

WHAT IS WORLDLINESS?

(LANCE LAMBERT)

Galatians 6:14—But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

John 12:31—Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

I John 5:19—We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.

Ephesians 6:10-13—Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against hosts of wicked spirits in the heavens. Wherefore, take up the full armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

I John 2:15-17—Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Just a further word of prayer:

Dear beloved Lord, we are so thankful that we are here found in Your presence. And Lord, we just want to recognize now before You, that without You, we can do nothing of eternal worth. We can speak many words, outline truths, it can even be sound doctrine, but unless that anointing of Yours is upon us in full measure, it will all amount to nothing. Lord, You have provided us with such an anointing, both for the speaking of Your word, the translating of Your word, and the hearing of Your word. Into that anointing grace and power we now stand in simple faith. Let a double portion of that anointing be upon us all, and may we thus meet with You, Lord, and something happen in our lives that is eternal. We ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

I want to ask a question and by the grace of God answer it. What is worldliness? The greatest disease among believers is worldliness. It paralyzes and infects spiritual health. It causes those who could grow up to be strong in the Lord, to be weak; more than weak; they sometimes become tools of the adversary of God. What is worldliness? Paul says that the world through Christ crucified has been crucified to me, and I to the world. What is worldliness? What is a worldly Christian? Worldliness is the love of this world; not just love for the sinner, but love for the world. A worldly child of God is basically in love with this world. John put it so simply: "Love not the world, neither the things that are within it. He that loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

James says in his own severe way, "Ye adulteresses, know you not that friendship with the world is hostility to God?" Worldliness is to be in a state of hostility with God. He says, "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world is an enemy of God." This is a severe truth and it comes to us in an uncomfortable way. But it is absolute truth. You

cannot be in love with this world and in love with the Lord Jesus. The love of the Father cannot be in us if we love the world and the things that are within it. It is a question of our commitment to the Lord. The basic, essential spirit of the world is put very simply, as always, by John: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of physical life." That is the basic, essential spirit of this world.

When God first created this world and everything within it, it was good. But with the fall of Satan, with the fall of a third of the angels, and with the fall of man, something entered into this world so that now Satan is called the prince of this world. And this title is nowhere contested in the word of God. The ruler of this world, the prince of this world, is Satan himself. John puts it again in his own simple, clear, black and white manner: "We know that we are of God and the whole world lies in the evil one." What then is this Trojan horse that is within the believer? What is it in the believer that hinders him from being joined to the Lord, wedded to the Lord, and causes him or her to be wedded to this world?

Very often we think there is nothing wrong in the world. I am saved and converted. I have been born of God. Surely I can handle the world. We are not talking about handling the world; we are talking about being wedded to the world. That is why James says, "You adulteresses, you who have been called to be married to the Lord Jesus, are giving yourself to another." It is a serious matter. It involves demons. It involves evil spirits. It involves world rulers of this darkness. It involves principalities and powers that are spiritual. This is no fairy tale; it is absolute truth. That is why so many works, so-called of God, are paralyzed. It is why so much of the church is paralyzed, a community like any other human community. It is not the body of the Lord Jesus. It is not wedded to a heaven at the right hand of God. It is not manifesting all the power and glory of the Lord Jesus, but instead it is so often a nest for evil, for hypocrisy, for division, for faction, for jealousy, for ambition. It all goes back to worldliness.

We often think of worldliness as the outward things, such as alcohol, smoking, the way you dress, television, newspapers, novels, and I could go on and on. Those things are symptoms, but it is not essential worldliness.

THE CHARACTER OF THE WORLD

Romans 1:29-32 says, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, back-biters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them."

This is the divine description of this world. This is the essential character of this world, nor should we be surprised. It bears and expresses the character of Satan and those angels that fell with him. It is the basic character of this world. Look at the history of this world. It is full of these things on the grandest scale and the most minute scale, from great empires and ideologies that have bound millions of human beings, to the family, to the individual human being who lives like this. But someone will say, "Brother, why are you talking to us? We are believers. You are describing an unsaved world. You are not describing believers."

THE WORLD IN THE CHURCH

Colossians 3:5-10 says, speaking of the cross and the world, “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication [immorality], uncleanness [pornography], passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things’ sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

The apostle was speaking to born again believers, to a living, born again church. And he describes all these things that many of us would say have nothing whatsoever to do with a child of God, nor with the church of God, nor with the work of the gospel. But I am old enough to have seen it all. So much Christian life is a façade for the world. There it is behind the façade—jealousy, back-biting, faction, unrivaled ambition, all these things.

James 3:13-16 says, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” (He is speaking of believers.) “For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed.”

This is spoken to believers. This is spoken to a real church. It is spoken to those who are workers of God’s gospel. It is something that you and I need to face.

What is worldliness? Worldliness, essentially, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of physical life. Where there is no dealing with that, it will not be long before these things begin to be found in our lives and amongst us. You cannot play with fire and not be burnt. It is so simple. Sometimes when you are young, you think you will only be young once. So you kick over the rails and enjoy yourself because you are only young once. But there is a terrible enemy and that enemy will bind you; he will lead you along a path so gently, you do not even know it is the power of darkness. But the end is bondage, paralysis, hypocrisy, Christian façade, and behind it, the world.

If reading a newspaper is worldly, I am very worldly. I once went to a group not very far from here to speak at a little retreat they had, and they did not even know that Robert Kennedy had been assassinated in Los Angeles. They did not listen to the radio; they had no television. They were separated from the world, but the world was in them. I am not making any appeal to you to become big newspaper readers; I would rather you read the Bible; study the Bible. I am not asking you to be watchers of television; better be watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem. No, we are not asking for that, but these things are only symptoms of worldliness. Real worldliness is the problem.

When I was first saved, I was in a fellowship that was very separated from the world. You had to be dressed nicely. Boys could not wear shirts opened to the waist. The girls could not wear little skirts that were only about a foot from the waist. We all had to dress in a special way. We were not allowed to go to the movies. We were not allowed to go to the theatre. We were not permitted to listen to orchestral music. We were not allowed to go to sports, such as football games, although for some strange reason, they thought tennis was spiritual. There was no alcohol, no smoking, and no make-up. When a lady

came in with lipstick on, all the heads would turn to look at her. The pastor actually called them post boxes because in Britain the post boxes are painted red. That was the kind of group my sister and I landed in. They were wonderful people, loved the Lord, sang the hymns from their heart, but you have no idea of the worldliness that was there. This was a Baptist Church and they had church meetings. In those church meetings people called each other names and they lost their tempers with each other. I have never forgotten it. The bottom of my Christian life fell out by watching those older people. Here I was, separated from the world and watching the world at work.

What is worldliness? It is the essential spirit of this world. And the seriousness of worldliness in a believer is that he or she makes themselves available to evil spirits and demons. You cannot play with fire and not be burnt.

THE CROSS DEALS WITH THE WORLD

What did the apostle mean when he said, “Put to death, therefore your members which are upon the earth”? Surely he meant that the world has to be dealt with through the cross. In the Greek, you can say through whom. “Far be it from me to glory, save in the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world.”

What am I to do? You can try to crucify yourself, but you will have a very, very bad time. I tried to do it for some years. Think! How do you crucify yourself? You have a hammer and you have a nail, and first of all, start with the feet. You bend down, and you bang the nail through your feet. Then you take a nail and hammer it into one hand, but what about the other one? You cannot crucify yourself. Try! Then it becomes religion. It becomes heaviness. It becomes darkness. There is no life in it. There is no resurrection life resulting. It is just religion, Christian religion.

IN CHRIST

The apostle Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

You will notice it is all to do with life—spiritual life, eternal life, resurrection life. Everyone puts the accent on being crucified with Christ, but listen: “I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” We are under new management; it is as simple as that; under new management. “I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

What a gospel! It is life—abundant life, overflowing life, resurrection life, the power of life, and it all stems from “I have been crucified with Christ.” Do you sometimes think to yourself, “I must be crucified”? You will never be crucified—not that way. That will end with religion, the affliction of the flesh, will-worship; it is not the way.

Let me illustrate it this way. It is the best way I’ve ever heard it illustrated. Here is a Bible and here is a marker. This Bible is Christ and the marker is you. Now God knew that you would be saved and in His foreknowledge He took you and put you in Christ. You cannot see the marker when it is in the Bible. You can only see the Bible. God sees you in Christ; He put you in Christ. If I put the Bible on a table, where is the marker? The marker is in the Bible, so the marker is on the table. Now, if I take the Bible and put it on the piano, where is the marker? In the Bible. You cannot see it, but it is in the Bible. The

history of the Bible is the history of the marker. The Bible was on the table; the marker was on the table. The Bible was on the piano; the marker was on the piano.

God put you in Christ. When Christ was crucified, you were crucified. It is an historic fact. It does not matter what you feel. When Christ died, you died. He not only died for you, He died as you. You cannot put to death your members on the earth unless you first know that He died and when He died, you died. You cannot deal with worldliness by just trying to come at it head on. You can only deal with it through Christ. That is why the word of God says, "By the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body." It is impossible to know the death of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enlightens your mind, who reveals the truth, who illuminates you so that you suddenly see when Christ died, you died. Now you can reckon on it. It is not make believe.

I used to know a dear, dear brother and he always used to pinch himself. Then he would feel it and say, "Ahhh, I have been crucified with Christ." But knowing the way he lived I became very suspicious. It seemed to me it was mind over matter—Christian Science. If you have a headache, you say, "I do not have a headache, I do not have a headache, I *do not* have a headache, I *definitely* do not have a headache." Psychologically it works, but it is not the faith which is the gift of God. Faith, which is the gift of God, means you reckon on eternal facts. Now you can reckon yourself dead indeed to sin when you see that when Christ died, you died.

GIVING UP ALL RIGHT TO SELF

Here is another wonderful Scripture in Mark's gospel 8:34a: "If any man follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." Mark this carefully: "follow—follow. If any man follow me, let him follow." What comes in between? "If any man follow me, let him deny himself." That is the core of worldliness. Let me put it another way: let him give up all right to himself. The whole problem is rights. "I have rights." Actually you mean that your self-life has rights.

We are living in a world of rights. There are women's rights, the unborn's rights, trees' rights, animal rights, fishes' rights; everything has rights, except men. Nobody ever talks about men's rights. It is all women's rights, hugging trees, all about the ecology—rights, rights, rights, rights. Rights are the deepest instinct in us. "I will not have anybody step on me. I will not allow myself to be limited, curtailed, overlooked. My self-life has rights. I have ambition, and I have a right to come up the ladder." "If any man follow Me..." Here is the most basic step. Let him give up all right to himself and take up his cross.

Now these pictures we all see in Ecclesiastical structures of Jesus bearing a cross are really quite wrong, because the upright of the cross was always in place at the place of execution. Sometimes it was the trunk of a tree, sometimes a living tree, sometimes a dead tree, but the upright was there. The disciples and the multitudes that Jesus called together to hear this had all seen this a thousand times. Soldiers, clearing a way and shouting, "Out of the way; out of the way!" And behind them came a prisoner with a card hanging around his neck with the sentence of death and the reason for his sentence. Carrying the cross beam, he was on his way to the execution ground.

First, you must understand that when Christ died, you died. You cannot crucify yourself, but you can give up all right to yourself. That is the most basic step that you can take. And only the Holy Spirit can enable you to take that step because the deepest

instinct in man is self-preservation. You can give up all right to yourself and take up your cross beam. Now you understand what the apostle Paul meant when he said, “We have the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” (see II Corinthians 1:9).

GOD ARRANGES THE CIRCUMSTANCES

You are on the way to the execution but you cannot crucify yourself. Well then, how are you crucified? You are crucified in Christ, but in practical terms, how does it happen? You do not have to worry yourself; God takes care of the execution. Your nearest and dearest will do it. Your husband will do the job. Your wife will do the job. Your parents will do the job. Your children will do the job. Your employer will do the job. Your employees will certainly do the job. And if none of those do it, the church will do it. You cannot get away. Give up all right to yourself, take up your cross beam, accept the sentence of death, and God will arrange the circumstances and situations.

People sometimes say, “Why did this happen to me? Why is so and so so difficult?”—instead of saying, “Praise the Lord; this is an opportunity to die.” I mean it. It is not just a joke; it is an opportunity to die. I have heard people say sometimes, “Lord, help me to be crucified. Help me to fall into the ground and die.” But then, when the Lord arranges the circumstances, they are really upset.

Worldliness! You may think, young person, that it is no big deal to get involved with the world, but in your innocence, you have no idea the spiritual powers that are hovering around you to bind you, and to destroy you. This worldliness will destroy you. It will destroy the church and it will destroy our service for God. We can begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. What was once alive to God—hearing the Lord, seeing the Lord, following the Lord—is now lifeless, a monument. It all goes back to this simple matter. In II Corinthians, chapter 4:10 Paul says this: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal body.” This is the only antidote to worldliness.

Where do you stand in this matter? Have you deliberately given up all right to yourself? Are you taking up your cross beam? You cannot follow Him in any other way. I can only say that I am so thankful that in the early days of my Christian life, I came to this decision. It cost me very much because in the church I was in the pastor had made all the arrangements for me to go to Bible College (thank God I never went), a very well known one, and he had it all planned out. But because I had given up all right to myself, I had another Master. I asked that Master what I should do, and He said, “Do not go this path, and I will take care of you.” And I can testify that He has. I can never say the Lord is in my debt, that He is indebted to me: “I gave up everything for Him and now He must do a lot for me.” I gave up all this path, the ladder to go up and up and up. The pastor actually said, “In the end you will be a Keswick speaker.” I was young, only a kid of 18 or 19 years old. I let it all go and the Lord has been to me so much that I am continuously in His debt.

Dear child of God, there is nothing in this world like following the Lord Jesus, but you cannot follow Him if He is not Lord. You cannot follow Him if you do not give up all right to yourself. And you cannot follow Him if you are not prepared to die daily. May the Lord touch our hearts. There is so much of the world in us all, me included, in all of us. And we have to remember this word: “To put to death our members that are on the

earth.” But the fulness that comes, the resurrection life that comes, the joy that comes, the laughter that fills our mouths, the sense of purpose—who is going to talk about dying? It is the pathway to the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God.

Let’s pray:

Beloved Lord, We are such poor material. We have to confess it. We love the world. We love the things that are in it. We get so involved, Lord; not only on the outward level but often in its basic, essential spirit. Forgive us, cleanse us, and bring us to the place where we will be able to say with the apostle Paul, “Far be it from me to glory, save in the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, through whom the world was crucified to me, and I to the world.” We ask it all in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.