

Place: Lurgan Baptist:

25:6:2006

Reading: 1 John 2:12-17

BACK TO BASICS

6. WHAT IN THE WORLD IS WORLDLINESS ?

Soon after a person becomes a Christian, he or she discovers that being a Christian is not a bed of roses. Rather, it is quite a battle. The Christian life is a struggle against formidable enemies. The child of God has three great foes. First, he has *an External Enemy*, the world, second, and *Internal Enemy*, the flesh, third, an *Infernal Enemy*, the devil. It has been well said that the first call from God to a person is this question “*Heaven or Hell ?*” Once a person decides that at all costs he wants to go to Heaven, a second question surfaces.

“*Heaven or Earth ?*” As Christians we have to decide which world we are going to live for. You see, its tragically possible to have a saved soul and a lost life, to see one’s whole life as a believer go up in smoke as “*wood, hay, and stubble,*” at the Judgement Seat of Christ. (1 Cor 3:15) To be saved but “*so as by fire.*” So let me ask you, which world are you living for ?

“*Heaven or Earth ?*” Which disturbs you most ? A soul lost in hell or a scratch on your new car? You missing the worship service or missing a days work?

A church not growing or your garden not growing ? Your Bible unopened, or your newspaper unread ? Which disturbs you most ? Missing the Bible Class or your favourite T.V. soap ? The millions who don’t know Christ or your inability to keep up with your neighbours ? Your tithes decreasing, or your income decreasing ? Are you living for time instead of eternity ? For self rather than God ? Has worldliness infiltrated into our lives ? Have we almost unconsciously become more like the world ? Well, John says, “*If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.*” (2:15)

Now worldliness is not so much a matter of *activity* as of *attitude*. You see, its possible for a Christian to stay away from questionable amusements, and doubtful places and still love the world, for worldliness is a matter of the heart. A senior student in a Bible College was know for his excellent grades and his effective Christian service. He was preaching his weekend and God was using him to win souls to Christ, and challenge believers to greater growth in the faith.

Then something happened to this young man. His preaching was no longer effective, his grades began to drop, and even his personality seemed to change. Noticing that something was wrong, the President of the college called him into his office for a conference. “*There has been a change in your life and work,*” the President said, “*and I wish you would tell me what is wrong.*” The student was evasive for a while, but then he told the story. He was engaged to a lovely Christian girl and was planning to get married after his graduation. He had been called to a fine church and

was anxious to move his bride into the manse and get started in the pastorate. “ *I have been so excited about it, that I have even come to the place, where I did not want the Lord to come back again,*” he confessed. “ *And then,*” he added, “ *the power dropped out of my life and ministry.*” This young man’s plans as good and beautiful as they were, came between him and the Lord. He was worldly. Worldliness is one of the problems of the modern church. It plagues our churches and keeps them from having the power of God. It robs us of our spiritual effectiveness and ruins our witness for the Master. Yet to speak of a worldly Christian is a misnomer. Billy Sunday said, “ *It makes no more sense to talk of a worldly Christian than to talk about a heavenly devil.*” Now, what in the world is worldliness ? Well, John deals with this theme in (2:15-17) and I want to give you three things this that I trust will open up what John is saying here.

(1) THE DEFINITION OF WORLDLINESS

What is worldliness ? What does John mean when he says, “ *love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.*” (2:15) Well, look at that statement,

(a) NEGATIVELY:

What worldliness is not ! When John talks about the

“ *world,*” he does not mean the physical world. The Greek word for “ *world,*” here is kosmos, and this word is used to refer to the physical world of mountains, water bodies, plant and animal life, and all the other things that are part of God’s creation on this planet. Paul uses the word this way when speaking on Mars’ hill in Athens he says, “ *God that made the world and all things therein.*”(Acts 17:24) Paul was talking about the beauty of God’s creation. Is John saying that we are not to admire the beauty of the mountains, rivers, seas and sky ? No ! Indeed the Psalmist tells us that God’s creation reveals His glory. (19:1-2) So when John says, “ *love not the world,*” he is not talking about the Physical world. Nor he is talking about the Populated world. For this word

“ *kosmos,*” can refer to the world of people, humanity. This is how it is used in (Jn 3:16) “ *For God so loved the world.*” The Lord Jesus was not talking about the mountains and the bodies of water, He was talking about the people. God loves all the people in the world.

Indeed the word is used in both ways in the prologue of John’s gospel ! John says, “ *He was in the world (physical) and the world was made by Him (physical). And the world knew Him not (populated)*” (1:10) So in telling us not to love the world John does not mean the world of lost humanity. We also ought to love the world of lost sinners. We’re to “ *do good unto all men especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*”(Gal 6:10) We are to extend the love of Christ to every man. We’re not to hate the people of the world because God loves them and sent His Son to die for them. So what does John mean here, when he says “ *love not the world,*” well, look at the statement,

(b) POSITIVELY:

What the world is ! As I have said the word here is “ *kosmos.*” It means an order or a system or an arrangement of things. For example, we get the word cosmetics from that word. Now think

about that. A woman when she applies cosmetic to her face is simply ordering or she is arranging her face. *She goes to bed at night and when she wakes up in the morning and looks in the mirror, what was once a cosmos has now become a chaos, so she takes cosmetics and rearranges it, so it again looks like a cosmos.* I heard about an ad for some makeup called Peter Pan, it went like this, “ *You better use Peter Pan before you Pan Peters out.*” Now when John uses this word “ *world,*” he is referring to the total world system. The world order that is ruled by Satan, that is against our God and His Son, the Lord Jesus. Now we use the word in this way many times. We talk about the world of sport, meaning a system of ideas and activities of people who are involved in sports. We talk about the world of politics. So John is using this word to refer *to the invisible spiritual system of evil.*

My Satan is the prince of this world (Jn 14:30) the lost are the children of this world (Lk 16:8) As the children of God we are in the world physically, but not of the world spiritually. (Jn 17:11-16) We are sent into the world to win others to Christ (Jn 17:18) but it is only as we maintain our separation from this world that we can serve others. So what is worldliness ? John Wesley says, “ *Anything that cools my love for Christ is the world.*” What is worldliness ? Its living for this world instead of the world to come ! What is worldliness ? *It is anything that keeps me from loving the Lord as I ought to love Him and from doing the will of God as I ought to do it.* Worldliness isn’t necessarily what you do, as much as it is what you think. You can do nothing, but still have worldly desires. You may say, “ *I don’t do worldly things but I sure would like to.*” Worldliness is primarily living to experience the world’s passing pleasures. Now where do you stand in relation to all of this ?

In your thinking, speaking, attitudes, standards, scheming, selfish ambition do you reveal your affection for the world and your likeness to the world ? My when a boat is in the water, there’s no problem, but when the water is in the boat you’ve got problems. Its all right for a Christian to be in the world, but its not very good for the world to be in the Christian. Tell me, have you become more like the world ? Has worldliness infiltrated into your life ? (1)

(2) THE DANGER OF WORLDLINESS

Now the danger is not always recognised so subtle is it. After all what harm is there in doing this, going there, thinking that, saying the other, and while we dally the harm is done. John makes it clear that the world draws away our love for the Father, you can’t have both. Has many a Christian not found that true ? You see, the world wants to displace the love of God in your heart and replace it with love for this world. Did you ever think of,

(a) *THE PROCESS THE WORLD EMPLOYS:*

It will start with,

1. Communication with the World:

It will try and get you to be friendly with this world. It will approach you like this, “ *You know*

you are here, so you might as well go along and take the course of least resistance. After all you don't want to be a Holy Joe, an old fuddy-duddy, a stick in the mud, you don't want to be different. Just be friends with this world." Have you heard that sort of talk ? Do you know what James says?

" Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (4:4) Be careful how friendly you become with this world. The next step after friendliness is courtship, and the next step after courtship is engagement, and the next step after engagement is marriage. It will lead to,

2. Contamination by the World:

What James calls becoming "*spotted by the world.*"(1:27) You see, if you get to friendly with the world, the dirt of the world will get on you. You go into the world and work in its factories and offices, and you hear the filthy language and the obscene jokes. When you get home you feel as if you need a bath not only physically but spiritually. My you cannot get close to the world and not get tainted by it. 1, 2, and then,

3. Conformation to the World:

The Bible warns us about being no different from the world. Paul says, "*Be not conformed to this world,*"(Rom 12:1) Or "*Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould.*" In other words, the world has a mould. This world wants to turn our carbon copies that think as it thinks, act as it acts, go where it goes, have the same standard as it has. One of the tragedies in the modern church is that we are so conformed to the standards of the world. Anything the world does, the average Christian does. You can no longer tell the difference between saved people and lost people by the way they dress, the way they act, and the places of amusement they go to. 1,2,3, and finally,

4. Condemnation with the World:

For Paul speaks of being "*condemned with the world.*"(1 Cor 11:32) That does not mean you will lose your salvation. It means you will lose your usefulness, your testimony for the Lord, it may mean you will lose your life. Do you recall Demas ? Paul says, "*For Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world.*" (2 Tim 4:10) Demas was just like you. He loved the Lord, but then he started letting some of the things of this world into his life and replace his love for the Lord. He started putting other things between himself and his service for the Lord. He began to neglect his Bible, his prayer life. He became unfaithful to the services, and after a while he became so wrapped up in material things that he left Paul and said, "*I am going back home, I am going to spend my life looking out for no 1.*" Is this what the world has done to you ? (a) and then,

(b) THE PRESSURE THE WORLD EXERTS:

For this world puts pressure on us in three ways. First,

1. In the Area of Performance:

“ *the lust of the flesh,*” (2:16) Lust means “ *desires, the cravings, the longings of the body.*” Though the body itself is not sinful, we have a fallen nature that makes an improper appeal to the natural desires of our body. The world wants to cause us to satisfy those normal desires in abnormal ways. *The world will try to take hunger and turn into gluttony. It take your thirst and turn into drunkenness, it will take sleep and turn it into laziness. It will take sex and turn it into adultery.* That’s why we are not to give our flesh an inch for if we do so, it will become our ruler ! You see, this is the area of performance. The world will try to get you to do things that are wrong to fulfil desires that are right ! Then, the world puts pressure,

2. In the Area of Possessions:

What John calls “ *the lust of the eyes,*” (2:16) Did you know that your eyes have an appetite ? Have you ever said to someone, “ *Feast your eyes on this.*” Or have you ever struggled to get through a big meal and said, “ *My eyes were bigger than my stomach.*” Did you know that your eyes can get you into a lot of trouble ? Do you recall that Achan saw some of the spoils of Jericho as the Israelites were conquering it ? Later he confessed, “ *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, and behold they are in the earth in the midst of my tent and the silver under it.*”(Jos 7:21)

Achan first saw, then coveted, then took, and his disobedience cost him his life. In our culture we see things and want to buy them. Its almost impossible to keep on driving the same car. Its so easy to think of fifty reasons for getting rid of it. Today’s stores pressure us to be stylish and improve our image. We are bewitched by beauty. We drive in a different neighbourhood and then become dissatisfied with the houses we live in. Advertising on television is a trap that appeals to the eyes. Do we not need to have the attitude of the psalmist who says, “ *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*” (Ps 119:37) The world also puts pressure on us,

3. In the Area of Pride:

What John calls “ *the pride of life.*” (2:16) The word for “ *pride,*” is a word used to describe a braggart, a boaster, someone who desires to be something. The pride of life puts on a big show for other people ! It means living in such a way as to impress other people. Have you ever wondered why people get head over heels in debt ? Why do we as Will Rogers puts it, “ *spend money we do not have, to buy things we do not need, to impress people we do not like ?*” What causes this behaviour ? Is it not just to keep up with the Jones ? My in these three areas the world will be put pressure on you ! Do you feel this pressure ? Do you find yourself concentrating on satisfying your pleasure-sensitive appetites ? Is the “ *lust of the eyes,*” a major problem for you in this sex-oriented and materialistic society ? Do you like to show off, so people will think you are something ? Well, how can we overcome the world ? This invisible spiritual

system of evil ? (1) (2)

(3) THE DEFEAT OF WORLDLINESS

Can we overcome it ? Let me give you three principles in closing that I think will help us.

(a) LOVE THE LORD EXCLUSIVELY:

Do you see how John puts it in (2:15) What does that mean ? It means that love for the world excludes love for the Father. Where one is, the other cannot be. Do you recall what the Lord Jesus said, “ *No man can serve two masters.* ” (Matt 6:24) You cannot be a spiritual schizophrenic. You cannot say, “ *Well, I love the Lord and the brethren, but I also love a satanic system that opposes God.* ” That’s an impossibility, because you be loving opposites. (Jn 15:18) My will you love the Lord exclusively ? Will you stop flirting with the world? Will you say with the hymn writer “ *take the world but gave me Jesus ?* ”

(b) LEARN THE LESSON CONTINUALLY:

What lesson ? The lesson that the world is passing away. (2:17) The words “ *passeth away,* ” are in the present tense and imply that the world is continuing to disintegrate. Its in the process of dissolution. The only sure thing about this world system is that its not going to be here for ever. (Rev Ch 6-19) One day the system will be gone and the pleasant attractions within it will be gone, all are passing away. That is why this world cannot permanently satisfy anyone, it is not lasting. You know the clamour of the world is always saying “ *look at me, try me, buy me, watch me, experience me, wear me, taste me, drive me, fly me,* ” but the things of this old world will never satisfy for they are transient. The great holiness preacher in the U.S.A. Buddy Robinson once went to New York and was shown the sights by some of his friends. When he got back to his motel room he knelt down and prayed, “ *Thank you, Lord for letting me see New York, and most of all I thank you that I didn’t see anything that I wanted.* ” My ... why are we living for that which is temporary, that which is transient, that which is passing ? Is it not better to live with eternity’s values in view ? Indeed that is the final principle, (a) (b)

(c) LIVE THE LIFE SPIRITUALLY:

“ *But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* ” (2:17) Do you see the contrast ? A life lived for time, and a life lived for eternity ! That which is passing, and that which is permanent !

The stars shine over the land, the stars shine over sea

The stars look up to God above, the stars look down on me:

The stars will live for a million years, for a million years and a day:

But God and I shall live and love when the stars have passed away.

Today in this country and other lands, the name D.L. Moody will be used in illustration after illustration. Moody was a man who shook two continents for God. On the tombstone of D.L. Moody they put these words,

“ *But he that doeth will of God abideth for ever.* ” Will you say and mean it this ?

*“ Only one life twill soon be past
Only what’s done for Jesus will last
Lord at Thy feet myself I cast
Help me, run well for Thee.”*