

The Christian And The World (Part Three)

The Converted and Unconverted Man

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In my last sermon in this series, we saw this world's Christians are not what they claim about themselves. We saw that the Bible showed that they were following the same general path of life in relation to God as is revealed in Genesis 3 in the story of Adam and Eve. The bottom line of that entire sermon is that despite having the intellect that allows them to extract much specific knowledge from the Bible, they simply do not believe God enough to translate that knowledge into action in their lives. They do not even obey God in areas that are clear basic simple matters of faith to you and me.

I illustrated that by showing their response to two commandments: the Fourth and the Sixth. I am sure that we could follow the same general line of reasoning on every one of them. With regard to the Fourth Commandment: despite the fact that the Bible and history show clearly that Saturday is the Sabbath, that Jesus kept it and taught those who were His closest disciples to keep it (and they indeed did keep it after His death and resurrection), and in spite of the fact that there is a clearly established biblical rule that we are to follow in Christ's steps and are—in addition to this—to allow Christ to live His life over again in us...all of this the world agrees with. They agree to these things that I have just stated. Yet, almost in a perverse way, they declare the Sabbath to be merely just ceremonial, to be done away with, and they keep Sunday in a nominal way; but at the same time they say that any day will do. I shudder to think of what would happen if they followed the same line of reasoning with the other commandments. But then after I wrote that in my notes, I got to thinking, perhaps with slight variations, they already do.

In regard to this Sixth Commandment: despite the fact that the commandment says, “You shall do NO murder”—the commandment itself does not allow any murder at all—men go to war at the command of other men and murder on a mass scale “in the national interest,” even though Acts 5:29 clearly says that a Christian is to obey God rather than men.

There is a reason for all this, and I would like you to turn to I Corinthians 2. Paul is talking about speaking spiritual things.

I Corinthians 2:13-14 Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Very briefly, those two verses say that the natural man, the unconverted man, the person who has not received of the spirit of God, either in terms of being led by it or regenerated by it...the natural man is not receptive to the word of God. He simply does not have the ability. And that is why it almost seems like there is a perverse streak within man. Indeed there is a perverse streak there. It is not that they really intended it to be there in many cases; it is just that somehow or another they cannot relate to the things that are so basically clear and simple to you and me.

Especially in relation to the Sixth Commandment, what is done in relation to it shows that their mind is weighted toward the world, and they will side with it, thinking that what they do is perfectly logical. To them it is logical. Keeping Christmas is logical to them. It is fun for them. It draws the family to them. It keeps business operating, and therefore it is good. They can come up with dozens of reasons why people keep Christmas, and to them it is perfectly logical.

To you and me it is illogical. It has nothing at all to do with the birth of Jesus Christ, but to them it is perfectly logical. See, the mind is simply weighted toward, and as Paul put it there in Romans 8, "The carnal mind sides with the world." It has a natural inclination in that direction. So it is understandable to us why they are the way they are. Indeed, that is the way we were until God moved to open up our minds and begin leading us by His spirit so that we began to see things in a different perspective than we did before.

Now as a result of this, or one fruit of it is that the world is in confusion, and that is evidenced by the constant division shown historically most clearly in

Protestantism. Thus in these last forty years or so, we have been witness to the Catholic church as well fracturing all over the world. In the Catholic Church, there is no longer the respect for one central figure or the doctrines they formerly held so dear that kept them headed in the same direction. We are almost seeing (in these last forty years) a microcosm of that last verse in the book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes." So we are seeing the breakup, the destruction (as Malachi Martin put it) and possibly even the death of the Catholic Church.

Now continuing in I Corinthians 3 on the same general subject. Remember, this is directed at an assembly of converted people.

I Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

Here is a very deeply converted man probably struggling with how to talk to these people who were supposed to be converted. Indeed they were converted, but he had to talk to them as though they were unconverted, as though they were carnal. So here was a converted people who were still under the domination of the spirit of this world, the spirit that is coming from Satan. So Paul says:

I Corinthians 3:2-3 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions.

Those three things that he named are evidence to Paul that these people were being motivated, driven, and therefore conducting their lives carnally. They had fallen back upon the old way of thinking, and of course the old way of thinking made them act the way that they did before they were converted, and so what was happening inside this Christian, truly Christian congregation, was division, envying, strife.

I Corinthians 3:4 For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?

Paul says that division is a sign of carnality, which is synonymous, really, with worldliness. It may have different specific usage in meaning, but actually they are synonymous for one another, and what Paul said here is true because Jesus said in John 17 that it was His prayer that we be one with the Father. That is His purpose—to bring us in oneness with Him. When that occurs—because there is no carnality in God—and we are one with Him, there will be no carnality and therefore no division.

There is another verse that I want to add to this, and it is back in I Corinthians 11. Paul's arguments and instruction continued from one problem to another. The fact that they were carnal was only an opening salvo, and division was the most evident fruit of that carnality.

I Corinthians 11:17-19 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

There must be heresies. This can be a statement of fact in the sense of, “There must be heresies, or you would not be having these problems.” That is evident. On the other hand, it is a statement of the certainty that they will arise. In other words, it is as though God willed that it occur. “There *must* be...” “There *has* to be heresies...” And then he gives the reason why God would allow this, permit it, or maybe even in a sense cause it directly—so that those who are approved will be evident, made manifest.

In other words, they will stand up for the truth and they will not resort to carnal behavior. They will stand steadfast, and they will stand out as a result of being steadfast to the truth. I take that to mean that God is going to allow these things to occur or even cause them to occur to produce a test that will prove who really is true to the truth and who is not.

A heretic most simply means an opinionated person. Now all of us are opinionated, and being opinionated is not necessarily bad. It is only bad

when our opinions are not from God. Rather than give in to God and submit to Him, we hold to the opinion, and that opinion in turn will produce the carnal result, which is division.

So, if someone calls you opinionated because you keep the Sabbath and believe that you should keep it very strongly...if they say you are opinionated because of that, well, you can take a measure of pride, the right kind of pride, because you are opinionated the way God wants you to be opinionated: opinionated to the point of being deeply convicted about it. Since you are in agreement with God, it is not wrong. But the way you use it might be wrong. But it is not wrong to hold opinions strongly that are the same as God's.

I think that there is, to me anyway, quite evidently an application of all of this today. That is that the calamity that the Church of God is in is the fruit of heresy. It is the fruit of carnality. It is the fruit of worldliness in the form of false doctrine and deficient character. The church on a worldwide scale is experiencing much the same thing as the people in Corinth experienced, and at the root of it is worldliness. We might say that that worldliness took a number of different avenues to evidence itself. In some it took the avenue of Laodiceanism where they were rich and increased with goods and felt that they were in need of nothing. But they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked spiritually—and proud of it.

On the other hand it can take the avenue of holding opinions that are different. They might have been very zealous in terms of, let us say, Bible study, but their Bible study always took them in the direction of opinions that were wrong, in opposition to God. In terms of a leader, let us say a minister, their worldliness might reveal itself in terms of false doctrines, false teachings, a bad example that he gave to the congregation. When you put the whole mix together, every bit of it is carnal, and it produced the expected result. It blew us apart. So now we find ourselves scattered all over the place. It is very interesting that God prophesied that this would occur in the church at the end time—that we would be, as we have termed it, Laodicean. And that He would spew us out of His mouth.

This problem with worldliness, I think, was most evident in the leadership, but there was enough of it within the whole Body for it to shatter in a

hundred different directions. When something like this occurs, it is the responsibility of each and every one of us individually to repent of his personal worldliness and get back to what we were converted to, in love and in doctrine, if we are ever going to be unified with God and with each other again. We cannot take the dodge. We cannot afford to take the dodge that simply because the leadership has the most obvious display of this worldliness, somehow or another we escaped it. If we do this, we are probably in the very condition that God means for us to repent of.

Let us take this sermon in a little bit different direction. The Bible clearly shows, and the world out there clearly shows, that the world is divided. Its variety of Christianity has produced a great deal of division, and this shows it is carnal. But the Bible also shows that they are not always going to be divided. They are going to be united for a short time with a central authority and with a solid core of doctrine underneath, at the behest of the beast and the false prophet. But even in this unity, it is only going to last for a short time, because their unity is really only in a common cause. There is no bond of love for the truth that is going to be holding them together for a short period of time.

Turn with me to the book of Daniel, in chapter 2.

Daniel 2:41 And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay.

You see, a bad mixture. They are unified together, but it is a bad mix.

Daniel 2:42-43 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken [weak, fragile]. And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another ["cleave," meaning "adhere" or "stick." The unity will not last.] even as iron is not mixed with clay.

With that in mind, let us go back to the book of Revelation and see an end time glimpse into this system which is coming. You will see a “unity” described.

Revelation 17:12-13 And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. [They shall receive power for a short time.] These have one mind [there is a unity there], and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

Revelation 17:15 And he said unto me, The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

We are looking, here, at something that shows every evidence of being a worldwide system unified for a very short period of time.

Revelation 17:16-17 And the ten horns which you saw upon the beast, these shall hate the whore [Uh oh! We are beginning to see cracks appear. The civil leaders hate the whore], and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. [There's not much love there. And here's the only reason they get together.] For God has put it in their heart to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Now their unity is carnal. It is the kind of unity you can have on an athletic team, a football team, a baseball team. They have a common goal. They want to win the championships, and so they give themselves over to winning of the championship. You see, it is carnal. But I know, if you follow sports at all, you read in the newspaper that this unity is very often, very frequently, a mixture of iron and miry clay. Out on the court or out on the football field, you might see the iron because they unify themselves for the heat of the game, but then after the game is over and they are practicing and so forth,

they bite one another's heads off, are angry with one another, and get in fights with one another. Just recently, Latrel Springwell, of the Golden State Warriors basketball team, tried to strangle his coach.

So, you see, the unity is based upon only the accomplishment of a physical goal. There is no love for truth there. The unity described in Revelation 17 is carnal, and each one giving for the purposes of accomplishing his own agenda. But they need to surface; the division still exists. It is only covered over for a brief period of time.

The Bible shows this unity is going to be produced in a spectacular and appealing fashion. Here comes the question to us: Do we have the faith to see through this worldly unity that is going to be put together in such spectacular, powerful, appealing action? Will we see that it is just carnal?"

Revelation 13:3-4 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered [stood in awe] of the beast. [You can see already that there is a great deal of admiration.] And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?

Now the word "wondered" could be better translated "marveled." The word "marveled" might be more appropriate to you and me today. "All the world marveled." Wow! You can see a great deal of admiration there. The admiration has so gripped the minds of these people that they worship. That means venerate. It means to give one's self over to. It means to side with.

"All the world . . ." Where are you in this mix? See, that is the question. When these things begin to occur, is it going to so captivate your mind that you are inclined to side with, on the basis of the things that the carnal mind is finding so captivating, and venerate the ones that are doing or leading this thing?

If our minds are yet carnal, as the Corinthians' were in the church, do you not think that there is going to be a very good chance that those carnal-minded Christians are going to be captivated by this? I think there is a pretty good

chance, and that is why it is here. It is a warning. If there was no chance that we could be captivated, I do not think God would even warn us about what is coming here.

In verse 3, the New King James says “All the world marveled...” and then they added another verse, “...and followed the beast,” because that is the implication of the two verses. When you worship something, you are following after it. You are plodding along behind it the leadership you worship. So they added a word, but that is what is implied. So, “All the world marveled and followed the beast.” Now how are you going to keep from worshipping the dragon who is the power behind the beast?

Let us go back to II Thessalonians 2:9, where Paul writes:

II Thessalonians 2:9-11 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. [This has the same time context as what we read in Revelation 13.] And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

The King James says “a lie.” The margin says that the definite article “the” is there and should read: “that they should believe *the* lie.” Now within the context, “the lie” is referring back to verse 4, because this is the subject: the man of sin, the son of perdition.

II Thessalonians 2:4 Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

That is *the* lie! He is not God. He is not to be worshipped, but those who do not love the truth are going to give themselves over to him. There is going to be such a strong appeal made to their carnality that they are going to side with the beast. They are going to accept the mark. They are going to worship his name. It is going to be carnally easy to follow the beast.

Now back to Revelation 13:8.

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

That is pretty clear. Unless a person's name is truly written there, they are going to side with the beast.

Revelation 13:14 And deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

So how are you going to keep from being deceived? Well, the answer to all those questions that I have asked hinges upon the issue that we are addressing in this series of sermons. It all has to do with worldliness. It has to do with carnality as contrasted with true spirituality. The world's Christians are going to be swept up into this for very simple to us reasons. First of all, they do not really believe God. That is so simple. They have a faith, but they do not trust God. They have a faith that will allow them, will permit them, to profess that they are of God, but they will not trust Him. Now let us look at Revelation 13 again and go back to verse 8.

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

So we have the identification of two groups of people: 1) Those who are going to worship the beast, and 2) those who will not. But right now, all He has revealed about those who will not, are those whose names written in the book. Now in verse 9 He tells us:

Revelation 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

Ah! Pay attention to this. It is going to identify who it is who will not listen to the beast.

Revelation 13:10 He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.

In other words, those who are worshipping the beast—God says, “Let them go.” Those who are serving the beast by even going to war in his behalf—
"let them go."

Revelation 13:10 Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Those whose names are written in the Book of Life are identified by God as those who have faith and patience. In other words, they believe God, and because they trust God, they have patience. The patience reveals the trust. The patience reveals that the faith is more than saying, “I believe in Jesus Christ.” So those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be persevering through whatever it is that the beast is going to do.

Those who are going to succumb to the machinations of the beast and the false prophet—they do have a faith, they will profess, but they will not trust. These people are clearly in opposition to God. If they did believe Him, they would be showing it by obeying His commandments and keeping the doctrines of the Bible. If they did that, it would put them in opposition to the beast, and they would resist his mark, as they believe what the Book says. These things are not difficult to figure out. Very simple principles.

Now because they do not believe and obey, they lack understanding. See, “A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.” Jesus said that if you are going to believe the doctrine, obey it (John 7:17). Because they do not believe and obey, they lack understanding, and therefore are confused. They keep coming around to the same things again; therefore they are of the world. Those who do not believe are opposed to God and their loyalties lie with the world. They side with the world, even though they talk about God. Now, let us really put a nail in this thing.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed [here they are identified] which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Is that not simple? That is all there is to the difference between the world and the church. It comes down to simple things. They grow more complex as they get into details regarding doctrines and commandment-keeping. But in order to make it very clear to you and me so that we can be encouraged about where we stand: We stand with God if we keep His commandments and we have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is, incidentally, the gospel. That was the witness that Jesus Christ made to the world. That is what He came to preach. He came to preach the message of what man's destiny is. And so those who keep the commandments of God have the faith to keep them because they believe. Their hopes are in the gospel of the Kingdom of God. They believe that, too. They shape their lives around it.

Now these others are going to shape their lives around the carnally appealing and attractive; a powerful persuasion; a carnal persuasion to go in this direction that everybody will be united in. Everybody will have the same doctrine, everybody will have the same god, and that god is going to be the beast. Their doctrines are going to be the doctrines of the false prophet whom the beast is using in order to get people behind him.

So, people in the world do not keep the commandments. They are confused about what to do with their lives. This world's Christians are not Christians at all, except in name. Remember how I started this. I am not saying this to run them down. As I said in that first sermon, there are very fine people in the world, people that you love to have as your neighbor, people that you would love to be converted. They are kind, they are generous, and they do a lot of good works in the world. But they just do not have it in relation to God because of something that God did, not because of something we did. God did something to us that He did not do to them, and that was God's choice. "It is not him who wills, but God who elects," as Paul put it. This makes us more responsible at this time to respond to God.

At the end, they are going to be briefly united in a false religion that may even carry the name Christian. I do not know, but I would imagine that it probably will carry the name Christian. Unfortunately, the Bible shows that it is in opposition to God, so please do not be lured into taking up with them religiously on the basis of surface evaluations, because it is a dead end for you for sure.

Turn with me to II Corinthians 4, because I am going to bend this sermon in another direction again. It is related, but more specifically pointed in another direction. I have to lay a little bit of groundwork here. What I have to do here is to begin to give more positive direction as to what we are to do with our lives so that we will be prepared for that time when the pressure is really going to be on us to use the carnality that remains within us to take up sides with the beast.

II Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The very fact that we believe God, trust Him, and keep His commandments puts us in opposition to the world. That opposition may not be in direct persecution where we are being painfully harmed. Sometimes it is, sometimes it is not. Most of the time it is not, but we still nonetheless are trying to row a boat upstream, because the whole world is going in a different direction from what we are going in. So all the time there is a measure of affliction that is upon us because of the things that we believe to the extent that we will put them into practice in our lives. But Paul calls it light. Certainly light compared to what Christ went through. Certainly light compared to what Paul went through. But it is probably going to get heavier as we go along here. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal [hang onto that word "eternal"] weight of glory.”

II Corinthians 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen [here is a major principle of those who live by faith], but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Now drop down to chapter 5 and verse 7. This is a concluding statement, an explanatory statement.

II Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Here, we are getting to the apex, the fulcrum point, of what makes us different from the world, and what will keep us from worldliness—what will protect us. “We walk by faith.”

In previous sermons, I have already searched out some of the specifics of what the Bible calls “the world.” The world has its origins in the activities of Adam and Eve and Satan in the Garden of Eden. They established the pattern on which all of mankind has followed and upon which the world has been built. Adam and Eve were prodded, persuaded, deceived, and tricked to disbelieve in the plain and clear word of God by a sensually-appealing, deceitful, living spirit.

Eve *saw* the tree... “We look not at the things which are seen.” ...that it was good for food and pleasant to the eyes. If she had been walking by faith, she might have looked at it, but she would not have seen it in the same way. It is obvious that she did see it that way (good), because her decision was weighted by the fact that she saw, and it looked pleasant. And with the help of Satan, then, they were moved to distrust God, and their disobedience quickly followed.

All the descendants of Adam and Eve have followed the same general pattern of conduct in their lives, in our lives. We have all done it. Romans 5: 12 shows that all have sinned. You might not have sinned in exactly the same way that Adam and Eve did, but the principle, the pattern, was the same. We have all followed it.

But despite the good intentions and the good conduct that is also part of us, the world and all its factors that go to make it up and make up any given culture on earth—such as religion, the political system, the economic system, the scientific system and technology, the healing arts—all that is dominated and marked by a mind of disbelief and antagonism toward God and His word. Always, in every situation, in every area of culture, there is that veneer overtop of seeing things carnally. “Seeing.” “There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

As I said a little bit earlier, we are getting to the apex, to the core, to the very fulcrum point of what makes us different from them. What makes us

different is we believe. We get to the place where we no longer trust what our eyes tell us, what our ears hear, what our mouths taste, or what we feel with our skin and so forth. The senses are things that are included with those things that are seen. They are included with those things that are temporal, and we have to evaluate everything on the basis of faith, rather than what the senses are telling us.

This involves the will in order to go in the right direction. Perhaps this is no more clearly stated than in Romans 8:7: “The carnal mind is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The carnal mind is at war with God, and that is why, carnally, religion turns out the way it does, science turns out the way it does, education turns out the way it does, and politics turns out the way it does...because the word of God (which is eternal, and what Jesus said is spirit) is looked upon by most people as being nice and encouraging, but you do not trust it when it really comes to living it. It is set aside for what men can do using the scientific method: that which can be weighed, measured, touched, felt, and so forth.

How can mankind, from our point of view, possibly build a truthful, stable, peaceful, and prosperous culture with minds that produce the cultures that are at war against God? When you look at it that way, you can understand why the world is in the condition it is in. Maybe it can help you understand what God is accomplishing through the church in preparing the foundation for a world that is not going to be operated that way. In order for it not to be operated that way, there has to be a solid core of sons of God who are never going to turn away from the eternal truth of God. They are going to be the leadership.

Revelation 12:17, as far as I am concerned, really puts a nail in it. They are those that Satan makes war against. The enemy, as far as Satan is concerned, is identified as those that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, and you see at the base of that is a people that believe and therefore trust in God.

That is one Biblical way of looking at this subject, but there is still yet another way. I am going to ask a question again. This present world . . . What is it? I found an interesting word in a commentary. The commentator said the world is “protean.” I see blank stares out there. I did not know what

it meant either, so I had to look it up. It is interesting. Protean means “readily assuming various forms; changeable.”

That is very interesting because the Bible says about God: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He never changes. Malachi 3:6 says, “I am God. I change NOT. Therefore you sons of God are not consumed.” But the world is a changeling, as we would say in fantasy. It can assume various forms and shapes. All of these things have something in common. They will appeal to the spirit in man. They will appeal to the spirit in you, and they will appeal to you most frequently through your senses: your eyes, ears, nose, mouth, taste.

This man went on to say that the world appeals to the spirit in man in areas of agreement or weakness (in other words, where the person agrees with the world, the person is carnal in this area) in each individual from a wide variety of angles; but each one on its own sufficiently strong and anti-God to pull the person away from God's purpose, certainly stunt their growth, and possibly even lose their salvation.

I will give you a simple explanation. There are some of you out there that alcohol does not bother at all. You can take it or leave it. You can have a little bit of it with your meal, and it does not bother you. You do not care one bit at all about imbibing in it to the point of getting drunk or being addicted to it. You can take it or leave it. If you did not have it the rest of your life, you do not care. You like it, you enjoy it, but that is as far as it goes.

But there are other people who have such a mind toward alcohol that they cannot walk past a saloon without turning to the right or left to go into it. You understand what I mean. They are addicted to it, and the world appeals to them through that weakness in their psyche—in their makeup, in their character, in their perspective, in the way they look at things.

Maybe that is an overly simplified way of stating it, but not everybody is tempted by the world in exactly the same way, and that is what this man was getting at. And so in general terms the world (he went on to say) is the aggregate. That means the total, or the entirety, or the mass of things seen and temporal. He is not connecting it to these verses.

To some, the appeal of the world is material advantage, so men will give themselves over to their career to such an extent that it occupies twelve, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen hours a day of their time, and the family goes to pot. But they have got to make money. It is that kind of a thing. To others the appeal might be to fame or to notoriety. The appeal might be for academic knowledge, scientific knowledge, or it might be the fads of superficial entertainment.

All these things are (as Paul stated) things seen. By that he means the realm or the world that is material and transient. The problem with this is that those things are realities. You cannot say that they are fantasies. We cannot say that they do not exist. They are there. Material things are realities, and these appeals are realities. And that is not to say that these things are inherently evil in themselves, but rather because we apportion them more time and energy than they are worth, they detour us from the pursuit of things of eternal value.

In order for a person to pursue the things of eternal value, the person has to have a pretty good handle on himself, to discipline himself, to turn away from those things and give his life over to things that are not seen. The appeal of the world is strong, persistent, and it is not going to go away anytime soon. Its appeal is continually upon us...so continually that we are necessarily in connection with it. It is our duty to be occupied with it, because we have to work, do we not?

To a certain measure, we have to participate in the things that are being done in the world, and all the while, we are doing that which we are willingly giving ourselves over to. It is our duty to do it. God tells us whatever we do...to do it with all our might, does He not? He expects that we work. "Go to the ant, you sluggard." He does not want His children to be lazy, and so we expend our time and energy out there, we might say, "in the world," mixing it up with the world, and so it is there. It is a present reality all the time—twenty-four hours a day. It is there. It takes an awful lot to push it aside. Here it is. It is like a big octopus out there, reaching out constantly with eight legs to try to drag us in until, like osmosis, we become absorbed by it. So it is our duty to be occupied with it, and it can even be considered a form of faithless cowardice to shirk the responsibility of fighting it because of the peril that comes with it.

We have to go about our business within it, and the trick, brethren, is to keep our heart on the Kingdom of God while our hands are busy with the secular and material things of this life. Now we know that God does not enjoin on us any kind of a monastic asceticism, and so if we are aware of the evil influence of this world, we find ourselves walking a razor's edge. It is our duty to God to be busily occupied in the world, but it is a sin to love it. So God tells us to do whatever we do with all of our might, and so there is a very real difficulty, but God is also very aware in balancing diligence in normal and necessary material and secular concerns, and yet not bowing down before them.

The first thing that we need to know is that we must be constantly aware that there is a Trojan horse right inside of us. There is an enemy within. That enemy is the spirit of this world. It is there. That Trojan horse is ready and willing to swing open the gates in order that we might surrender to the world. And that enemy appeals to our senses. It appeals to our desires, the desires of the flesh and of the mind, of the pride of life, and that is why John said what he did there in I John 2:15-17.

We have the ability to fight it. We have the ability to walk the razor's edge, and that is why Paul wrote what he did here briefly in Romans 5:5, where he said, "And hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." Unless there is a strong enough desire or impulse to please God that is dominant in our minds, there is a very good chance we will flop to the wrong side of the razor's edge more often than not.

This makes sense in light of the letter to the Ephesian church. Jesus said to go back to your first love. He meant not just the exercising of the will, but He also meant the affectionate regard for God. Do not love the world. Do not have an affectionate regard for it. And so we find ourselves on this razor's edge between the two of them; and as Paul put it in Galatians 5, there are two spirits within us, and they are at war with one another. But we have to exercise the dominion by exercising our love for God, to make sure we always flop on the right side of the razor.

See what God is doing? He has put us into a position where we are right on top of the razor's edge, and He is forcing us to make choices. I am sure that one of the reasons for this scattering was to make the razor's edge sharper than it ever was before, so that we would see the clear delineation between the two, and we would be motivated to choose life. Hopefully that is the way we are going to go.

This situation in the church has given us a clear identification of the carnality that was within the church. It should have given us a clear identification of the carnality that was within us. If we really want the things of God, we are going to walk by faith and not by sight, and we are going to choose Him regardless of the way things look through our eyes. Always remember that that appeal is going to be made to the spirit that is within you and me, and it is going to appeal to us.

I have noticed in my experience in the ministry that it is always there, and more frequently than not the appeal is made to a weak area, but every once in a while the appeal will come in the area that we thought we were strong in, and then we really have a battle on our hands, because our view of ourselves becomes severely damaged. We can be overwhelmed with grief and guilt with what we see within ourselves.

Deuteronomy 30:16-18 In that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land whither you go to possess it. But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away [Notice these words. Here they are, way back in the Old Testament.], and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land whither you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.

What is going to happen to the world? John says, "It is passing away." It is already in progress.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: That you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey his voice [See how the two go together?], and that you may cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

We will conclude here, but remember this: You and I are walking on a razor's edge. On the one side is God and the Kingdom of God—invisible, eternal. On the other side is the other reality—the world—easily seen, appealing to the senses, but temporal. But boy! It is appealing.

And so the next time when we go on, we will continue this, and we are going to go into Matthew 6 where Jesus addressed this very issue. We cannot get better advice than what the Boss gave us. In Matthew the 6th chapter we will go into the “heart” considerably, because that is where the problem lies—in the heart.