



Spiritual Warfare – Part 3 – The Struggle with the World

During week 1 of this study, we had an introduction to spiritual warfare and discovered 6 basic principles as we launched into our study. **First**, we learned that we

must look ONLY to the Bible to get a real understanding of what spiritual warfare is and how we are involved in it. **Second**, when we came to Christ, we declared ourselves to be warriors in this fight. We moved from the realm of evil into the kingdom of God. **Third**, we determined that whether we want to participate or not, we are caught up in this conflict that goes on in the spiritual realm. **Fourth**, God has already won this war, and He has condemned Satan and his army into the lake of fire. **Fifth**, Satan and his followers have been given power, for a time, to operate freely on the earth.

In week 2 we learned how sin entered the world and how Lucifer rebelled, becoming the devil. A third of the angelic hosts followed him in his rebellion. Humans also sinned in the Garden of Eden when they chose to obey Satan and disobey God. Sin and brokenness introduced evil into the world. Spiritual attack comes against us from three sources: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The World - What is Worldliness

This week we will look at what scripture means by “The World.” Paul writes the Roman church urging them to pursue holiness instead of conforming to the world.

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2, NASB).

The disciple John writes,

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17, NASB).

“Worldliness” is a very complicated subject to understand. Since we don’t readily understand it, we often have trouble recognizing it, and therefore we’re not very good at doing combat with it. It helps to think of the world as “world-likeness.” Evangelicals and/or fundamentalists often identify worldliness by such things as smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages, playing cards, or maybe even going to immoral movies. Such actions are not in themselves worldliness. Rather, they are more descriptive of sins of the flesh. Worldliness is more focused on getting our solutions and answers from what the world offers instead of from God’s Word.

Worldliness is wrapped up in thinking and attitude

The biblical concept of worldliness has more to do with a way of thinking that is contrary to the mindset of God. Throughout history, different philosophies and mind-sets have been adopted to influence how people think. In one generation worldliness might involve a trend toward relativistic morality. In those generations, people might drift away from any kind of spiritual hunger for God. In another generation, people might seek enlightenment and try to find it in something or some religion other than in God.

In his book *Spiritual Warfare*, author Robby Dean summarizes it as follows:

Worldliness is best understood as an overall philosophy of life or way of thinking that stirs up the flesh to indulge in specific sins such as sexual immorality, drunkenness, gossip, or unrighteous arrogance. Worldliness is a way of thinking about life that is contrary to the biblical way or divine viewpoint. Worldliness may contain a large amount of truth, yet its overall makeup and foundation is divorced from Scriptural authority. As such, worldliness provides a rationale for sin, and it is often associated with false teachings that blind people to the truth and lead them away from God (see 2 Corinthians 4:4).

James, the brother of Jesus, is clear that *friendship with the world is hostility toward God* (see James 4:4). Additionally, Paul’s letter to the Romans tells us specifically that we are *not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds* (see Romans 12:1-2). I remember discussing this at length with our Amish brothers and sisters who were here in Whitehall for a few years. They focused on clothing that looked different from their surrounding neighbors and speaking their own language as ways to “not be conformed to the world.” I don’t think that’s what Paul is trying to tell us. Paul is instructing that a believer must not conform his or her thinking to the norms and standards of the world. We must be on guard with our minds. The spiritual battle to control your mind rages. We must be on our guard to cleanse our minds of such worldly thinking as mysticism, idealism, and relativism. Curiously, this “worldly thinking” changes its appearance again and again, but it always excludes God and biblical truth.

Probably the earliest example we have of a “world system” is the account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11. In the account, Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah was a powerful figure. The people of the earth gathered under him and set out to build a great tower. At that time, all people spoke the same language, and the emphasis was that all of the earth would be ruled from Babylon. It was man’s first attempt at a one-world government. It might help to think of it as man’s first attempt to establish a United Nations.

Rabbis have interpreted the whole incident in different ways. The Jewish Theological Seminary has an interesting entry on their website that explains what went wrong at the Tower of Babel.

The building of the tower then was an act of rebellion born of prosperity. In the phrase "and they settled there" ([Genesis 11:2](#)), the Rabbis felt a tone of finality. The migrants from the east ended their wanderings because they had come upon a land bursting with blessings. Yet what God had intended for good quickly became the source of their downfall. Self-satisfaction fed their arrogance ([Tosefta Sotah 3:10](#)/[Tosefta Sotah 3:10](#)/[Tosefta Sotah 3:10](#)), or as the Rabbis observed elsewhere, "A full stomach is the source of much evil" ([BT Berakhot 32a](#)/[BT Berakhot 32a](#)/[BT Berakhot 32a](#)).

God is not mentioned in the endeavor at Babylon, and this is indicative of the mindset of the day. Man alone was attempting to do it all on his own.

Worldliness is always focused on arrogance and self. It cries out that mankind has better solutions than a relationship with a loving God who has given mankind guidance and rules for living. The Ten Commandments are a great foundation for building a society that works and is respectful of the rights of all living within it. In the early 1900’s, world idealism birthed the philosophy of Communism in Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto. Communism rejects biblical truth, rejects the existence of God, and elevates human idealism. God’s word empowers individuals as being made in God’s image. Communism minimizes the importance and relevance of the individual. Scripture teaches that man is made in God’s image, and as such, the individual has the highest value and every human being contains a spark of the divine. Communism elevates society over the individual. The God ordained concept of private property is disdained and replaced by collectivism. Those who promote the ideal of communism, do so, promising that it is a fairer way to have a society. They promote the idea that without economic disparities or differences, everyone will get along better, and no one will be envious of anyone else. All will be equal and no one will make money off of the efforts of anyone else. Parts of this may sound attractive for one reason or another, but the system is anti-God and against the biblical ways God sets out for humans to live in society. Communism led to abuse of any and all who disagreed with the elitists who put themselves in charge, and who always think of themselves as more enlightened and above others. The “party” became supreme and individual rights were erased. The idealistic utopia envisioned by Marx and his philosophical progeny ALWAYS has resulted in human debasement, human misery, wholesale slaughter, and imprisonment of any who carried differing opinions. Communism was the manifestation of worldliness for a time in its day. Leaders of communist China, the former

Soviet Union, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea have brought more bloodshed to the world than ANY prior philosophy man has cooked up for a more “just” society.

Satan cooks up the same lies and serves them again to each successive generation. The “newest” philosophy that is being promoted at present is based on a philosophy called Critical Theories. Like Nazism, it originated in Germany in the 1930’s. Many of the ideas you are hearing about a “woke America” are worldly idealism that is being served up supposedly to make a “better society” or a “fairer society.” The ambiguous term that is thrown around to describe the motivation behind this thinking is something labeled as “social justice.” It is never quite defined, but it is demanded. The philosophy argues that social problems (and consequently personal setbacks by individuals) are created more by societal structures and cultural assumptions (read racism) than by INDIVIDUAL choices or psychological factors. What is that all saying? It is saying that people can’t succeed because the system is against them. And, to correct that wrong, non-biblical solutions are the answer. This idea also will end in tyranny with a small minority lording over others. It is the whole push behind the idea that instead of equal opportunity, a just society should somehow achieve equal outcomes.

This “critical thinking” today sees concepts such as merit-based rewards and individual responsibility as oppressive and indicative of systemic unfairness. These are recooked Marxist theories which deny the existence of God. They demand that present systems of law, order, and authority must be torn down as they are patently unfair. It is interesting that they never quite enunciate that with which they desire to replace the present system. The American system, with all its flaws and deficiencies, has been a beacon of hope to those of the world who just want a place to be free to worship, to work, and to live. Personal responsibility is not just a good idea; it is a divine idea. Paul was clear in telling the churches in Galatia, “*God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*” (*Galatians 6:7b, NASB*). Scriptures are also filled with God ordained concepts of personal responsibility, industriousness and thrift, along with compassion for all human beings.

Worldliness is almost always introduced as something beautiful, desirable, and enlightening. As Eve looked on at Satan’s offer, the Bible tells us, “*it was a delight to the eyes, and... desirable to make one wise.*” (*Genesis 3:6, NASB*). Eve was ready, willing, and able to sin when she began to look at things from Satan’s point of view, rather than looking at things from God’s point of view. When a person is not consciously trusting God’s Word to lead him or her, it is very easy to become deceived into adopting the world’s thinking.

The Apostle John tells us that the totality of the world system (the *kosmos*), **all that is in the world**, is comprised of: (1) the “lust of the flesh,” (2) the “lust of the eyes,” and (3) the “pride of life” (1 John 2:16). The “lust of the flesh” is the idea that “if it feels good do it.” The thing promised to feel so good, never really feels that good. It never satisfies. Whenever Satan promises fleshly fulfillment, it never satisfies. Drugs don’t bring the lasting relief they promise to bring. Sordid sex or illicit sex never bring the lasting excitement and satisfaction they promise to bring. The things that our eyes lusts after likewise never deliver what the world tells us they will bring to us. The advertisement never delivers in full. Material abundance never

gives the total security that wealth promises. Money and education can never give us the status we crave to feel like we're someone that has significance and worth.

If we indulge our fleshly lusts to satisfy its desires, sadly, we are never sated. Our souls are still hungry and thirsty. We just can't get enough. It always comes up short. The world cannot deliver. John adds to the mix the "pride of life." The pride of life is the arrogant attitude that some have by which they feel more highly of themselves than they should. It is the ambition to center one's life on self rather than on God. We all desire to be loved and accepted, to have value and worth, and to have an identity. Whenever one tries to fill any of these needs with ANYTHING or ANYONE other than God, the result is always frustration and conflict. Worldliness promises to satisfy those deepest needs through a host of other people, ideas, or things that have nothing to do with God's best for us.

In contrast, the believer is called to live a life of love towards God that transforms everything about one's life (Romans 12:1-3; John 14:15). The cosmic system hates God and all who are aligned with Him (John 15:19). This is because the principles of the world are diametrically opposed to the fundamental principles of being a believer and a Christ-follower. The Apostle John comes right out and says it: *"do not love the world nor the things in the world."* (1 John 2:15, NASB). So reader, what do you love? What do you long for?

One of the first steps in engaging in Spiritual Warfare is understanding and recognizing what exactly the world is throwing at us. It is throwing ideas that are void of spiritual wisdom that will always come up short. They will NOT lead to individual happiness, societal happiness, or tranquility. I am not advocating some sort of theocracy, rather I am advocating society based on God's concepts for His creations. Fall in love with Him today, and decide that you will not conform to the world and its ideals; rather you will allow God to transform you by the renewing of your mind to see yourself and others with the mind of Christ.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

