

# Ten Reasons Why Christians Must Not Be Worldly

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It is hardly necessary to define what it is to be worldly. But lest we be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and blinded to our own worldliness, let us remind ourselves of what the Word of God says on the subject. To be worldly, according to the apostle Paul, is to walk “according to the course of this world” (Eph 2:2) and to be “conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2a). In other words, it is to live and to conduct oneself according to the fashion and standards of this world—in a way that is contrary to God’s revealed will. The qualifier is crucial because we are in the world, though we are not of the world (Jn 17:15-16). Thus, it is not worldly for men to wear T-shirts or neckties; neither is it worldly for women to be involved in sports; nor is it necessarily worldly to wear a pair of \$200 shoes today; nor is it worldly to use the computer as most people in the world do; nor is it necessarily worldly to indulge in an

expensive vacation; nor is it necessarily worldly to enjoy golfing or to use a Visa Card. On the other hand, it is worldly to dress scantily or provocatively; to drive an expensive car not because it is reliable, but because it is a status symbol; to carry a \$2,000 bag to flaunt wealth; to engage in partying and clubbing; to be addicted to computer games or videos; to attend glitzy wealth and investment seminars where mammon is elevated as God; to play golf to impress wealthy clients; to define entertainment as worship; to engage in competitive sports or to shop on the Sabbath Day; to live beyond your means; to love money; to seek the praises of man more than the approval of God; and to enjoy the entertainments of this world more than spiritual things.

These two lists are, of course, not exhaustive. It may even be debatable how some of the items are classified since worldliness can hardly be scientifically defined. Nevertheless, they are given as examples to paint a concrete picture of what worldliness looks like, lest we be tempted to

excuse our worldliness by insisting that it cannot be objectively determined. In any case, they must not be used exclusively to determine whether one is worldly or not. Remember that God is concerned not only with the outward, but also with our attitude. Thus, Paul would have us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom 12:2b). And John likewise teaches us to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 Jn 2:15).

But why must we not be worldly? Here are ten simple reasons.

## 1.

### **It Is to Disobey God**

The apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes it very clear in the text already alluded to: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom

12:2). This is an imperative, not merely a suggestion. The same is true of the words of the apostle John quoted above. Thus, Christians who are worldly are disobeying God!

## 2.

### **It Is to Return to Wallow in the Mud**

Believers have been redeemed from sin, released from damnation, and rescued from the world. We have, in the words of Peter, “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 2:20a). Therefore, to be worldly is to be “again entangled therein, and overcome” and “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20b). It is to be like a dog returning to eat its own vomit, or a sow returning to wallow in the mire after being washed (2 Pet 2:22).

How grieved Paul must have been when Demas forsook him, “having loved this present world” (2

Tim 4:10). How sad faithful ministers must be, to see those who have been plucked out of the world through the ministry of the gospel returning to dally with the temptations of the world! What sorrow pierces the heart of godly parents when their child who has been brought up in the holy ways of the covenant turns away to walk in worldliness!

### 3.

## **It Is to Destroy Assurance of Salvation**

The First Epistle of John is sometimes called the Test of Life Epistle. In this letter, the apostle John lists several tests we may use to reflect on whether we are born again and, therefore, truly have eternal life.

One of the tests proposed by John concerns our relationship with the world. He writes: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world,

even our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). In other words, those who are born again and have genuine saving faith will not succumb to the lusts of the world. They will not love the world or the “things that are in the world”: for “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15). “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever,” he declares. (1 Jn 2:17).

This being the case, a professing believer who is worldly or finds his satisfaction and joy in the fashion and things of the world ought to seriously question whether he is born again. A worldly Christian who is assured of his salvation is almost certainly deluding himself.

#### 4.

### **It Is to Trifle with the Danger of Losing One's Soul**

This is related to the previous point but addresses those who care not for assurance. “I know not

whether I am born again, but I know I am justified because I have faith,” says the worldly Christian.

But regardless of how confident he may feel, the Lord Jesus makes it clear that one who loves the world is in danger of losing his soul when He says, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mt 16:26). This is true for an unbeliever. But make no mistake: it must be true for a professing believer too, for one who professes faith but loves the world is manifestly a hypocrite. One who loves the world and the things of this world cannot possibly love God (cf. 1 Jn 2:15). Did not the Lord say: “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. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt 6:24)?

And is not a worldly Christian likely to be an unfruitful Christian? Did not the Lord also say: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he

that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Mt 13:22). An unfruitful Christian is an oxymoron for “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:20).

No believer should think that he can trifle with worldliness and not be in danger of ultimately losing his soul. And let not anyone who is worldly appeal to the doctrine of perseverance: for it is not sinners who will persevere, but saints. And saints, by definition, are holy—that is, set apart unto God—and therefore not worldly.

## 5.

### **It Is to Walk Foolishly**

There is such a thing as godly wisdom as there is also worldly wisdom or “fleshly wisdom,” as Paul calls it (2 Cor 1:12). But “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19). Therefore, to be worldly is to be foolish!



Mr Worldly Wiseman in *Pilgrim's Progress* arrogantly advised Christian to get rid of the heavy burden on his back by not paying too much attention to the Book, but instead seeking help from Mr Legality in the Village of Morality. Christian would have been lost had he not been rescued through his own conscience and the work of Evangelist. Worldly wisdom is like that. Except that in the modern context, Mr Worldly Wiseman can often be found behind the pulpit advising a happy crowd that their burdens have already been taken away at the Cross, so they are free to wander through vanity fairs and alleyways of the world without worrying about the burdensome narrow road.

A gospel without repentance and holiness is a worldly gospel. To use the words of James, "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (Jas 3:15). It appears wise and pragmatic. It appears to work because many are being added to the church. Many are rejoicing and confident of attaining to heaven. But it is

foolishness: for the path that these will walk on is not the narrow road that leads to life (Mt 7:14), which is also known as the way of holiness (Isa 35:8); it is instead, the broad road that leads to destruction (Mt 7:13). Oh, what a day of sorrow and regret it will be for those who walk in that way when the Saviour says to them: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt 7:23).

## 6.

### **It Is to Be Unlike God Our Father & Our Elder Brother, Christ**

God the Father is not worldly. "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," says John (1 Jn 2:16). And neither is Christ our Elder Brother. Referring to His elect in prayer, He says: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn 17:16).

Therefore, those who are worldly are unlike God our Father, and Christ, our Elder Brother. But the

children of God are those whom He foreknew, whom He predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). To this end, we are born again and given the Holy Spirit that we “might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 1:4). Thus, professing believers who are worldly—to borrow the language of the apostle to the Hebrews—would be “bastards, and not sons” (Heb 12:8). Such will not be able to enjoy fellowship with the Father or with His Son (1 Jn 1:3). Such will not experience the fullness of joy which true believers partake of (1 Jn 1:4).

## 7.

### **It Is to Be like the Devil**

Not only does worldliness make us unlike the Father, but it also makes us like the devil, “the prince of this world” (Jn 14:30) and the ruler of darkness (cf. Eph 6:12). What does that leave us?

The Lord Jesus declares: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Jn 8:12). Those who walk in worldliness and darkness are the children of the devil. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,” says the Lord to the unbelieving Jews (Jn 8:44).

No faithful Christian will fail to shudder and humbly repent when told that he is a child of the devil. Yet this is precisely what a worldly Christian can expect to hear from the Lord.

## 8.

### **It Is to Be at Enmity with God**

To be like the devil is bad enough, but it does not end there. James informs us that those who love the world are enemies of God. “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” (Jas 4:4).

If this does not give us pause to consider if we are worldly or to repent of worldliness, nothing will move us to do what is right regardless of how many reasons may be forwarded.

## 9.

### **It Will Mean Losing Our Testimony**

The Lord Jesus says, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Mt 5:13-14).

A worldly Christian is, essentially, salt that has lost its saltiness and light that is hidden under a bushel (Mt 5:15). Such a Christian does not only lack a godly testimony that draws others to Christ, but emboldens the children of the world: for they will be provided with fodder to encourage themselves in their worldliness. “See, they are not so different from us,” they will say. “They profess a creed and claim to believe in God, but they find

their delight in the same things as us.” Such a Christian will also encourage their children to live in hypocrisy. “See, it is OK to love the things of the world, so long as we read the Bible, pray occasionally, and attend worship regularly.”

Oh, may we not rather be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world” (cf. Phil 2:15).

## 10.

### **It Is to Forfeit Boldness in the Day of Death and Judgement**

Those who walk in love as Christ walked can expect boldness on the day they meet God in judgment. John alludes to this blessing when he says: “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world” (1 Jn 4:17). Thus, the spiritually-minded Christian fears

not death, and expects rather to hear the comforting words of the Lord: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mt 25:21).

Conversely, however, those who are worldly in this world, contrary to the character of Christ, cannot enjoy this boldness. Instead, death will be a dreadful experience: for without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

## **Conclusion**

More than two thousand seven hundred years ago, the Prophet Elijah remonstrated against a people who had gone astray: “If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kg 18:21). Today, the same call is going forth: only that Baal has taken a different form. The Baalism of yesteryears is but the worldliness of today. Christians may not be worldly and faithful to Christ at the same time. Let us “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 Jn 2:15). Let us watch against “the lust of the

flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16). Let us resist the counsel of “fleshly wisdom” (2 Cor 1:12) in the fear of God.

Let us refuse to make decisions “according to the flesh” (2 Cor 1:17). Let us refuse to speak in a worldly manner, eschewing filthiness, foolish talking or crude jokes unbecoming of saints (Eph 5:4). By the grace of God, let us deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit 2:12). Let us, instead, be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may bear the image of Christ so that we may be salt of the earth and light of the world, drawing others who are caught up in the snares of the world to find freedom and life in Christ. Ω

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