

Keep Unspotted from the World

James 1:27b

12/19/1999

The book of James, chapter 1. The book of James, the first chapter. In our consecutive exposition of the book of James at our evening services together, we have come now to the conclusion of chapter 1. To pick up the context of the passage we'll be studying together this evening, we want to begin reading at verse 18 and read down through verse 27. James, chapter 1, verses 18 through 27. Speaking of the Father of lights, who gives us good gifts and with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, in verse 18 it says of God:

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Now in our studies together in the book of James, we have been examining the marks of *true* religion in the life of those who profess to be Christians. James tells us that a *true* Christian is one who is not only begotten *through* the word of God, but who also carefully *listens* to that word and who personally *implements* that word in his motives, attitudes, speech, and conduct.

James has drawn our attention to three areas of behavior that mark the true Christian, in verses 26 and 27. He tells us, a *true* Christian is one who controls his *speech*, who bridles his *tongue* by restraining corrupt communication, while expressing communication that is good to the use of edifying. Furthermore, he tells us in verse 27 that a *true* Christian is one who shows compassion on the needy by looking for what they can do to relieve their afflictions. The same kind of care that is to be extended to the widow and the fatherless is to be extended to *all* those who are in similar conditions of affliction.

Now we come now today to the third area of behavior that marks out a true Christian, and that is, is that he separates himself from the sins of the world. Notice if you will, verse 27: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their

affliction, *and* to keep himself *unspotted from the world.*” And so this third indication of a true believer *tells* us that holiness of life, no less than the control of the tongue and kindness towards others, is the mark of the true *Christian*.

Hebrews 12, and verse 14, says, “Follow peace with all men, *and holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord.” And so those who are not holy will not see the Lord in Heaven, but rather they will be separated from the Lord throughout all eternity. And so holiness is an *indispensable* necessity and attendant to true saving faith. Now people ask the question, What is “holiness”? Well holiness is simply a pattern of life in which one *separates* himself from the practice of *sin*. To be holy means to be *separate*. And to be holy in the Christian sense means to be separate *from* the practice of sin. And it is of course, as I said, an indispensable mark of a true believer. One who has true religion, one who is truly saved, is one who keeps himself unspotted from the world.

In Matthew 1, and verse 21, we are told that Jesus came to save us *from our sins*. He did not come to save us *in* our sins, and if we are not departing *from* sin in our practice, then we have no reason to believe that we have been saved from its *penalty* or from its *power*. On the other hand, one who *does* live a life of separation from sin has a sound basis for the assurance of salvation.

So having seen in our previous studies, then, that a true Christian is one who controls his tongue and has compassion on the afflicted, we want to consider together in the third place, that *true* believers are those who *separate* from the sins of the world.

Now in order to deal with this final principle at the end of verse 27, and to properly understand it, we must ask ourselves three questions. If we are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, we must ask ourselves, first of all, What is the *world*? What does that term mean? And then we must ask ourselves, What are the *sins* of the world? And then thirdly, What does it mean to separate from those sins, or to be *unspotted* from them?

So in the first place then this evening, let us consider together, What is the world as it is spoken of in our passage? What is the world as it is spoken of in our passage? Now the word “world” is used in several different ways with several different meanings in Scripture. And we must consider the context if we are going to properly identify what is meant when the word “world” is used.

Let’s consider for a couple of moments the various meanings together. The word “world” is sometimes used of the earth, the planet upon which we stand. For example, in Ephesians 1 and verse 4, it says, “According as he [God] hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him.” So here the word “world” is clearly used of the creation of the physical orb upon which we reside.

Sometimes the word “world” can not only mean the planet upon which we stand, but the word “world” can also be used of all men without exception. Sometimes it refers to all men without exception, that is, every man, woman, and child that has ever lived upon the face of the earth. In Romans 3, and verse 19, it says, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the [authority of that] law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the

world may become guilty before God.” And so in this sense, all the world refers to every man, woman, and child that has ever lived upon the face of the earth. They are *all* guilty before God because they have all violated the law of God.

Sometimes the word “world” is used of the *Gentiles*, as opposed to the *Jews*. For example, in Romans, chapter 11, verses 11 through 12, Paul says, “I say then, Have they [Israel] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them,” that is, the fall of the Israel of the Jews, “be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” So in Romans, chapter 11 and verse 12, the “world” and the “Gentiles” are equated with one another in parallel statements in contrast *with* the Jews, who are called in this passage, “them.” So if the fall of “them,” that is, the Jews, “be the riches of the world,” clearly all those who are not Jews, “and the diminishing of them,” the Jews, “be the riches of the world [Gentiles], how much more [then] their fullness?” So without getting into the meaning of the passage, it is clear here that the word “world” is used of the Gentiles, as opposed to the Jews.

Fourthly, the word “world” is sometimes used of *believers*, as opposed to unbelievers. For example, in John, chapter 1, and verse 29, it says, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world*.” Now whose sins has Jesus taken *away*? Has He taken away the sins of unbelievers? He has not. Their sins still cling to them and they are going to be damned in hell forever *because* of them. The only people’s sins that Jesus has *ever* taken away are the sins of those who are *saved*, those who are believers. And the sins of unbelievers are *not* taken away from them, clearly, because they are being *punished* for them in hell.

So here is a clear example of where the “world” is a reference to *believers*, as opposed to unbelievers. Jesus does not just make their sins *takeawayable*, in terms of mere potential. He actually takes them away. And those whose sins He actually takes away are those who are designated here as “the world.” And clearly, people who are in hell have not had their sins taken away. Otherwise they wouldn’t be there.

In John 6, and verse 33, it says, “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” So who is it that has *life*? It is those who are *saved*. Those who are saved are here called, or designated by the term “world.” And so Jesus does not just make life *givable*, but He actually *gives life* to who? Well, to believers. Unbelievers don’t have eternal life. *Believers* have life given to them by Christ. And here, that body of people who have life *given* to them by Christ are called “the world.”

In John, chapter 12, and verse 19, after the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, sitting on the back of the donkey, a great crowd was following Him and worshiping Him, and praising Him, and in John 12:19, “The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the *world* is gone after him.” And here, once again, the “world” is designated as those who are loyal to Christ, believing in Christ, and *following* Christ, in distinction to those Pharisees who didn’t include them in that group called the “world,” who were not

following Him. So here, once again, clearly the “world” is those who are believers, as opposed to the unbelievers, who identified themselves as not being part of the “world” who followed Jesus.

Finally, in Second Corinthians 5, and verse 19, it says, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” So here is an example where the “world” is that body of people who have been *reconciled* to God, and who do not have their trespasses, or their sins, imputed or placed to their account. So clearly, the “world” here has to be that body of believers, those who are saved people, those who are of the category who do not have their sins imputed to them. So in these four very clear passages, the word “world” is used of exclusively believers, in opposition to those who are unbelievers.

Fifthly, the word “world” is not only used of the planet Earth; it is not only used of all men without exception; it is not only used of the Gentiles, as opposed to the Jews; it is not only used of believers, as opposed to unbelievers; the word “world” is used of *unbelievers*, as opposed to *believers*. It is used of *unbelievers* as opposed to believers. Now this is the opposite of what I just said. Point number four was the word “world” is used of believers, as opposed to unbelievers. Point number five is the word “world” is used of *unbelievers* as opposed to *believers*.

For example, John 15, verses 18 through 19. It says, Jesus speaking here to His disciples, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Now here, clearly, the word “world” is referring to those who hate Christ. No believer hates Christ. So here, the word “world” is clearly not referring to *believers*. It’s referring, in fact, to *unbelievers*, to those who hate Christ.

In John, chapter 17, and in verse 9, Jesus in His high-priestly prayer says, with reference to His disciples, He says, “I pray for *them*: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” And so here the “world” is those who have *not* been given to Christ; they are those who are *not* God’s; and they are those for whom Christ does *not* pray. He says, I do not pray for the world. I pray for those you have given me out of the world. Those are the people I’m praying for. And so clearly, Jesus used the “world” in *this* context to refer to all of those who were outside of the orb of those whom God had given to Him, and those for whom He was praying.

Finally, in First John 5:19, John says—First John 5:19—“And we know that *we* are of God, and the whole *world* lieth in wickedness.” And there the word “world” is used for those who are in wickedness, in contrast with those who are of God, which are *not* part of “the world,” as it’s used in this text.

The point is, is that the word “world” can be used in a wide variety of ways. Now we do the same thing in the English language, and we don’t think anything of it. I’ve used this illustration before. I’ll use it again. Think of our word “run”—r-u-n. Think of the many different ways in which we use that word. You can run in a footrace. You can run for political office. Your nose runs. Women’s nylons run. And there are many other ways in which the word “run” can be

used. And from the context, we instantly know—Oh, that’s what it means in that context. And we must do the same thing with the word “world.” We must look at the context and say, What does the context tell us the meaning of the word “world” is in *this* particular situation?

Now coming back to our passage in James—One who practices *true* religion is one who keeps himself unspotted from “the world”—which one of these definitions fits? Are we to keep ourselves unspotted from the physical dirt that is out there? Well, those of you who are children, perhaps your mother from time to time says, Now you keep unspotted from the world. Don’t get dirt on your clothes! But as a general rule, we don’t say that and we don’t use it in that way. And James clearly is not saying, Don’t get yourself dirty when you go out.

Does the definition that the “world” refers to all men without exception—does that fit? Well, this would require avoiding any contact or influence from even *good* men. It would lead to monasticism. If it refers to all men without exception, then what that means is that we better go crawl in a cave and just be all by ourself all of the time. Can’t possibly mean that.

Does the definition of Gentiles as opposed to Jews, does that fit? Is he saying, You stay unspotted from those Gentiles? No, the Gospel is not racist. The Scriptures clearly tell us in Galatians 3, and in verse 28, that in the Gospel there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female. You’re all one in Christ Jesus. So he’s not saying, Keep yourself unspotted from the Gentiles. He’s not saying that, because Gentiles are as welcome among the people of God and the church of God as *Jews* are.

Is he saying, Keep yourself unspotted from *believers*? Well of course he’s not telling us to do that. We are *commanded* to be with believers and follow the example of believers. Philippians 3, and verse 17 says, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” So he’s not saying, Stay unspotted from *believers*, as opposed to unbelievers.

Obviously, the word “world” is congruent with definition number 5. It is used of *unbelievers* as opposed to believers. He is saying that we are to keep ourselves *unspotted from unbelievers*. That is the meaning of the word “world” in this context. It is the *unsaved* who are *ungodly* in their attitudes, motives, speech, and conduct that are *defiling* and *contaminating* in their *influence*.

And so the “world” as it is viewed in this passage is the collective attitudes, motives, speech, and conduct of those who are in rebellion against God. These collective attitudes, motives, speech, and conduct result in a set of values, a worldview and a purpose of life that are all directed towards the destruction of *godliness*. And it is precisely this pattern of rebellion against God and the behavior that it produces that we must separate ourselves from so that we do not adopt it or become defiled by participation *in* it.

Now this does not mean that we are to therefore have zero contact with the unsaved. If that were the case, we would have to *leave* the world. In First Corinthians 5, verses 9 through 10, Paul

says, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.”

He’s saying, I’m not telling you to have zero contact with sinful people. Because if that were the case, we would have to literally leave the world, because we come into contact with sinful people *constantly*. This does not mean that we are to have zero contact with such people, for if this were the case, we would have to leave the world. If this were the case, we would cease to have any effective *witness* to the world. In Mark 16, and verse 15, we are told to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” So, obviously, we can’t have *nothing* to do with unsaved people. We ought to preach the Gospel to them.

Furthermore, if we were to have zero contact with unsaved people, not only would we have to leave the world and cease to have any effective witness, we would be living contrary to the example of our own dear Savior, of whom it is said in Luke 7, and verse 34, He was the *friend* of publicans and sinners.

So it is clear, then, that we must have contact with the world of unsaved people. But we must *also* ensure that we are not *defiled* by that contact by allowing them to influence our attitudes, motives, speech, or conduct.

So this, then, is what the meaning of the word “world” is in this passage. It is a reference to this attitude and spirit of rebellion against God and the behavior it produces that we must separate ourselves from so that we do not adopt it or become defiled by participation in it.

And that brings us then to our second point this evening. Having seen what the meaning of the word “world” is here, that it refers to the collective attitudes, motives, speech, and conduct of those who are in rebellion against God, in the second place, we want to ask the question, What, then, are the sins of the world that we are to keep ourselves unspotted from? How might we avoid worldliness?

Of course, the broad answer to this question is that we are to keep ourselves undefiled by *anything* that is contrary to the word of God. But more specifically, John tells us in First John 2, verses 15 through 17, how these temptations and defilements of the world come to us, and how we may combat them, and what form they take.

So turn in your Bibles, please, to First John 2, verses 15 through 17. First John chapter 2, verses 15 through 17. Now rather than list every single possible sin that the world could possibly commit and that worldliness would consist of, what he does is he identifies the nature of worldliness as to its conduct and behavior in principle, and thus covers every individual situation. First John chapter 2, and verse 15. He says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are *in* the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Now notice, if you will, verse 15. He says, “Love not the world.” And what is he speaking of here? He’s speaking of that whole realm that is the sum of the attitudes, motives, speech, and

conduct of those who are in rebellion against God. It is this which we must not love. We must not love the collective attitudes, motives, speech, and conduct of those who are in rebellion against God. We must not love that.

Then he goes on to say, not only are we to not love the world, but he goes on to say we are also not to love the *things* that are *in* the world. Now people immediately jump to the conclusion that this is a reference to material items. I want to say, this is *not* a reference to material *items*. Many people are led by this verse to think of the world as being sinful people in their lifestyles, while the things *in* the world as being material objects. And while we certainly are not to love or idolize material objects, material objects are not even *remotely* in view in this passage. Because the things that are in the world—you say, Well then what are those?—well the very next verse tells us what they are, verse 16.

It says, “For all that is in the world”—now it doesn’t say, automobiles, houses, lands, or money, as identifying those things that are in the world. No, it doesn’t mention them at all. When he says, “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,” he then tells us in the very next verse what those things *in* the world *are* that he’s referring to. He says, “For all...”—notice the parallel of the phrases. Do not love the things that are in the world, verse 15. Verse 16, “For all that is in the world,” and now he identifies what it is. He says it consists of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” These things are not of the Father, but of the world.

So the things that are *in* the world are these three items that he is referring to here in verse 16. And these three things: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are those things which are in the world which are the operating principles of worldliness. Write that down. These three things are the operating principles of worldliness. Do you want to know what a worldly person is? A worldly person is not one who has a lot of material possessions. You can’t look at someone and say, He’s got *all* these worldly possessions and all these riches, therefore, he’s worldly. Nor can you look at someone who is poor, who doesn’t have *any* material possessions, and say, He’s godly.

The amount of material possessions you have or don’t have has nothing to do with worldliness or the lack thereof. What has to do with worldliness or the lack thereof is, Are you functioning according to the operating *principles* of the world—the unsaved mass of humanity in their rebellion against God. And what are the operating principles of that unsaved mass of humanity in rebellion against God? It is the lust of the flesh, it is the lust of the eyes, and it is the pride of life. And so he is telling us in verse 16 about these three motivating forces by which the world functions and which are behind all that it does, and he calls them the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

So to summarize, then, when he says “Love not the world,” the world is the collective attitudes, motives, speech, and conduct of those who are in rebellion against God. And then when he goes on to say, and love not the things that are *in* the world. These are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, the three of which make up the motivating principles and the driving force behind what constitutes worldliness, and behind that which the world *is* and the world *does*.

Now the point is this: If you can avoid the motivating principles and the driving force behind worldliness, you can avoid worldliness *itself*. If you can avoid the motivating principles and the driving force behind worldliness, you can avoid worldliness *itself*. You can keep unspotted from the *world*. After all, what is it that is the motivating principle and driving force behind the attitudes, the speech, the conduct, and the worldview of those who are in rebellion against God? What is the motivating principle? Is it not the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life? Are not those three motivating principles that which *drives* those who are in rebellion against God? Are not those three things the operative principle by which they function?

Listen, it is precisely the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life that was the cause of the Fall of Adam and Eve. In Genesis, chapter 3, and verse 6, after Satan had extended his temptation, it says of Eve, “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for *food*”—there’s the lust of the flesh. It was good for food. It would please my flesh. It would *taste* good. “[A]nd that it was pleasant to the eyes”—There’s the lust of the eyes. It *looked* good. “[A]nd a tree to be desired to make one wise”—there’s the pride of life. Aren’t I something? I’m wise. “[S]he took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” And Genesis 3 and verse 6 tells us, in the very *beginning* of worldliness the operating principle behind it was the lust of the flesh—it pleased my tongue; the lust of the eyes—it pleased my sense of aesthetic beauty; and the pride of life—this will make me into somebody really smart.

And so the fact that this fruit was good for food appealed to the lust of the flesh. The fact that it was pleasant to the eyes appealed to the lust of they eye. The fact that it was a tree desired to make one wise appealed to the pride of life. Now then, is there anything wrong with wanting goodtasting food? Is there anything wrong with enjoying beautiful and pleasant *things*? Is there anything wrong with wanting to be *wise*? The answer is, absolutely not. In fact, we are encouraged and commanded by God to *seek* these things. But what *was* wrong was the seeking of them outside the *method* God had prescribed for *obtaining* them. The lust of the flesh, you see, involves the desire to satisfy legitimate physical needs, but *outside* of the will of God.

An illustration would be, do you have a legitimate physical need to eat? I mean, is hunger a legitimate physical need? Sure it is. Is there anything *sinful* about being hungry? Absolutely there is not. Is there anything wrong with wanting food that is good? No. But is there something wrong with *stealing* it so you might have it? Sure. And so, you see, the problem is not that you have this legitimate need for food. The lust of the flesh involves meeting that legitimate need in an *illegitimate* way and through *illegitimate* avenues.

The lust of the eyes involved the desire to satisfy legitimate aesthetic needs outside of the will of God. We have need to enjoy beauty. God has made the world beautiful. He has made people beautiful. He has given us art that is beautiful. And there is nothing wrong with having aesthetic desires for beauty. But when we attempt to meet those aesthetic needs, the lust of the eye, if you will, the desire of the eye to look upon—I mean, I’d rather look at something nicelooking than something ugly, wouldn’t you? I mean, is it legitimate that we like beautiful things? Certainly it

is. You prefer a beautiful landscape to a bombedout crater. Why? One looks nicer than the other, does it not?

And so an example of this would be covetousness of another person's possessions, which are visually attractive to us. We see someone's nice, beautiful, shiny red Corvette. Now is there anything wrong with enjoying a nicelooking car? I mean, why do they make it the way they make it instead of just a square box? Because the way they make it *looks* nicer, doesn't it? And it appeals to us. It appeals to all of us. And that's fine. But you see, when I look at that thing and I say, That is beautiful; I really appreciate that beauty, there's nothing wrong with that. But there is something wrong with me then having a covetous attitude towards it and wanting to *have* it and deny that person it, because he's got it and I don't, and I'm jealous and *envious*.

And so the lust of the flesh involves the desire to satisfy legitimate physical needs outside of the will of God. The lust of the eyes involves a desire to satisfy legitimate *aesthetic* needs outside of the will of God. The pride of life involves the desire to satisfy legitimate *significance* needs outside of the will of God. Now what are people doing when they are being proud? Well the answer is, is they are puffing themselves up; they're exalting themselves; they're trying to make themselves significant to themselves and to others.

Now do we need significance? Has God made us to feel that there must be something about us and about our lives that is *valuable* and *meaningful*? Absolutely. But when we strive to meet the need to feel significant by feeding that need through a *sinful* way, we are engaging in the pride of life—for example, bragging about one's accomplishment in order to exalt oneself in the eyes of others.

Suppose you're in a particular field of endeavor, whatever your occupation is. You work really hard in it to be the best at it. And there's nothing wrong with wanting to be the best at what you're doing, and *striving* hard to rise to the pinnacle of your profession, whatever it may be. It's something that gives you a sense of fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of worth. And so to work hard and to produce and to strive in order to be someone of significance and value is perfectly legitimate. God put that within us. But when we strive to achieve those things through *ungodly* means, by puffing ourselves up, and by bragging, and by putting other people down so we can seem more important, and by ultimately putting ourselves in competition with God *Himself*, that is the sin of the pride of life. And so the pride of life involves the desire to satisfy legitimate significance needs outside of the will of God.

Now it is indisputable that we have true physical, aesthetic, and significance needs. Man cannot live without bread, without beauty, or without meaning. He has to have those things. God has put the desire for those things within man. And man has every right to pursue those things. Indeed, he is *commanded* to pursue those things, but he is to do so *within* the will of God, and with the *methods* that God has prescribed.

You see, man cannot live without bread, without beauty, or without meaning; but the world pursues all of these things in a way that is *contrary* to the word of God, and *therein* lies the problem. That is what constitutes worldliness. Worldliness is the pursuing of *legitimate* human

needs in an *illegitimate* fashion. Listen. The opposite of worldliness is not asceticism—the denial of legitimate human needs. It is not ugliness—the denial of beauty. And it is not insignificance—the denial of purpose and value in life.

You see, this has been the fallacy of much of evangelical fundamentalism. If worldliness is seeking the meeting of our physical, aesthetic, and significant needs *outside* of the will of God, then the opposite of worldliness is to meet our physical, aesthetic, and significant needs *within* the will of God. It is *not* denying those needs, or labeling those needs as evil or *corrupt*.

You see, the labeling of legitimate human physical needs, the labeling of legitimate human aesthetic needs, the labeling of legitimate human significant needs as being *evil* and being *corrupt*, is what has led us to such aberrations as vows of poverty, celibacy, ugliness of clothing and appearance, hatred and fear of the human body and form, and a lack of leadership in the artistic, educational, social, and political arena on the part of professing Christians.

You see, we have needs and the unsaved have needs. They meet them in illegitimate ways. We meet them in legitimate ways. And worldliness is meeting legitimate human needs in an illegitimate way; and the opposite of worldliness is meeting legitimate human needs in a legitimate way. The opposite of worldliness is not denying human needs.

Therefore, the sins of the world that we are to keep ourselves unspotted from are the meeting of legitimate needs, be they physical, aesthetic, or significant needs, in a way that is contrary to God's will. It is *not* to avoid physical pleasures. It is not to avoid aesthetic beauty. It is not to avoid the expression of our talents, gifts, or abilities in the largest possible sphere. To avoid worldliness is *not* to brand all that is material, beautiful, or fulfilling as somehow being *evil*. Because when we do that, when we deny the material, the beautiful, or the fulfilling—we say that those things are evil, those things are worldly—then we are denying and disdain and repudiating the good gifts that God has given to us *richly* to enjoy, and to *insult* the Giver by labeling His gifts as evil.

Therefore, as Christians, when we are at war with the world, we are not at war with the material; we are not at war with the beautiful; we are not at war with the fulfilling. We are only at war with the sinful means that ungodly men use to *obtain* them. That's the only thing we're at war with. And that's why Christians can have an abundance of the material, and abundance of the beautiful, and an abundance of the fulfilling—and be completely godly, because they got all those things in the way in which God prescribed for them to have. And they can give *glory* to God for those things as His gifts in meeting their own legitimate human needs that God Himself placed within them, which brings me to my third and final point.

Having seen what *is* the world as it is spoken of in our passage; having seen what are the *sins* of the world that we are to keep ourselves unspotted from; in the third and final place, we want to ask the question, What does it mean, then, to separate from those sins? What does it mean to separate from those sins? Well very simply, it means a conscious repudiation of any and every

ungodly method to meet legitimate human needs. It means the conscious repudiation of any and every ungodly method to meet legitimate human needs.

To be unspotted from the world does not mean to get poor, it does not mean to get ugly, and it does not mean to get insignificant. That's *not* what it means to be unspotted from the world. To be unspotted from the world means to *pursue* the material; it means to *pursue* the beautiful; it means to *pursue* the significant without the defilement of any sinful methods or attitudes or motives in the obtaining of them.

God's word contains clear direction as to how we are to meet our legitimate needs. And we are to *look* in His word and derive from His word those means and methods for meeting those legitimate needs and *pursue* them. That's how we keep ourselves unspotted from the *world*. We must not look to those around us for our guidance in the methods and motives for obtaining the meeting of our legitimate human needs, but rather we must look to God's word. We must ask, Are my methods and my motives for meeting my legitimate human needs derived from the common cultural consensus around me, or are they in clear opposition to it, and consciously striving to contradict it because we are following the dictates of God's word.

So if we can avoid the lust of the flesh—that is, the desire to meet physical needs *outside* of the will of God; if we can avoid the lust of the eyes—that is, the desire to meet aesthetic needs outside of the will of God; if we can avoid the pride of life—the desire to meet significant needs outside of the will of God, then we *will* avoid being spotted by the world. So departure from worldliness does not mean departure from the world—the material, the beautiful, or the fulfilling. It simply means departure from ungodly methods of obtaining the material, the beautiful, and the fulfilling.

Let us pray. Father, you created the world and all things in it, and you said, It is *very* good. Father, we have never been at war with the world, as it came from your hand, or the human needs that were built into us. But Father, we are at war with the sinful perversions and corruptions of those things. Thank you, Father, that you have provided a legitimate means to meet every single human need that you put within us—the need we have for food and for sexual fulfillment—you have provided a legitimate means to *meet* those needs. The needs we have for beauty—you have provided us legitimate needs to have those things, legitimate ways to have them. And the need we have for significance to *do* something that is fulfilling and that is *valuable*—you have provided us with legitimate ways to meet those needs, too.

Father, help us not to deny our needs, but help us to *search out* the Godgiven way for *meeting* them, and not take the shortcut of sin in an effort to meet our needs, the cheap way. But help us to meet our needs the godly way by pursuing those paths and behaviors that you have given for their fulfillment. Lord, thank you that you did not give us needs and then give us *no* way to have them met. You have always provided for the needs of your children, and given them avenues to fulfill them that are not only are not sinful, but are blessed in and of themselves. Help us, then, to search those out and to repudiate the methods of the world and thereby keep ourselves unspotted from it. In Jesus' Name, amen.