

## WORLDLINESS

### Romans 12:2

Every one in this world has a philosophy of life and while there are thousands of different philosophies, these philosophies can be narrowed down to two—the world's philosophy and the Christian's philosophy. The philosophy of the world is, "My life is my own to live as I please." This view is focused on man and is self-centered. The philosophy of the Christian is, "My life is God's to do with it as He wills." This, of course, is a God-centered view of life. These two philosophies are opposed and they can never be compatible. These two viewpoints of life are based on two distinct sets of presuppositions. In essence, it is revelation against reason, supernaturalism against naturalism and theism against antitheism.

No man will ever understand the Christian philosophy of life until he accepts Christ as his personal Savior and he accepts the Bible as his only standard of authority.

In Romans 12:1, the Apostle Paul is addressing Christians and urging them to make a decision to commit their lives to God. They are to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice. As those who have been redeemed by the mercy of God, Christians are to dedicate their bodies for God and live a God-centered existence.

To present the body to God springs from obedience of the human will in which the believer gives over his life for God's use and service. This does not mean a person will be perfect or not sin. It does mean that now every decision that is made and every act that is done will be related to the fact that the Christian has made an initial dedication of himself to God.

The presentation of the body is an official announcement to God, oneself and others that the Christian believes in God's philosophy of life over against the world's philosophy.

### ***NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD 12:2a***

In Romans 12:1, Paul has given a positive request to present the body, but now he gives a negative command to stop conforming to the world. Commitment to Christ involves negatives as well as positives, and the negatives are much more difficult to accept.

Learning to accept the negatives of Christianity is like taking a big, bitter pill for some ailment. At first, the pill tastes bad and goes down hard, but the pain suffered is worth it when the ailment is cured. Accepting the negatives at first may

give a bad taste and go down hard, but when we put them into practice it makes us feel so good.

Meaning of "World." Before we can obey what God wants us to do, we must understand the meaning of the term "world." A more correct translation of world is age. This present age spans the time from Christ's birth to His Second Advent. We are told that this age is evil in nature. *"Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father"* (Gal. 1:4). This present age is directly related to the world system that is under the control of Satan.

*"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out."* (John 12:31).

*"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."* (2 Cor. 4:4).

*"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."* (John 5:19).

This world system has its own philosophy and standard of conduct.

*"... in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."* (Eph. 2:2).

The world system, headed up by Satan, is opposed to the world of the elect, headed by Jesus Christ. These two systems are at enmity with one another, and there is no possibility of mixing or compromising the two systems.

### **"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world"**

Phillips translates this, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you to its own mold." The philosophy of the world is every man for himself; it is self-centered, self-pleasing, indulgent and indifferent to others. The world system puts constant

pressure on the Christian to conform to it. The world wants everything and everyone to mold to it, but for the Christian to be poured into its mold is sin and quenches the working of God in the life.

When most people think of worldliness, they think in terms of the man-made taboos of religion: "I don't smoke, drink, dance or chew and I don't go with the girls who do." While these things could be a manifestation of worldliness under certain conditions, real worldliness is much more subtle and devastating. The tragedy is that there are many Christians who do not practice the taboos who are extremely worldly. How does the Christian conform to the world?

***Fortune.*** *The world has the philosophy that "money is power" and "every man has his price" and "there is nothing that money can't buy." For those in the world who live for pursuit of fortune alone, there is a ruthlessness that stops short of nothing. To try to get merely in order to possess is nothing short of idolatry. "and greed, which is idolatry." (Col. 3:5). Money is not evil but the love of money is what brings evil to men.*

***If the Lord in His grace brings fortune to a Christian, he should rejoice and remember that he is to be a good steward of his money. There is nothing sinful about Christians having money. The Bible constantly exhorts the rich to give to the poor and to support the Lord's work. With much wealth comes much responsibility!***

*"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." (1 Tim. 6:17-19)*

About ten years ago, I was invited over to a Christian man's home to discuss a personal problem. It was a very lovely home and would have been the envy of most married couples. One problem led to another until we got around to the problem of giving faithfully to the Lord's work. The man and wife went on and on about how they wanted to give more but couldn't because they had too many debts because of the house and all the furnishings. I then asked the man a simple question, "Have you ever considered moving out of this home to a less expensive one so you can pay your bills and give faithfully to the Lord?" There was a dead silence and the subject was soon changed. It was obvious that they loved their home more than they loved the Lord's work.

***Fame.*** There is an inherent drive within men for public recognition. The world will stop at nothing to become famous. Christians should thank the Lord if

fame comes their way in God's providence, but their fame is to be used to be a testimony for the grace of God and the reaching of others for Christ.

Power. Every person in the world wants to be the "top man." Men have a great lust for power and desire to dominate others. This is why you have Nazis, Communists, racial hatred, wars, wife beatings and parents manhandling their children. Man loves power!

A Christian may be given authority in the secular or church realm but what ever authority he has it is from God and is to be ministered in the fear of God. Christians can become worldly as they lust for power in the local church. There are always some who try to dominate a local assembly by their prestige or money.

Pleasure. The world lives for pleasure and thrives upon the evils that some pleasures bring. The Bible says there is pleasure in sin but the consequences of this sin is devastating to the human soul. All pleasure is obviously not sin. The Bible tells us that God has given the Christian "richly all things to enjoy." There are many definite absolutes that the Bible calls sins—hate, envy, pride, gossip, murder, jealousy, adultery, sexual perversion, drunkenness and so on. However, there are thousands of legitimate pleasures that God gives to the Christian to enjoy. The Westminster Confession says, "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." But pleasure must never be put ahead of Jesus Christ. God wants us to enjoy nature, sports, music, the arts, reading, friendships and social contacts. But these pleasures should only be practiced when they glorify God. Anything that does not glorify God is not of God!

A Christian can be quite worldly when he begins to judge other Christians on the matter of these pleasures that God wants His people to enjoy. Each Christian must determine his own convictions on these matters as he is led by the Holy Spirit.

Everything must be done with moderation. God wants us to read widely and be intelligent Christians but we must be selective in our reading and need not fill our mind with filth. If it is our conviction that movies can be attended, then we must be selective in the movies we see so as not to fill our minds with trash. If we want to have a cabin on the lake or a boat, this is fine as long as it does not take the place of Christ and the church. If a woman wants to be in style in her dress, she should wear her clothes to glorify God and not to attract the men. Most of us are probably more worldly than we know as we sit in front of the TV hour after hour but then complain because we do not have time to personally study the Word and pray. Even TV is to be used in moderation.

Conformity to the world or worldliness is **really a mental attitude that excludes the person of Christ.** As Christians, we are to use the world but not abuse it. ". . . those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away." (1 Cor. 7:31). Any time that fortune, fame, power

or pleasure is given first place over Christ or even made equal with Christ, we have become worldly, for Christ is not at the center of our thoughts.

If we were to see a Christian go into some bar and drink and watch the dancing girls, we would say that he is worldly and this would be a right conclusion. But a person could be at home in a perfectly dark room and be thinking about the same kinds of wrong things and be just as worldly. Why? Because in both places, the person's mind is not occupied with Jesus Christ.

## ***CONFORMITY TO CHRIST 12:2b***

### **“but be transformed”**

The Christian is to be transformed, not reformed. Transformation is a supernatural process whereby the believer allows himself to be changed by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is an inward change that brings outward change of behavior. Transformation comes when one is dependent upon the Holy Spirit and surrendered to God's will.

When transformation takes place, we begin to look at people as individuals with real needs, not just instruments we can use. We begin to see that money and material things are no longer important as they once seemed to be. The big thing in life no longer becomes the matter of whether you can close this business deal and make so much money, but whether you will do it in a way that honors and glorifies God whether you make money or not. A sign of transformation is when a person becomes less self-centered and becomes more objective with his own life, not taking everything that is said so personally but is willing to evaluate it.

### **I. “by the renewing of your mind”**

Transformation comes as one has a radical renovation of the mind. The mind is the key to conformity to Jesus Christ. What we put in our minds is what we shall be! If we are thinking about money, pleasure, fame, sex or power all the time, we will certainly reap these things in the life. If we are thinking about Christ and relating Christ to all these things, then we will have a Christ-oriented mind and the blessing of God.

Our minds must be active for Christ. Evangelicals are often afraid to use their minds and many have actually closed their minds to divine revelation because they have been wrongly told that to use their minds will lead to liberalism. Consequently many evangelicals do not think and only operate on their emotions. Mental laziness is a mark of worldliness because we have stopped using our minds for God.

The world is struggling to win our minds so that we will become atheists, agnostics, humanists and liberals. If the world cannot get us to deny our faith, then it will get us to compromise it! The world tells us it is all right to cheat on income tax if no one finds out. It tells us the premarital and extramarital sex is not wrong and morality is what we want to make it. The world tells us the way to change government is through revolution and not legislation. It tells us that all religions are good for we are all going to heaven but traveling different roads. If we listen to the lures of the world long enough without relating them to Christ, we will soon fall captive to the devil's trap.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse found that at night he would often have dreams that were not glorifying to God. The sensual thoughts of his subconscious mind were finding release. So Dr. Barnhouse began to memorize scripture before he went to bed at night in order to put his mind upon Christ just before falling to sleep. He found that this did not completely cure his subconscious thought life at night but it certainly made a big improvement. Oh, that we could all have this same consciousness of sin with a desire to turn from it and glorify Christ.

### ***PROVING GOD'S WILL 12:2c***

***"Then you will be able to test and approve"***

***The word "prove" means to test with the idea of approval. The believer is to test God's will for approval. This is not a proof to others but a proof to the individual Christian. In doing God's will, we discover that it is good. We come to understand that doing God's will is not burdensome, but a blessing.***

The philosophy of the world is, "Show me and I will believe." But the Christian philosophy is, "Believe and I will show you." When the Christian in obedience takes the leap of faith to present his body and not conform to the world, then he will come to understand and love God's will.

***"what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."***

By presenting the body to God and repudiating the philosophy of the world, the Christian approves God's will as good, well pleasing and perfect. God's will becomes wholesome, satisfying and complete. Only when the Christian puts God to the test, will he find a deep, satisfying experience of being in the center of God's will.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Christian, do you want God's will? Then you must present your body to God for a living sacrifice and you must not be conformed to this world but have a mental attitude that is occupied with Christ.

A very young Christian woman in the Lord said to a dear old saint who had walked with the Lord for many years, "I would give the world to have your experience." The devoted Christian lady said to the young girl, "My dear, that's exactly what it cost me. I gave away the world for it!"