

Sunday, October 8, 2023 am

## **CLOSER TO GOD (55)**

### **Challenges (1)**

### **Worldliness**

Today we resume our study of our theme form 2022-23, “Closer to God”. We have covered much ground. In these past 2 years we have addressed:

- What it means to know God – trusting Him
- How sin separates us from Him and what I need to do about it
- God’s amazing grace
- Our pursuit of holiness
- How our character (attitudes, etc.) defines us and helps us draw closer to God
- How we are to draw closer to Him in the way we conduct ourselves – actions, appearance, associations, etc.
- Understanding fellowship
- What it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

In our lesson today, we want to address a final aspect of this study – challenges and dangers to drawing closer to God and notice some recommendations to help us deal with these challenges. After this, we will present some concluding lessons. That will be our study.

Today, we will begin by noticing the danger of worldliness.

#### **I. What is worldliness?**

- a. In the Greek the word “world” can have many different meanings. The created world – Acts 17:24 – God made the world and all that is in it; Mark 16:15 – the environment of this earth – Go into all the world; Humanity – John 3:16 - God so loved the world; John 15:18 – the lost – the world that hated Jesus and His disciples; the carnal mindset – or the ways and influences of this world – 1 John 2:15-16 – “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
- b. When we think of worldliness, we sometimes think of materialism. While that is involved, it is much more. It is about the influence that the world has on us, especially in contrast to the Christian’s life. It is when we chose worldly pursuits over strengthening our faith. It can involve how we use our time, where we go, what we are interested in and what we do. In terms of our study, it is when we decide to pursue the world instead of drawing closer to God. It may be total rejection of God, or some area of our life where God is simply not our priority.

#### **II. The Bible and Worldliness**

- a. The Bible does not use the word *worldliness* (or materialism), but we find it throughout its pages.
  - i. 1 John 2:15-16 – do not love the world or the things in the world
  - ii. Ephesians 2:1-3 – when *you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*
  - iii. 1 John 5:19, *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*
  - iv. Matthew 13:22 – the thorny soil – the word was choked out by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.
  - v. Philippians 3:18-19 – enemies of the cross of Christ... who set their mind on earthly things.
  - vi. James 3:13-18 – the wisdom of this world contrasted with the wisdom from above

- vii. Romans 1:32 – after listing numerous worldly behaviors he noted that they are worthy of death, “*not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*”
- b. Examples of worldliness to consider
  - i. 1 Samuel 8:19-21 – the people came to Samuel demanding a king, “So that we also may be like the nations round us.
  - ii. Matthew 19:16-22 – the rich, young ruler went away sorrowful because he had great riches that he was unwilling to part with.
  - iii. Luke 10:38-42 – Martha and Mary. Martha was distracted with serving Jesus and neglected the more important task – listening and learning from Jesus.
  - iv. 1 Corinthians 3:2-3 – they were carnal and hence not able to receive the word.
  - v. Genesis 19 – Lot’s family in Sodom and Gomorrah – a “case-study” of worldliness.
    - 1. It began in Genesis 13:10-11 when Lot chose the well-watered plains of Sodom.
    - 2. Genesis 19:1ff - As the LORD determined to destroy those cities because of their worldliness (including homosexuality), he warns Lot.
    - 3. Lot is bothered by the wickedness (cf. 2 Peter 2:6-8), but we see how it impacted his family.
    - 4. He is very concerned but when faced with a decision, his is still a worldly solution (in place of homosexuality he offers his daughters – Genesis 19:2-8) which he THOUGHT was better than the alternative.
    - 5. Genesis 19:9-16 when warned to get out he hesitates – there was at least some love for that city;
    - 6. Genesis 19:26 – his wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.
    - 7. Genesis 19:30-38 shows the worldly actions of his daughters.
- c. Worldliness causes problems
  - i. It engages in warfare against you - 1 Peter 2:11 – fleshly lusts “war against the soul”
  - ii. It will rob your heart - Matthew 6:19-21 – where you treasure is, there your heart will also be. Where you treasure is...Matthew 6:19-21.
  - iii. Friendship with the world is enmity with God - James 4:4
  - iv. You CANNOT serve 2 masters... Matthew 6:24
  - v. Luke 12:13-21 – the parable of the rich fool
  - vi. It can deceive you into thinking you are pleasing to God - 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – this list of “selfishness” who “having a form of godliness but denying it power...”
  - vii. In all these verses we can see how worldliness will affect our relationship with God. If we are pursuing worldly things, it WILL affect how close we are to God. Simply ask yourself, what am I willing to give up to be closer to Him? Cf. Philippians 3:7-11

### III. **Overcoming worldliness**

- a. John 17:14-16 - Understand the difference between being in the world and of the world. Study the above passages and examples and others.
- b. 2 Corinthians 13:5 – it will begin with honest examination.
- c. We have to MAKE UP OUR MINDS! Joshua 24:15 -
- d. It is a mindset - Transform your mind - Colossians 3:1-2, to the obedience of Christ. Romans 12:1-2 – be transformed. We CANNOT conform to this world. We present ourselves as living sacrifices to God. Romans 8:5, *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Philippians 4:8 – meditate on these things. 2Corinthians 10:4-5 – bringing every thought into captivity
- e. Matthew 6:33 – we have to put God and His kingdom first.
- f. If needed, we must genuinely repent – 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
- g. Give God the time and energy He deserves – Ephesians 5:15-16, Colossians 4:5 – redeem the time.
- h. Romans 13:14 – put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts

i. 2 Peter 1:5-11 – build up your faith with godly qualities. Cf. Galatians 5:22-23

If I were to summarize overcoming worldliness in one statement, it would be that we need to be “other worldly”. We need to appreciate and focus our where our true citizenship is (Philippians 3:20). What about you? How much of an impact does the ways of the world have on you? Think about it!