God, and Christians need wisdom, sleep, health, order, and seasons of recovery. But there is also a counterfeit rest that is just surrender with a pillow. The flesh can call retreat “peace.” It can call disobedience “self-care.” It can call cowardice “healthy boundaries.” It can call love of ease “wisdom.” That is not always the Holy Ghost talking. Sometimes it is the present world offering a soft chair away from the battlefield. A man must discern whether he is resting in order to keep serving, or quitting because he loves comfort more than faithfulness.

Demas may have grown tired of the cost. The text does not give every detail, so we should not pretend to know what God did not write. But we know the reason Paul gives: he loved this present world. That love could have included fear, ease, comfort, safety, respectability, or some worldly opportunity. Whatever the particular bait, the present world became more attractive than remaining with Paul in costly service. That is the warning. The world does not always look like filth. Sometimes it looks like relief from the cross.

6. No Man Who Looks Back Is Fit for the Kingdom Work

The Lord Jesus said, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). That verse is not talking about earning salvation by perseverance in works. It is talking about fitness for discipleship and service. A plowman who looks back cannot plow a straight row. His body may be facing forward, but his eyes and heart are behind him. That is exactly how the present world ruins usefulness. It gets a man looking back, glancing sideways, comparing costs, missing comforts, and wondering whether the old world had something better after all.

Looking back is dangerous because it divides the man. One part of him is in the field, another part is in the old life. One hand holds the plow, but the heart holds memories, comforts, ambitions, fears, and desires from the present world. That man will not plow straight. He will drift. He will slow. He will complain. He will eventually leave the field or damage the work. Demas had put his hand to gospel labor, but his heart looked elsewhere. The present world got into his line of sight, and Paul felt the loss.

The cure is a fixed gaze. The Christian must look unto Jesus. He must look for the Saviour. He must look at the things which are not seen. He must look at the judgment seat. He must look at the end of the world system. He must look at the crown, the appearing, the better country, the eternal weight of glory. If he keeps looking at what the present world offers, he will eventually call obedience too expensive. A straight furrow requires a forward eye. A faithful life requires a heart that refuses to look back with longing.

7. The Tragedy of Demas Is a Warning, Not a Curiosity

God did not preserve Demas's failure so Christians could speculate endlessly about him. He preserved it as a warning. The warning is simple: love of the present world can ruin a man's usefulness even after he has been near great truth and great servants. Demas's name remains in Scripture, but not the way any man would want. He is remembered as the man who forsook Paul because he loved this present world. That is a terrible legacy. Better to be unknown and faithful than remembered as a warning against worldly affection.

The warning should be received personally. Every man has a version of "this present world" that appeals to him. For one it may be comfort. For another, money. For another, safety. For another, sexual sin. For another, reputation. For another, family approval. For another, academic respect. For another, religious advancement. For another, ease after years of conflict. The bait differs, but the principle is the same. The present world offers something now in exchange for faithfulness. Demas accepted the bargain. The believer must refuse it.

The answer is not to boast in self-confidence. The answer is to walk closely with God, keep the heart, set affection above, stay in the Book, pray honestly, judge early drift, refuse worldly nostalgia, and remember the end. The man who says, "Demas fell, but I cannot," is already in danger. The man who says, "Lord, keep me from loving this present world," is wiser. Paul finished his course. Demas forsook him. The difference should make every serious Christian tremble and cling to Christ.

Conclusion

Demas is a tragedy because he was not far from truth. He was close to it. He was named among workers. He had been near Paul. He had seen real ministry and heard sound doctrine. Yet the present world pulled him away. That proves proximity is not protection if the heart is not guarded. A man can be in the right circles and still drift. He can hear the right preaching and still love the wrong world. He can know the right doctrine and still be seduced by now. Demas stands in Scripture as a warning that no amount of association can replace personal devotion to Christ.

The phrase "this present world" should be marked in the mind. The danger is now. Comfort now. Safety now. Respect now. Money now. Pleasure now. Ease now. Relief now. The world offers immediate rewards while God calls men to walk by faith, endure hardness, deny self, and wait for the appearing of Christ. Many do not fall because they hate Christ. They fall because they love the present age more than the costly path of obedience. They want the crown without the conflict, the blessing without the burden, the name of Christian without the reproach of the cross.

So love not the world, especially this present world. Do not trust your closeness to strong men, strong preaching, strong doctrine, or strong history. Keep your heart. Judge the first inward turn before it becomes an outward forsaking. Refuse the soft chair the world offers beside the battlefield. Put your hand to the plow and do not look back. The present world is passing away, and the man who loves it will lose more than he thought. Better to stand with Paul in chains than walk with Demas into comfort. Better to finish the course with scars than leave the field with the world's approval. Better to hear Christ say "well done" later than have the present world make life easy now.

17 of 20: Love Not the World - When the Cares of This World Choke the Word

Worldliness does not always kick the church door open wearing a devil costume. Sometimes it walks in carrying a calendar, a bill, a phone, a project list, a business plan, a family obligation, a repair bill, a worry, a hobby, a deadline, and a perfectly respectable excuse. That is what makes it so dangerous. A Christian knows enough to be on guard against open scandal, filthy entertainment, false doctrine, drunkenness, adultery, and obvious rebellion. But he may not recognize the quieter worldliness of ordinary life becoming too large. The Lord Jesus said, "And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word" (Mark 4:18). These people heard the word. The seed was not defective. The problem was the soil was crowded. Then He said, "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19). That is a terrible thing. The word can be heard, received in some sense, and yet choked into unfruitfulness.

The thorns in Mark 4 are not all strip clubs, whiskey bottles, witchcraft books, and criminal habits. They include "the cares of this world." That means worry, pressure, responsibility, maintenance, provision, schedules, trouble, obligations, anxieties, family needs, business demands, daily burdens, and the endless noise of living in a fallen world. Those things are not always sinful by themselves. Bills have to be paid. Families have to be fed. Children have to be raised. Work has to be done. Houses have to be maintained. Business has to be handled. Health has to be cared for. But when those things become so large that the word of God is squeezed out, ordinary life has become a thorn patch. The devil does not have to make a Christian deny the Bible if he can keep him too busy to feed on it. He does not have to make a man curse Christ if he can keep him distracted from Christ. He does not have to make him hate the seed if he can simply crowd the soil.

This essay has to strike at a form of worldliness many respectable Christians excuse. A man may never run off into some scandalous sin, yet his soul may still be spiritually strangled. He may be busy, responsible, employed, productive, decent, religious, and exhausted, while the word of God is being choked in him. He may talk about truth but have no time to sit under it. He may defend the Bible online but barely read it in secret. He may love sound doctrine as a category but live too distracted to be personally changed by it. He may be so busy maintaining life that he loses the life that matters. The seed is good. The problem is that thorns do not need to kill the plant in one day. They just grow near it, crowd it, wrap around it, steal light, steal space, steal strength, and slowly choke it until fruitfulness disappears. That is Satan's quiet masterpiece: a strangled Christian who still looks respectable.

1. The Word Can Be Heard and Still Be Choked

Mark 4:18 says these are they "such as hear the word." That is the first sobering point. The choked man is not necessarily the man who never heard truth. He may hear it often. He may sit under preaching. He may listen to Bible teaching. He may quote verses. He may have doctrine in his head. He may even admire the word of God. But hearing alone is not the end of the matter. The seed must have room to take root, grow, and bear fruit. If the soil is crowded with thorns, the word may be present without being fruitful. That is a frightening condition: exposed to truth, but not governed by truth.

This explains many modern Christians. They have more access to Bible teaching than any generation before them and less fruit than they ought to have. They can listen to sermons while driving, pull up commentaries in seconds, search verses instantly, carry a Bible on a phone, and find preaching at any hour. Yet many are spiritually thin because access is not the same as attention, and attention is not the same as obedience. A man can hear the word in a crowded soul and never let it breathe. It is like throwing seed onto ground already occupied by thorn roots. The seed is there, but everything else is there too.

The devil is perfectly willing for some people to hear the Bible as long as they never give it room. He will let them attend church if Monday through Saturday strangles what they heard. He will let them say "Amen" if anxiety eats the sermon before lunch. He will let them own a Bible if the phone gets the firstfruits of the mind every morning. He will let them defend doctrine if they are too distracted to walk in it. The seed is powerful, but it is not to be treated like decoration. It must be received into a heart where God has authority to pull up thorns.

2. The Cares of This World Are Respectable Thorns

Jesus did not say only the crimes of this world choke the word. He said “the cares of this world” (Mark 4:19). That phrase is important because cares often look legitimate. A care may be a real responsibility. A man may have a mortgage, a business, children, repairs, aging parents, health issues, taxes, customers, employees, schedules, ministry burdens, and daily troubles. These are not imaginary. The Bible does not command a man to be careless with duty. But the cares of this world become thorns when they crowd God out of the center and make the soul live in a constant state of worry, hurry, distraction, and pressure.

Respectable thorns are often harder to detect than scandalous sins. If a man falls into open wickedness, everyone sees the danger. But if he becomes consumed with work, bills, projects, goals, improvements, planning, and maintenance, people may call him responsible while his soul dries up. He may even praise himself for being practical. Yet the word is being choked. Prayer is shortened. Bible reading is delayed. Church becomes optional when life gets crowded. Meditation disappears. Family worship never happens. Witnessing is postponed. Spiritual appetite weakens. The man is not drunk in a gutter. He is buried under respectable thorns.

That is why the Christian must judge cares before cares become kings. A care becomes dangerous when it controls thought more than Scripture does. It becomes dangerous when it steals trust from God. It becomes dangerous when it makes obedience seem unreasonable. It becomes dangerous when it constantly says, “Later,” to the Lord. Later I will pray. Later I will read. Later I will serve. Later I will teach my children. Later I will obey. Later I will get serious. The problem is that thorns grow while you are saying later. The word is choked by inches.

3. Riches Deceive by Promising What Only God Can Give

Mark 4:19 also mentions “the deceitfulness of riches.” Riches do not merely tempt. They deceive. They lie. They promise security, peace, importance, freedom, control, happiness, respect, and satisfaction. But riches cannot give what they promise. They may change a man’s circumstances, but they cannot cleanse his heart, quiet his conscience, save his soul, give him eternal life, or make him fruitful for God. Riches can become thorns because they require attention, protection, management, expansion, and emotional dependence. The more a man has, the more he may worry about keeping it. The thing he thought would free him can become the thing that owns his imagination.

This does not mean money itself is evil. The Bible has already been clear on that. Money can be used lawfully. A Christian can work, save, give, build, and provide. But riches become deceitful when the heart begins to believe life will finally be right if enough money

arrives. The poor man may be deceived by riches he does not yet possess. The rich man may be deceived by riches he already has. Both can be choked. One is choked by longing for money, the other by managing, guarding, and trusting it. The thorn works either way.

The prosperity gospel is one of the great thorn growers of this age because it teaches people to confuse spiritual life with material increase. It does not uproot the deceitfulness of riches. It waters it. It tells people their faith should be proven by more. More money, more things, more visible blessing, more status, more luxury, more display. Then the word of God gets pushed into the corner while the soul becomes obsessed with gain. Jesus said riches can deceive. The prosperity preacher says riches confirm. Believe Jesus.

4. Other Things Can Choke as Surely as Wicked Things

Mark 4:19 includes “the lusts of other things.” That phrase is broad enough to search every corner of the heart. Other things. Not always evil things. Other things. Things besides the word. Things besides Christ. Things besides the will of God. Hobbies, plans, comforts, projects, entertainment, sports, shopping, travel, collections, upgrades, social media, personal goals, home improvements, investments, side interests, endless learning, endless fixing, endless watching, endless scrolling. None of these things have to be wicked in themselves to become thorns. They only have to enter in and choke the word.

The lusts of other things are dangerous because they multiply. One interest becomes five. One hobby becomes a lifestyle. One project becomes a chain. One screen becomes a habit. One comfort becomes a demand. One goal becomes an identity. The heart has only so much room, and the mind has only so much strength. If “other things” keep entering in, something must get crowded out. Often it is the word of God. Not because the Christian formally rejected the Bible, but because everything else kept entering in with louder demands.

This is one reason many Christians are spiritually exhausted. They are not always doing wicked things. They are doing too many things. Their lives are packed with noise. Their minds are never quiet. Their hearts are never still. Their schedules are stuffed. Their phones never stop. Their houses demand attention. Their hobbies demand attention. Their ambitions demand attention. Their worries demand attention. Their entertainment demands attention. Then they wonder why Scripture feels distant. The word has not lost power. It is being choked by other things.

5. Satan Uses Distraction as Effectively as Temptation

The devil does not need to tempt every Christian into open rebellion if distraction will do the job. A distracted Christian may still believe right doctrine, but he is too scattered to live it. He may still love the Bible theoretically, but he rarely sits long enough for it to cut him. He

may still want to pray, but his mind is already running ahead to the next task. He may still care about souls, but he is too busy to speak. He may still believe in eternity, but his schedule is ruled by the temporary. Distraction is not harmless. It is often temptation without a scandal.

Noise is one of the devil's great tools. Constant noise keeps a man from hearing clearly. The phone buzzes. The news screams. The calendar presses. The inbox fills. The bills arrive. The project waits. The family needs something. The world produces another emergency. A thousand things call his name, and the still small discipline of opening the Book gets pushed back again. Satan does not mind if a man respects the Bible as long as he never actually sits under it with a surrendered heart. A Bible on the shelf does not frighten the devil nearly as much as a Bible open before a man who intends to obey.

The Lord Jesus rebuked Martha in a related principle when she was "careful and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). She was not committing some vile sin. She was serving, moving, working, and caring. But Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word, and the Lord said Mary had chosen the good part. That is the issue. Many things can trouble a soul, but one thing is needful. If the many things constantly choke the one needful thing, the many things have become thorns.

6. Haggai Shows the Vanity of Busy Disobedience

Haggai 1 gives a powerful Old Testament picture of people busy with their own houses while God's house lay waste. God said, "Consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5). Then He said, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm" (Haggai 1:6). The people were active, but not blessed as they should have been. They were busy, but misordered. They had energy for their own houses while God's house was neglected. That is a timeless danger.

The issue was not that houses are evil. A man needs shelter. Families need care. Homes require maintenance. The issue was priority. God said, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai 1:4). That question cuts. How often do Christians have time for everything except God's priorities? Time for work, entertainment, errands, upgrades, scrolling, projects, and personal interests, but little time for prayer, Scripture, worship, witness, and service. The problem is not always lack of time. Often it is theft of priority.

Haggai exposes busy disobedience. People can be working hard and still be wrong. They can be productive and still be misaligned. They can improve their own comfort while neglecting God's claims. The Lord says, "Consider your ways." That is what the choked

Christian must do. Consider the schedule. Consider the spending. Consider the attention. Consider the worries. Consider the habits. Consider the thorns. Is the word being given room, or is God's house lying waste while the believer maintains a decorated life?

7. Fruitfulness Requires Thorns to Be Uprooted

The point of the parable is fruit. The choked word "becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19). God is not merely interested in the seed being present. He wants fruit. He wants the word to produce obedience, holiness, endurance, witness, prayer, charity, discernment, and spiritual maturity. A thorn-crowded life may contain the word, but it does not produce as it should. The Christian must therefore stop admiring the thorns and start uprooting them. It is not enough to say, "I am just busy." Busy may be the name of the weed.

Uprooting thorns requires honest judgment. Some things need to be removed. Some need to be limited. Some need to be reordered. Some need to be put under discipline. Some worries need to be cast upon the Lord. Some ambitions need to be crucified. Some hobbies need to be cut back. Some noise needs to be turned off. Some schedules need to be simplified. Some projects need to wait. Some spending needs to stop. Some forms of entertainment need to die. The heart cannot be fruitful while giving equal space to everything that wants to grow.

This is not legalism. This is gardening. A farmer who pulls weeds is not a legalist. He wants fruit. A Christian who guards time for Scripture, prayer, church, family worship, service, and quiet before God is not extreme. He wants fruit. If the word is being choked, something must change. The seed is good. The Saviour is right. The Book is powerful. The question is whether the soil will be cleared. Thorns do not apologize for choking. They must be pulled.

Conclusion

Worldliness is not always loud, filthy, and obvious. Sometimes it is ordinary life becoming too large. Jesus said the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things enter in and choke the word. That means a man can be respectable, responsible, busy, productive, and religious, yet spiritually strangled. The word can be heard but crowded. The seed can be good but unfruitful. The soil can be occupied by too many thorns for the life of the word to flourish.

This should sober every Christian living in a noisy age. Satan does not have to make a believer deny the Bible if he can keep him too busy to be governed by it. He does not have to make him hate prayer if he can keep him distracted from it. He does not have to make him despise church if he can keep him exhausted by everything else. He does not have to make him love wickedness if he can make him consumed with cares, riches, projects,

hobbies, ambitions, maintenance, and noise. A choked plant does not always look dead immediately. It just stops becoming fruitful.

So love not the world, even when the world comes dressed as ordinary pressure. Consider your ways. Look at the thorns. Judge the cares. Beware the deceitfulness of riches. Watch the lusts of other things. Clear room for the word of God. Give Scripture the first voice, not the leftover minutes. Cast care on the Lord instead of letting care choke your soul. Pull up what must be pulled up. Cut back what must be cut back. Refuse to let your life become so crowded that God's words cannot bear fruit in you. The seed is good. Do not let the thorns win.

18 of 20: Love Not the World - The Fashion of This World Passeth Away

The world has a short shelf life, but it spends every generation pretending it is permanent. It struts across the stage like it owns the theater, while the floorboards underneath it are already rotting. Paul said, "And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). That is the Holy Ghost's verdict on everything men are killing themselves to obtain. The fashion of this world passeth away. Its styles pass. Its celebrities pass. Its empires pass. Its beauty passes. Its applause passes. Its money passes. Its trends pass. Its proud movements pass. Its scholars pass. Its philosophies pass. Its kingdoms pass. Its religious fads pass. Its political saviors pass. Its monuments pass. Its technology passes. Its markets pass. Its great names pass. The whole thing is a parade marching toward a graveyard, and men stand on the sidewalk clapping like fools.

That word "fashion" is important. It speaks of the outward form, the arrangement, the appearance, the visible shape of a thing. The world is very good at fashion. It knows how to arrange itself so it looks impressive. It paints the corpse. It polishes the idol. It lights the stage. It puts music under the scene. It puts makeup on rebellion, gold over greed, perfume over lust, academic robes over unbelief, church language over covetousness, and celebrity lighting over emptiness. But the Bible tells you what the world never puts in the advertisement: it is passing away. Yesterday's fashion becomes today's joke. Yesterday's superstar becomes tomorrow's forgotten name. Yesterday's empire becomes a tourist ruin. Yesterday's millionaire becomes dust in a box. Yesterday's movement becomes a footnote. Yesterday's proud scoffer becomes a corpse who found out too late that God was not impressed. The world's glory is rented. God's glory is eternal.

That is why the Christian has to stop envying the system. Why envy something that cannot keep what it brags about? Why envy beauty that wrinkles, fame that fades, money that flies away, empires that crumble, bodies that die, applause that goes silent, and achievements that will burn? Why sell eternal reward for temporary glitter? David said, “Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psalm 39:5). Isaiah said, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field” (Isaiah 40:6). John said, “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17). The Bible is not being poetic to sound pretty. It is telling the truth about the passing show. If the believer sees that clearly, the world loses much of its power. You cannot be as impressed by the circus once you see the tent is on fire.

1. The World’s Fashion Is Already Passing While Men Admire It

Paul does not say the fashion of this world will pass away someday as though it is stable now and temporary later. He says it “passeth away” (1 Corinthians 7:31). Present tense. It is already passing. The paint is already peeling. The flowers are already wilting. The applause is already fading. The body is already aging. The empire is already cracking. The trend is already becoming old. The name is already being replaced by another name. The world is not a permanent structure waiting for future judgment only. It is a dying system in motion right now.

Men do not notice because they are too close to the glitter. They see the lights, the music, the publicity, the money, the fashion, the crowd, the headlines, the awards, the ceremonies, the brands, and the platforms. They do not see the grave at the end of the parade. The world trains men to live inside the moment and call it reality. The Bible pulls the curtain back and says the moment is passing. It says the shape of this age is dissolving. It says what looks settled is temporary, what looks glorious is fading, and what looks powerful is already under judgment.

This truth should make a Christian sane. He can use the world without abusing it because he knows it is temporary. He can handle earthly things without treating them as eternal. He can work, buy, sell, build, provide, and serve, but he must not anchor his soul to the fashion of the hour. The world’s current arrangement is not a foundation. It is vapor with decorations. The believer who builds his identity on it is building on smoke. The believer who sees it passing can walk through it with a loose grip and a clear eye.

2. Yesterday’s Stars Become Forgotten Names

The world loves stars. It manufactures them, photographs them, interviews them, sells them, imitates them, praises them, destroys them, and replaces them. Every generation has its faces that seem untouchable for a moment. Actors, singers, athletes, politicians,

influencers, preachers, scholars, businessmen, and cultural icons rise up and become the conversation. People study their clothing, repeat their phrases, buy their products, defend their sins, follow their opinions, and act as though their names are carved into eternity. Then a few years pass. The crowd moves on. Another face appears. Another voice gets the microphone. Another idol takes the altar.

That is the cruelty of fame. It uses a man while pretending to crown him. It feeds his pride, fattens his ego, surrounds him with praise, and then discards him when a new attraction arrives. The celebrity who once could not walk down a street without being recognized can become a trivia question. The singer who once filled stadiums can become a memory in an old playlist. The politician who once shook nations can become a photograph in a textbook. The preacher who once had crowds chanting his name can become a warning, a scandal, or a forgotten brand. The applause of men is rented space in the air. It disappears almost as soon as it is heard.

Why should a Christian envy that? Why should a preacher sell truth for applause that will die before his body is cold? Why should a young person trade holiness for popularity among people who will forget them? Why should a believer shape his life around being seen by men when those same men can barely remember yesterday's idol? The praise of God is eternal. The praise of men is a fog. Let the world chase fog if it wants. The Christian should seek the approval that will still matter when every spotlight is switched off.

3. Beauty and Strength Are Flowers in a Field

Isaiah says, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6). That verse does not flatter human vanity. It cuts it down. Flesh is grass. Human goodliness is a flower. It may be beautiful for a moment. It may be admired. It may be photographed. It may be celebrated. But grass withers, and flowers fade. The same chapter says, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8). There is the contrast: fading flesh and standing Scripture.

The world worships beauty and strength because it has nothing better to worship. Bodies become idols. Faces become currency. Youth becomes a god. Strength becomes a throne. Fashion becomes a doctrine. Whole industries are built on making people terrified of aging, ordinary appearance, weakness, and mortality. The world says, "Preserve the flower forever." God says the flower fades. That does not mean a Christian should neglect the body or despise lawful beauty. It means he must not worship what cannot last. Beauty without God is a flower in a field under a hot wind. Strength without God is grass waiting to be cut.

This should humble both the admired and the envious. The admired should remember that the thing people praise will not last. The envious should remember that what they envy is fading too. A woman envying another woman's beauty should remember that both are grass. A man envying another man's strength should remember that both are grass. A preacher envying another man's appearance, voice, or charisma should remember that all flesh is grass. The word of God abides. Character under God matters. Holiness matters. Truth matters. The hidden man of the heart matters. The flower fades. The Book stands.

4. Wealth Flies Away and Leaves Its Worshippers Empty

The world celebrates wealth as if money can defeat vanity, time, decay, and death. It cannot. Money can change surroundings, but it cannot change mortality. It can buy a better bed, but not sleep. It can buy medicine, but not immortality. It can buy a mansion, but not peace with God. It can buy influence, but not forgiveness. It can buy a funeral, but not resurrection life. Riches are useful as a tool, dangerous as a master, and pathetic as a saviour. The Bible says, "riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:5). Men spend their lives chasing birds with wings and call it security.

Psalm 39:6 says, "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." That is one of the sharpest verses ever written against earthly accumulation. A man heaps up riches. He sacrifices, worries, cheats, schemes, labors, saves, guards, and counts. Then he dies and does not know who will gather them. Someone else opens the account. Someone else sells the house. Someone else wears the watch. Someone else fights over the estate. Someone else spends what he worshipped. That is vanity with paperwork.

This should strip the shine off covetousness. Work honestly, provide faithfully, steward wisely, give generously, and thank God for provision. But do not worship money. Do not envy those who have more. Do not assume wealthy men are blessed men. Do not assume poor men are failures. Do not trade obedience for gain. Do not measure life by what can be left behind in one heartbeat. If riches come, hold them loosely. If they leave, do not let them take your soul's peace with them. The world brags about wealth like it can stay. The Bible says it flies.

5. Empires and Systems Become Ruins

The world loves its empires. Men stand in capitals, courts, towers, universities, banks, temples, and corporate headquarters and imagine the structure will last. Babylon thought that. Rome thought that. Egypt thought that. Greece thought that. Every proud kingdom thinks its system is the final arrangement. Then time, judgment, corruption, war, decay, and

God's providence grind it down. The marble cracks. The banners rot. The kings die. The language changes. The currency disappears. The palace becomes a ruin. The empire becomes a lesson for schoolchildren who are not paying attention.

The same is true of systems today. Political systems, financial systems, academic systems, entertainment systems, religious systems, and cultural systems all carry themselves like gods, but they are temporary. They rise, boast, persecute, control, and decay. The Christian must not give them the reverence that belongs to God. He may live under them, use what is lawful, obey what is lawful, and speak truth within them, but he must not mistake them for permanence. God has seen every empire rise and fall. He is not nervous over the newest version of human pride.

Second Peter 3 says this present arrangement is heading toward dissolution. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). That includes the works men brag about. The towers, monuments, institutions, inventions, archives, achievements, and proud creations of man are not eternal. That does not mean all labor is meaningless when done for God. It means labor done for the world's glory is temporary. The believer should work with eternity in mind. If what he builds cannot be carried into God's reward, then he had better not build his soul around it.

6. The Word of God Outlasts the Passing Show

Isaiah gives the great contrast: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8). The world passes. The word stands. Flesh passes. The word stands. Beauty passes. The word stands. Kingdoms pass. The word stands. Riches pass. The word stands. Trends pass. The word stands. Scholars pass. The word stands. Critics pass. The word stands. Bible-correctors pass. The word stands. Every generation produces men arrogant enough to think they can judge God's words, update them, correct them, replace them, or improve them. Then those men die, and the Book keeps standing.

This is why it is madness to trade eternal Scripture for temporary respectability. Men will compromise the Bible to be accepted by scholars whose names will be forgotten. They will soften doctrine to be liked by crowds that will disappear. They will modernize truth to fit fashions that will look ridiculous in ten years. They will cut the Book to please an age that is passing away. That is not wisdom. That is spiritual stupidity. The word of God is not a trend. It is the standard by which trends are judged.

The Christian must therefore build his life on what stands. Build doctrine on the Book. Build preaching on the Book. Build family on the Book. Build hope on the Book. Build resistance to the world on the Book. Build comfort in suffering on the Book. Build discernment on the

Book. The world's fashion changes so quickly that a man who follows it must keep changing to remain acceptable. The word of God stands forever, so a man who stands on it may be called outdated by every passing age and still be right when the age is gone.

7. The Passing World Should Produce Holy Detachment

Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7 is practical. "The time is short" (1 Corinthians 7:29). Then he speaks of handling earthly relationships and circumstances with a proper eternal perspective. He is not telling Christians to despise marriage, sorrow, joy, possessions, or earthly activity. He is saying the time is short and the fashion of this world is passing away, so none of those things can be treated as ultimate. The believer must live in the present without being swallowed by it. He must use the world without abusing it. He must engage earthly duties without letting them become eternal gods.

Holy detachment does not mean coldness, laziness, irresponsibility, or lack of love. It means the heart is not chained to temporary things. A Christian can love his family deeply while knowing Christ comes first. He can weep in sorrow while knowing sorrow will not have the last word. He can rejoice in lawful blessings while knowing joy is not dependent on circumstances. He can buy and possess while knowing possessions are not his life. He can use the world while knowing the world is passing. That is not emotional deadness. That is spiritual sanity.

The world wants full attachment. It wants the heart glued to its changing fashion. It wants the Christian in panic when markets fall, despair when possessions leave, envy when others prosper, identity crisis when appearance fades, and terror when applause stops. Holy detachment says, "No. These things are not my life. Christ is my life. The fashion is passing. The word stands. The Saviour is coming." That kind of man is hard to control. He can lose without being destroyed, gain without being intoxicated, use without worshipping, and leave without looking back.

Conclusion

The fashion of this world passeth away. That one sentence should take the shine off the whole system. Everything the world celebrates is already fading while men admire it. Its styles pass. Its fame passes. Its beauty passes. Its wealth passes. Its empires pass. Its applause passes. Its systems pass. Its celebrities pass. Its proud achievements pass. The world is a parade marching toward a graveyard, and only a fool builds his soul's hope on the parade. The Bible tells the truth: all flesh is grass, every man at his best state is altogether vanity, and the world passeth away.

This does not mean the Christian refuses to live responsibly. He still works, loves, provides, builds, serves, suffers, rejoices, weeps, and uses what God puts in his hand. But he does

so with eternity in view. He does not worship the present arrangement. He does not envy men who possess fading glory. He does not trade God's approval for temporary applause. He does not chase trends that will be mocked by the next generation. He does not sell truth for a seat in a system headed for fire. He uses the world as passing through, not as a man who thinks the hotel room is his eternal home.

So love not the world. Do not envy its stars. Do not worship its beauty. Do not trust its riches. Do not fear its empires. Do not chase its fashion. Do not sell your soul for its applause. The world's glory is rented. God's glory is eternal. The grass withereth. The flower fadeth. The word of our God shall stand forever. Build on what stands. Live for what lasts. Set your affection where Christ sits, not where the fashion changes every hour. The world is passing away, and the Christian who sees that clearly is finally free to live for God instead of being impressed by dust with lights on it.

19 of 20: Love Not the World - Use the World Without Abusing It

There is a ditch on both sides of this road, and plenty of Christians fall into one ditch while congratulating themselves for not being in the other. On one side is worldliness, where a man loves the world, envies the world, imitates the world, trusts the world, and lets the world's tools become his gods. On the other side is religious foolishness, where a man thinks holiness means becoming useless, poor by neglect, ignorant by choice, unskilled on purpose, and afraid to touch anything God might use for His glory. The Bible gives neither ditch. Paul says, "And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). There is the balance in one verse. Use it. Do not abuse it. Handle it. Do not worship it. Pass through it. Do not marry it. Make use of lawful tools. Do not let those tools become treasures. Keep your hand on the plow, your heart in heaven, your Bible open, and your grip loose.

The Christian is not called to pretend earthly things are automatically evil. Money is not evil when used as a servant. Property is not evil when held as stewardship. Business is not evil when conducted honestly. Technology is not evil when used lawfully. Education is not evil when kept under the authority of Scripture. Travel is not evil when governed by wisdom. Tools are not evil because sinners also use them. A printing press can print a Bible or a dirty magazine. A microphone can preach Christ or sell heresy. A website can spread truth or promote vanity. A business can provide for a family and support good work, or it can become an idol of profit and pride. The issue is not mere possession or use. The issue is

affection, mastery, purpose, and worship. The thing may be in your hand, but the question is whether it has climbed into your heart.

This essay is necessary because after warning against worldliness, some people will always swing into a false conclusion. They think if the world is dangerous, then every earthly tool must be rejected. That is not Bible separation. That is often fear, pride, or laziness wearing a religious coat. The Lord did not pray that His disciples would be taken out of the world. He sent them into it. A saved man can use a website to preach truth, a business to provide for his family, a platform to spread Scripture, money to support good work, property for hospitality, education to sharpen usefulness, and tools to serve his calling. But he must never forget that the world is temporary, dangerous, and never worthy of worship. The Christian uses the world with a loose grip because he knows the fashion of it is passing away. He is a steward, not a slave. A pilgrim, not a settler. A witness, not a worshipper.

1. Paul Commands Use Without Abuse

Paul's wording in 1 Corinthians 7:31 is precise: "they that use this world, as not abusing it." He does not say, "they that refuse this world in every possible form." He says use it. That means there is a lawful, practical, necessary handling of earthly things by the people of God. A Christian must live somewhere, eat something, wear something, work at something, communicate somehow, travel somehow, and handle responsibilities in the present world. God knows that. The Bible is not written for imaginary saints floating three feet above the ground. It is written for real believers living in a fallen world with bodies, families, duties, burdens, tools, and decisions.

But Paul adds "as not abusing it." Abuse begins when use crosses into misuse. Earthly things are abused when they become idols, when they feed lust, when they govern the conscience, when they replace trust in God, when they steal affection from Christ, when they silence obedience, when they choke the word, when they produce pride, when they become the measure of worth, or when they keep a man from doing the will of God. The same thing can be used rightly by one man and abused by another. Money can feed a missionary or feed greed. A platform can spread Scripture or spread self. A house can serve hospitality or become a shrine to comfort. A business can be stewardship or Babel. The difference is not always the object. Often it is the heart holding it.

Paul gives the reason: "for the fashion of this world passeth away." The temporary nature of the world is what keeps use in its place. The Christian can use what is passing because he knows it is passing. He does not build his identity on it. He does not trust it for eternal security. He does not bow to it. He does not panic when it changes. He does not envy men

who have more of it. He uses it like a traveler uses a hotel room, not like a fool who thinks the hotel is his inheritance. The world is useful in limited ways, but it is not ultimate. The man who remembers that can handle it without being handled by it.

2. Earthly Tools Must Remain Servants

A tool is useful when it stays in the hand. It becomes dangerous when it gets on the throne. That is the difference between lawful use and abuse. A hammer is a good thing when a carpenter swings it. It is a bad thing if the carpenter bows down to it, obeys it, fears it, or lets it decide what kind of house to build. Money, technology, business, education, property, platforms, vehicles, and possessions are all like that. They can be tools in a steward's hand, or they can become masters over a fool's heart. The tool is not supposed to define the man. The man is supposed to use the tool under God.

Technology is a clear example. A phone, computer, camera, website, or platform can be used to preach the gospel, teach Scripture, encourage saints, expose error, organize work, run a business, and communicate truth. That is lawful use. But the same technology can become an idol of attention, lust, envy, distraction, vanity, outrage, and wasted life. A man may begin by using a platform to serve truth and end by serving the platform to keep attention. He may begin by posting Scripture and end by craving reactions. He may begin by using tools and end by needing tools to feel important. That is the tool becoming master.

The Christian must regularly ask hard questions. Is this tool helping me obey God, or is it training me to disobey? Is it increasing my usefulness, or stealing my attention? Is it serving the word of God, or choking it? Is it helping me provide, witness, learn, and labor, or is it feeding pride, lust, envy, and fear? Can I set it down? Can I give it away? Can I lose it without losing myself? If the answer is no, then the tool is no longer merely a tool. It has become a chain. Earthly tools must stay servants. The moment they demand worship, they must be judged.

3. Money Can Serve God, But Mammon Must Not Rule

Money is one of the most obvious examples of use without abuse. A Christian can earn money honestly, provide for his family, pay debts, help the poor, support gospel work, plan wisely, and use resources under God. Paul told Timothy to charge the rich "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Timothy 6:18). Notice, Paul does not tell the rich that the mere presence of wealth means they are wicked. He tells them how to hold it rightly. They are not to be highminded. They are not to trust in uncertain riches. They are to trust in the living God. They are to do good with what God entrusted to them.

That is biblical stewardship. Money in the hand of a humble, generous, Scripture-governed Christian can be useful. It can print Bibles, feed families, support missionaries, help widows, fund outreach, build necessary structures, pay workers, relieve burdens, and serve the work of God. But money in the heart becomes mammon. It starts giving orders. It says, "Do not preach that. You may lose support." It says, "Do not give that. You may need it." It says, "Do not obey that. It may cost too much." It says, "Protect me first." When money begins commanding the conscience, it is no longer a servant. It is a master.

The Christian must therefore hold money with fear and purpose. If God gives much, use it well. If God gives little, be faithful with little. If God increases, do not become proud. If God withholds, do not become bitter. If God opens a door through resources, walk through it humbly. If God asks you to give, obey cheerfully. If God asks you to walk away from dirty gain, walk away clean. The issue is not whether money passes through your hands. The issue is whether it builds a throne in your soul. Use money. Do not serve mammon.

4. Business and Labor Can Be Holy Stewardship

A Christian in business does not have to apologize for honest labor. Work existed before the fall. Responsibility is not worldliness. Diligence is not greed. Provision is not covetousness. A man who works hard to feed his family, serve customers honestly, create value, pay employees, and manage what God has put under his hand is not automatically worldly because he deals with markets, tools, customers, and profit. The Bible condemns sloth as well as greed. A lazy man hiding behind religious phrases is not more spiritual than a diligent man who fears God.

Business becomes abuse when profit becomes god. It becomes abuse when a man lies, cheats, manipulates, exploits, overpromises, underpays, deceives, or sacrifices his family and soul on the altar of increase. It becomes abuse when the business owns every thought, every hour, every affection, and every decision. It becomes abuse when a man cannot obey God because the business might suffer. It becomes abuse when success makes him proud or failure makes him faithless. It becomes abuse when the business becomes his identity rather than his stewardship.

Ecclesiastes speaks plainly about enjoying lawful labor under God. "There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour" (Ecclesiastes 2:24). But the same passage says this is from the hand of God. That is the key. Labor is clean when received under God and governed by God. Enjoyment is lawful when it remains thanksgiving, not idolatry. A man can enjoy the fruit of honest work without worshipping the fruit. He can build with diligence while knowing the building is temporary. He can conduct business as a steward while refusing to become a slave.

5. Education and Knowledge Must Bow to Scripture

Education can be a tool. A Christian can learn skills, history, language, trade, finance, law, medicine, technology, writing, communication, and many useful things. Ignorance is not a fruit of the Spirit. Some people act as if being untrained, sloppy, and uninformed is a mark of spirituality. It is not. God used Moses learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, though Moses had to choose reproach with the people of God over Egypt's treasures. God used Paul, a man who was no fool in learning, but whose confidence was in Christ. Knowledge can be useful when kept beneath the authority of God.

But education becomes abuse when man's wisdom sits in judgment on God's words. That is where much of the world's education becomes poisonous. It teaches men to doubt what God said, correct what God preserved, naturalize what God did, excuse what God condemns, and worship the mind of man. A degree can become a fig leaf for unbelief. A scholar can be a fool with footnotes. A man can know Greek, Hebrew, history, philosophy, science, and literature, and still be blind to the truth if he approaches the Bible as judge instead of servant. Education is a tool only when Scripture remains the final authority.

The Christian must therefore learn without bowing. Learn what is useful. Sharpen what can serve. Develop skills. Read. Study. Think. But never let the academy become your priesthood. Never let a professor make you ashamed of the Book. Never let human learning talk you out of divine revelation. Never let education become the mold of your mind instead of Scripture. Use knowledge. Do not worship intellect. Use education. Do not be disciplined by unbelief. A tool that refuses to bow to the Bible must be put back in its place.

6. Platforms Can Be Pulpits or Idols

A platform is one of the most dangerous tools because it can serve truth while feeding pride. A Christian can use a public platform to preach Scripture, answer error, encourage believers, warn sinners, publish teaching, expose false doctrine, and spread the gospel. That is lawful use. Paul used public spaces, letters, courts, synagogues, schools, and whatever lawful doors God opened. There is nothing automatically wrong with speaking where people can hear. If God gives a door, the issue is faithfulness in the door.

But platforms become idols when the speaker becomes the center. The man begins to measure his worth by numbers, likes, shares, views, invitations, comments, and public reaction. He begins shaping the message to keep attention. He avoids truth that might reduce reach. He attacks when attention drops. He performs outrage because outrage sells. He becomes a servant of the algorithm while claiming to be a servant of Christ. He may still quote verses, but the platform is training him. That is abuse. The pulpit has become a mirror.

The test of a platform is whether the man can use it with a loose grip. Can he tell the truth if it costs engagement? Can he be ignored and still be faithful? Can he lose followers and keep preaching? Can he avoid theatrical self-display? Can he point men to Christ and the Book rather than himself? Can he step away when needed? Can he refuse to let applause become oxygen? If not, the platform is no longer a tool. It is an idol with analytics. Use the platform if God opens it. But keep the cross on your back and the mirror under your feet.

7. A Loose Grip Is the Pilgrim's Safety

The Christian uses the world safely only with a loose grip. A tight grip usually reveals misplaced affection. When a man cannot let go, cannot lose, cannot give, cannot obey at cost, cannot be content without a thing, cannot imagine life if God removes it, that thing has become too important. Pilgrims travel light. They may carry useful supplies, but they do not pack like settlers who think the road is home. The believer must hold possessions, opportunities, tools, platforms, relationships, money, and earthly comforts as temporary stewardship under God.

First Timothy 6:17 says not to trust in uncertain riches, "but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." That verse holds both sides. God gives. We may enjoy. But we must not trust uncertain riches. Lawful enjoyment becomes dangerous when it turns into dependence. The living God must remain the trust. If God gives, thank Him. If God takes, trust Him. If God increases, serve Him. If God reduces, serve Him. If a tool is useful today, use it. If it is gone tomorrow, keep walking. The pilgrim's safety is not in the baggage. It is in the Lord.

The loose grip also keeps worship clean. A man with a loose grip can give generously because he knows the thing is not his god. He can obey quickly because he is not chained to outcomes. He can refuse compromise because he does not need the world's reward. He can use earthly things boldly because he is not afraid of losing them. He can enjoy God's gifts without turning them into idols. He can pass through the world as a free man. That is what the world cannot understand. It thinks freedom is having everything. The Bible shows freedom is being owned by nothing but the Lord.

Conclusion

The Bible does not teach that earthly things are automatically evil. It teaches that earthly things are dangerous when abused, idolized, trusted, or loved more than God. Paul says to use this world as not abusing it, because the fashion of this world passeth away. That gives the Christian a practical path. He can use money, business, property, education, technology, travel, platforms, tools, and possessions for the glory of God. He can work, build, provide, learn, speak, give, and serve. Holiness does not require artificial poverty,

deliberate uselessness, or fear of every tool sinners also touch. Holiness requires that all things remain under God.

The issue is mastery. Does the Christian use the tool, or does the tool use him? Does money serve, or does mammon rule? Does the business remain stewardship, or does it become identity? Does education sharpen service, or does it exalt unbelief? Does the platform spread truth, or does it feed pride? Do possessions provide usefulness and lawful enjoyment, or do they possess the heart? The question is not merely what sits in the hand. The question is what sits on the throne. Earthly things become abusive when they stop being tools and become treasures.

So love not the world, but use what God allows with wisdom. Use the website to preach truth. Use the business to provide and serve. Use the money to support good work. Use the platform to spread Scripture. Use the tools to sharpen usefulness. Use the education to serve truth. Use property for hospitality. Use lawful blessings with thanksgiving. But keep your grip loose. The fashion of this world is passing away. The tool is temporary. The Master is eternal. The Christian is not called to worship the world or fear it. He is called to pass through it as a faithful steward, using what he can for God's glory while refusing to let anything down here own what belongs to Christ.

20 of 20: Love Not the World - He That Doeth the Will of God Abideth Forever

The whole series comes down to one final contrast: the passing world and the abiding man. John says, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17). There it is. One thing is passing. One thing is abiding. One thing is fading. One thing remains. One thing is temporary glitter. One thing carries eternal weight. The world looks alive because it is noisy, bright, wealthy, sensual, religious, political, fashionable, and proud, but the Bible says it is passing away. The believer who does the will of God may look small, narrow, strange, rejected, old-fashioned, and unimpressive to the age, but the Bible says he abideth forever. That is the contrast God puts before the Christian. You can live for what is dissolving, or you can live for what remains. You can chase the parade, or you can follow the Lord. You can love the world, or you can do the will of God. But you cannot make the world eternal by admiring it, and you cannot make obedience worthless because the world mocks it.

This is why "Love not the world" is not a small command. It is not a side doctrine for severe men with no joy. It is one of the sanest commands in the Bible. God is warning His people not to give their hearts to something already under judgment. The world sells itself as

permanent, but it cannot keep one thing it brags about. Its beauty fades, its money flies, its applause dies, its celebrities vanish, its empires crumble, its pleasures rot, its philosophies shift, its fashions change, its governments fall, its religions corrupt, and its proud men go into the ground. Everything the world offers is marked by time, decay, death, and judgment. Yet men still sell truth for it. They trade the Book for a seat. They trade holiness for applause. They trade conviction for comfort. They trade the will of God for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. That is the insanity of sin. It spends eternity to rent a moment.

The final essay must bring the matter before the judgment seat of Christ and the soon return of the Lord. This is not theory. The Christian will answer. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). The world will not be sitting on that throne. The crowd will not be sitting there. The algorithm will not be sitting there. The donor list will not be sitting there. The family that pressured you will not be sitting there. The religious leaders who wanted you quiet will not be sitting there. Christ will be there. The question will not be whether the world thought you were balanced, successful, attractive, intelligent, marketable, loving, respectable, or relevant. The question will be what you did with what God gave you. What had your affection? What had your time? What had your money? What had your imagination? What had your loyalty? What did you love? What did you refuse? What did you obey? What did you build? What did you burn your life on? The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

1. The World Passeth Away

John does not say the world might pass away. He says, "the world passeth away" (1 John 2:17). That is a present, ongoing funeral procession. The world is not simply going to pass away one day. It is passing away now. Its glory is already fading while men are admiring it. Its idols are already cracking while men are bowing to them. Its celebrities are already aging while people worship their faces. Its empires are already decaying while politicians boast about progress. Its philosophies are already being replaced while scholars pretend they have found final truth. Its wealth is already shifting hands while fools trust it. The whole thing is moving toward judgment with a smile painted on its face.

This is the great fact the world hides. It never puts death in the advertisement. It never shows the end of the road. It shows the pleasure, not the payment. It shows the mansion, not the grave. It shows the body, not the decay. It shows the applause, not the silence. It shows the crown, not the judgment. It shows the lights, not the darkness beyond them. It shows the money, not the man who dies and leaves it behind. The Bible tells the truth the world edits out. The world passeth away. Its lust passeth away. Its parade passeth away. Its market passeth away. Its idols pass away.

If that is true, then loving the world is madness. Why fasten your heart to something God says is dissolving? Why build your identity in a burning house? Why envy men whose treasure cannot cross the grave? Why sell Bible truth for a system that will not survive the judgment of God? The Christian may use the world as not abusing it, but he must not love it. He may walk through it, work in it, witness to it, and use lawful tools in it, but he must never confuse it with home. The world is passing. The believer had better not chain his soul to a corpse.

2. The Lust Thereof Passeth Away

John does not merely say the world passeth away. He adds, “and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17). That means even the desires that seem so powerful now are temporary. The cravings, appetites, ambitions, fantasies, envies, and fleshly longings that feel urgent today will pass. The lust of the flesh passes. The lust of the eyes passes. The pride of life passes. Men act as if appetite is a god that must be obeyed, but appetite is temporary. It screams loudly, then fades. It demands worship, then leaves shame. It promises fullness, then produces emptiness. The lust thereof passeth away.

That truth should help the believer resist temptation. The temptation is temporary. The consequence may last much longer than the desire. The thrill passes. The shame remains. The purchase passes. The debt remains. The applause passes. The compromise remains. The lust passes. The scar remains. The world is a master at magnifying the present desire and hiding the future cost. The Bible brings the end into view. It says, “That thing you think you must have is passing away. That appetite barking orders at you will not last. Do not trade obedience for a vapor.”

This also exposes the foolishness of building a life around desire. Modern culture says a man should define himself by his desires. God says the lust thereof passeth away. Why would anyone build identity on something that is passing? Why would a saved man organize his life around appetites that belong to the old nature? Why would a Christian obey impulses that war against the soul? The lusts of this world are not eternal truths. They are passing fever dreams of fallen flesh. The believer must not let temporary cravings overthrow eternal words.

3. The Will of God Is the Only Safe Path

The contrast is clear: “but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17). The answer to a passing world is the will of God. Not self-will. Not cultural will. Not religious popularity. Not family pressure. Not public opinion. Not the approval of men. The will of God. The Christian life is not merely avoiding bad things. It is doing the will of God. It is

positive obedience. It is living under divine authority. It is saying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and then doing it whether the world claps or curses.

The will of God is not discovered by following the mood of the age. It is not found by taking a poll. It is not found by asking the flesh what feels peaceful. It is found under the authority of the words of God, in fellowship with the Lord, with a yielded heart and a renewed mind. Romans 12 connects presenting the body a living sacrifice with proving “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). A man who refuses to present himself to God should not pretend he is deeply interested in God’s will. Most confusion about God’s will is not intellectual. It is often a refusal to obey what is already plain.

The will of God may cost comfort, applause, money, relationships, reputation, and ease. But it abides. A man doing the will of God may look unimpressive now, but he is attached to eternity. A mother raising children in truth is doing something that abides. A preacher standing on the Book when men mock him is doing something that abides. A believer refusing compromise when it would be profitable is doing something that abides. A Christian giving, praying, witnessing, serving, enduring, forgiving, and obeying in hidden places is doing something that abides. The world cannot properly measure that because the world’s ruler is broken. God measures by eternity.

4. Saying “Lord” Is Not the Same as Obeying Him

Matthew 7 gives a severe warning about religious profession without obedience. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Then He gives the contrast: “but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). That verse cuts through empty profession. Words matter, but words without obedience can be a mask. A man may say “Lord” loudly and still live as though the world is his master. He may speak religiously, sing emotionally, post spiritually, and still refuse the will of God.

The Lord continues by describing many who will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?” and “in thy name have cast out devils?” and “in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22). These are not irreligious claims. They are ministry claims. Public claims. Impressive claims. Charismatic claims. But the Lord says, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). That ought to make modern religion tremble. Activity in God’s name is not the same as obedience to God’s will. Wonderful works can impress men while the worker remains lawless before Christ.

This has direct bearing on worldliness. The world loves religious performance when it does not produce submission to God. It loves big names, big crowds, big claims, big emotions, big productions, and big personalities. But Christ looks deeper. Did the man do the will of

the Father? Was he built on the rock? Did he hear and obey? The man who hears Christ's sayings and does them builds on rock. The man who hears and does not do them builds on sand. The storm will tell the truth. The world builds on sand and calls it success. The will of God builds on rock, even when it looks small.

5. The Judgment Seat Will Burn Away the World's Measurements

Paul says, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (2 Corinthians 5:9). That should be the Christian's aim: accepted of Him. Not accepted by the world, not accepted by the academy, not accepted by religious compromisers, not accepted by the crowd, not accepted by the age, but accepted of Him. The next verse explains why: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). That word "must" should settle a man. This appointment will not be canceled. Every Christian will appear.

The judgment seat will expose the foolishness of worldly measurements. The world asks how many followed you. Christ will examine faithfulness. The world asks how much money you made. Christ will examine stewardship. The world asks how famous you became. Christ will examine motive. The world asks how comfortable you were. Christ will examine obedience. The world asks whether people liked you. Christ will examine whether you pleased Him. The world asks whether your life looked impressive. Christ will examine what sort of work it was. Men judge by surface. The Lord judges righteous judgment.

This should sober the preacher, the teacher, the parent, the worker, the business owner, the writer, the singer, the church member, and every believer. There are things that look important now that will mean nothing there. There are hidden obediences now that will shine there. There are compromises now that seem profitable but will be shameful there. There are sacrifices now that seem unnoticed but will be rewarded there. The judgment seat should tear the mask off the world. Why live for the approval of a system that will not be sitting on the throne when your work is tried?

6. The Returning Christ Brings the Real Reward

Revelation 22:12 says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." That is the voice that should matter. "Behold, I come quickly." The Lord is coming. The world acts as if it will continue forever, but Christ says He is coming. The world hands out temporary rewards: applause, money, access, comfort, reputation, status, pleasure, and influence. Christ brings the real reward. His reward is with Him. That one promise makes the world's bribes look cheap.

The believer must live in light of that appearing. If Christ is coming, then worldliness is insane. If Christ is coming, then secret obedience matters. If Christ is coming, then

suffering for truth is not wasted. If Christ is coming, then giving up the world's approval is not loss. If Christ is coming, then every compromise will look foolish. If Christ is coming, then every faithful act done for Him will be worth it. The soon return of the Lord is not a doctrine for charts only. It is a purifier, a motivator, a comfort, and a warning.

The question is whether the believer wants the world's reward now or Christ's reward then. The world says, "Take it now." Christ says, "My reward is with me." The world says, "Be admired now." Christ says, "I come quickly." The world says, "Secure your place now." Christ says, "I give every man according as his work shall be." A Christian with his eyes on the appearing can refuse the world's bargains. He knows the payday is coming, and the Paymaster does not forget.

7. Examine What Owns the Heart

At the end of this series, the matter must become personal. What has your affection? Not what do you claim to love, but what actually moves you? What do you think about when no one assigns your thoughts? What do you envy? What do you fear losing? What do you protect from Scripture? What do you defend when the Bible presses on it? What has your imagination? What has your time? What has your money? What has your loyalty? What has your obedience? The thing that owns those areas may be closer to your real treasure than your religious words.

A man can say he loves God while the world owns his schedule. He can say he loves the Bible while entertainment owns his attention. He can say he trusts God while money owns his decisions. He can say he wants truth while praise owns his tongue. He can say he is separated while Egypt owns his memory. He can say he is a pilgrim while comfort owns his choices. He can say he believes in the judgment seat while the present world owns his ambitions. The heart is deceitful. It must be examined under the light of Scripture.

This examination is not meant to produce despair, but repentance and clarity. The Christian is not called to love this world, decorate this world, chase this world, envy this world, or imitate this world. He is called to pass through it as a witness, use what he can for God's glory, refuse its idols, keep his affection set above, and do the will of God until the Lord calls him home. The world should not own what Christ bought. If anything has taken the throne of affection, it must come down. If anything has choked the word, it must be pulled up. If anything has purchased silence, it must be judged. If anything has become master, it must be dethroned.

Conclusion

The final word is the same as the first: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). After all the study, all the warnings, all the examples, and all the

rebukes, the command still stands in plain English. Do not love the world. Do not love its lusts. Do not love its applause. Do not love its money. Do not love its fashion. Do not love its religion. Do not love its praise. Do not love its compromise. Do not love its Egypt. Do not love its golden calves. Do not love its present comfort. The world is passing away, and the lust thereof. God has told the Christian the end before the end arrives.

The contrast is eternal: “but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17). The obedient life may look small now, but it abides. The faithful sermon may be mocked now, but it abides. The hidden prayer may be unseen now, but it abides. The act of giving may be forgotten by men, but it abides. The refusal to compromise may cost now, but it abides. The stand for truth may bring reproach now, but it abides. The world’s trophies are temporary. God’s will is eternal. The world’s applause is temporary. Christ’s reward is eternal. The world’s glitter is temporary. The judgment seat is real.

So pass through this world like a man who knows where he is going. Use what can be used for God’s glory, but do not worship the tools. Work, provide, preach, witness, build, give, serve, and endure, but keep your grip loose and your affection above. Do not build your identity in a burning world. Do not trade eternal reward for temporary glitter. Do not let the world purchase your heart with things it cannot keep. Christ is coming. His reward is with Him. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Love Not the World

Series Conclusion

After twenty lessons, the command should no longer sound like a small devotional phrase. “Love not the world” is not a verse to hang on a wall while the heart keeps flirting with the age. It is a battlefield command. It is a line in the sand. It is God telling His people not to give their affection to a system that is passing away, ruled by the god of this world, fueled by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and dressed up to look harmless while it blinds men from the glorious gospel of Christ. The world is not neutral. It is not innocent. It is not just “culture.” It is not just “society.” It is an organized spiritual system that hates the Father, rejects the Son, resists the Book, flatters the flesh, rewards compromise, and punishes holiness.

What we learned in this series is that worldliness is much deeper than a few outward habits. Yes, it includes open sin, sensuality, filth, drunkenness, vanity, greed, and obvious

rebellion. But it also includes religious pride, love of praise, fear of man, soft compromise, respectable covetousness, ministry branding, prosperity preaching, platform jealousy, careless entertainment, and ordinary life becoming so large that it chokes the word of God. A man can reject the barroom and still be worldly in the pulpit. A man can preach against Hollywood and still worship applause. A man can rebuke prosperity preachers and still be ruled by money in quieter ways. A man can separate from old sins and still keep Egypt alive in his heart. This series has forced the question beneath the surface: not merely “What do you do?” but “What do you love?”

We learned that the world has three old weapons: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). The lust of the flesh says, “Feed me.” The lust of the eyes says, “Give me.” The pride of life says, “Notice me.” That is the world’s trinity. It worked in Eden. It worked in Achan’s tent. It worked in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace. It worked in the Pharisee’s prayer. It worked in Demas when he loved this present world. And it works today through screens, money, fashion, applause, entertainment, luxury religion, false doctrine, and the constant pressure to fit the age. The bait changes clothes, but the hook is ancient.

We learned that the Christian is not called to be useless, monkish, weird for the sake of weird, or artificially poor. The Bible never taught that holiness means hiding in the woods and refusing every tool. The believer can live in the world, work in the world, run a business in the world, use technology in the world, buy and sell in the world, and speak truth through platforms in the world. But he must use the world without abusing it. He can use money, but he cannot serve mammon. He can use a platform, but he cannot become addicted to praise. He can have possessions, but possessions must not possess him. He can work hard, but work must not become his god. He can enjoy lawful blessings, but he must never turn blessings into idols.

We learned that Laodicean Christianity has a special problem with this doctrine because Laodicea is rich, increased with goods, and in need of nothing while being spiritually miserable, poor, blind, and naked. That is the age. It has big buildings, big screens, big productions, big brands, big conferences, big personalities, and big bank accounts, but often little fear of God. It has prosperity preachers selling golden calves and calling it anointing. It has celebrity Christianity that turns pulpits into stages and churches into fan clubs. It has soft preachers who know the truth but trim it because they love the praise of men. It has Christians who claim to love the Father while measuring blessing by the same worldly standards as lost people. This series has exposed that lie plainly: gain is not godliness. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

We also learned that worldliness is not always loud. Sometimes it is quiet. Sometimes it is the cares of this world choking the word. Sometimes it is worry, bills, schedules, projects, maintenance, hobbies, business, ambitions, and constant noise becoming so large that Scripture gets pushed to the edge. Satan does not have to make a Christian deny the Bible if he can keep him too busy to feed on it. He does not have to make him hate prayer if he can keep him distracted from it. He does not have to make him reject truth if he can keep him too crowded to obey it. The thorns do not kill the plant in one day. They just keep growing until fruitfulness disappears.

The fresh perspective after this series is simple but severe: the Christian life is a matter of affection. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). That is where the fight is. The world wants the heart before it gets the hands. If it can make a man admire what God hates, envy what God condemns, trust what God calls uncertain, and love what God says is passing away, it has already won ground. But when affection is set above, the world loses its shine. The applause of men sounds thinner. The golden calf looks uglier. The old Egypt smells like bondage again. Mammon loses its throne. The present world stops looking like home. The Christian remembers that his conversation is in heaven, and from thence he looks for the Saviour.

This series has taught us to see the world differently. Not as a playground, but as enemy territory. Not as home, but as a wilderness road. Not as a treasure house, but as a burning building. Not as a neutral system, but as a system under the god of this world. Not as a thing to envy, but as a thing to witness to. Not as a place to build our identity, but as a place to pass through faithfully. The Christian can now look at the world's glitter and say, "That is passing." He can look at its applause and say, "That is temporary." He can look at its wealth and say, "That has wings." He can look at its fashion and say, "That will fade." He can look at its pressure and say, "I am not being conformed." He can look at its idols and say, "My heart belongs above."

The final lesson is eternal. John said, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:17). That is the end of the world's story. It passes. Its lust passes. Its pride passes. Its fame passes. Its money passes. Its beauty passes. Its empires pass. Its religions pass. Its philosophers pass. Its celebrities pass. Its trends pass. Its golden calves pass. But John did not stop there. He said, "but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17). That is the contrast that should govern the rest of our days. Passing world versus abiding obedience. Temporary glitter versus eternal reward. Praise of men versus praise of God. Mammon's throne versus Christ's judgment seat.

So after twenty lessons, the call is not merely to understand worldliness better. The call is to examine what owns us. What owns the affection? What owns the time? What owns the

money? What owns the imagination? What owns the loyalty? What owns the tongue? What owns the schedule? What owns the secret life? What owns the hopes and fears? If the world owns any of those places, it must be judged. If Egypt is still alive in the heart, it must be put down. If mammon is giving orders, it must be dethroned. If the praise of men has bought silence, the chain must be broken. If the cares of this world are choking the word, the thorns must be pulled up.

The series ends where it began, with the Book speaking plainly: “Love not the world.” Do not court it. Do not envy it. Do not imitate it. Do not bow to it. Do not let it define success, beauty, ministry, blessing, wisdom, compassion, or truth. Use what God allows. Witness to sinners in it. Work while there is time. Provide faithfully. Serve diligently. Preach boldly. Give generously. Walk cleanly. But keep your grip loose and your affection above. The world is not your friend. Egypt is not your home. Mammon is not your master. Applause is not your reward. Christ is coming, and His reward is with Him.

That is the fresh perspective: we are not here to decorate the world’s system, chase the world’s prizes, copy the world’s methods, or win the world’s approval. We are here to pass through as pilgrims, shine as witnesses, stand as Bible believers, and do the will of God until the Lord calls us home. The world passeth away. The will of God abideth. The only sane thing left to do is set our affection above and live like we believe it.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

A 20-PART BIBLE SERIES

The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

1 JOHN 2:17

LOVE NOT THE WORLD,
NEITHER THE THINGS
THAT ARE IN THE WORLD.
1 JOHN 2:15

FOR ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD,
THE LUST OF THE FLESH,
AND THE LUST OF THE EYES,
AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE.
1 JOHN 2:16

THE COMMAND



God commands His people to love Him above all and refuse the affection of this present evil world.

1 John 2:15 • Luke 14:26

THE ENEMY



Satan is the god of this world blinding minds, tempting hearts, and ruling the kingdom of darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:4 • Eph. 2:2

THE CONTRAST



Passing world vs. abiding obedience. Temporary glitter vs. eternal glory.

1 John 2:17

THE CALL



Set your affection on things above, serve Christ faithfully, and do the will of God.

Colossians 3:2 • Matt. 7:21

THE DESTINATION



He that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Reward awaits the faithful at Christ's coming.

2 Cor. 5:9-10 • Rev. 22:12

WHAT IS "THE WORLD"?



Not creation, but a system. An organized order that:

- Rejects God
- Exalts self
- Serves Satan
- Promotes sin
- Offers temporary rewards

1 John 2:15-17 • James 4:4

THE WORLD'S TRINITY



- Lust of the Flesh – Appetite
- Lust of the Eyes – Covetousness
- Pride of Life – Self-Exaltation

These three destroy the soul.
1 John 2:16 • 1 John 5:19

THE 20 LESSONS IN THIS SERIES

- | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|---------------|
| 1 Love Not the World – The Forgotten Command | 1 John 2:15 | 11 Love Not the World – Contentment, the Forgotten Weapon | 1 Tim. 6:6-10 |
| 2 Love Not the World – Satan, the God of This World | 2 Cor. 4:4 | 12 Love Not the World – Friendship with the World is Adultery | James 4:4 |
| 3 Love Not the World – In the World, Not of the World | John 17:15-16 | 13 Love Not the World – Be Not Conformed to This World | Rom. 12:2 |
| 4 Love Not the World – Set Your Affection Above | Col. 3:1-2 | 14 Love Not the World – Pilgrims, Not Settlers | 1 Pet. 2:11 |
| 5 Love Not the World – The Lust of the Flesh | 1 John 2:16a | 15 Love Not the World – Egypt Still Lives in the Heart | Num. 14:4 |
| 6 Love Not the World – The Lust of the Eyes | 1 John 2:16b | 16 Love Not the World – Demas Loved This Present World | 2 Tim. 4:10 |
| 7 Love Not the World – The Pride of Life | 1 John 2:16c | 17 Love Not the World – Cares of This World Choke the Word | Mark 4:18-19 |
| 8 Love Not the World – The Love of Praise | John 12:43 | 18 Love Not the World – The Fashion of This World Passeth Away | 1 Cor. 7:31 |
| 9 Love Not the World – Mammon, the Rival God | Matt. 6:24 | 19 Love Not the World – Use the World Without Abusing It | 1 Cor. 7:31 |
| 10 Love Not the World – The Golden Calf Gospel | Ex. 32:4-6 | 20 Love Not the World – He That Doeth the Will Abideth Forever | 1 John 2:17 |

THE DANGER



- Worldliness blinds
- Worldliness hardens
- Worldliness deceives
- Worldliness destroys

Hebrews 3:13 • Prov. 1:10-19

THE PROMISES



- God will keep you
- God will strengthen you
- God will reward you
- God will present you faultless before His glory

John 10:28 • 1 Cor. 9:24-27
2 Tim. 4:8 • Jude 24

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



- Examine your affection
- Guard your time
- Watch your thoughts
- Control your eyes
- Resist world pressure
- Feed on the Word
- Pray without ceasing
- Keep eternity in view

USE, DON'T ABUSE



The Christian can use:

- Money
- Technology
- Business
- Platforms
- Possessions

But never let the tool become your master.
1 Cor. 7:31 • Luke 16:9

LAODICEA WARNING



- Rich in goods
- Poor in spirit
- Self-satisfied
- Blind
- Naked
- In need of the Lord

Revelation 3:15-17

WHAT IS PASSING AWAY



- Fame
- Fashion
- Wealth
- Pleasure
- Applause
- Empires
- This world system

Psalms 39:5-6 • Isa. 40:6-8

WHAT ABIDES FOREVER



- The Word of God
- The will of God
- The souls of men
- Righteous reward
- Heaven
- Glory
- God Himself

1 Pet. 1:23 • Heb. 12:28

SUMMARY

The world is not your friend. Egypt is not your home. Mammon is not your master. Applause is not your reward. Use what God allows. Witness to sinners. Work faithfully. Give generously. Walk cleanly. But set your affection on things above. The world passeth away. The will of God abideth forever.

LOOK ABOVE.
LIVE FAITHFUL.
ABIDE FOREVER.

VerseQuest Ministries