

**EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)**

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**Sunday Worship 10:45 AM**

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**Worldliness**

As we face a New Year many of us wonder about what it has to offer. What challenges will it present? We can't know these things but we can decide what we are going to try to accomplish.

As believers we want to give ourselves to that which pleases our Lord and that which is lasting. God, speaking to us through the apostle John gives us some valuable guidance with regard to this; I John 2:15-17.

"Do not love the world," John writes. Love of the world or worldliness is a constant danger for Christians. The influence and effectiveness of many believers has been diluted or destroyed by worldliness. A close friend and companion of the apostle Paul succumbed to worldliness, "Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me," II Timothy 4:10.

As C.J. Mahoney writes, "so often we're ignorant of the signs, the symptoms of worldliness. People can be attending church, singing the songs, apparently listening to the sermons — no different on the outside than they've always been; but inside, that person is drifting. He sits in church but is not excited to be there. He sings songs without affection. He listens to preaching without conviction; he hears but does not apply."

Today, the greatest challenge facing American evangelism is not persecution from the world, but seduction by the world. "The world" which we are not to love is the organized system of civilization that is actively hostile to God and alienated from God. Worldliness is a love for this fallen world.

Joel Beeke asserts, "the goal of worldly people is to move forward rather than upward, to live horizontally rather than vertically. They seek after outward prosperity rather than holiness. They burst with selfish desires rather than heartfelt supplications. If they do not deny God, they ignore and forget Him, or else they use Him only for their selfish ends."

Iain Murray also describes worldliness: Worldliness is departing from God. It is a man-centered way of thinking; it proposes objectives which demand no radical breach with man's fallen nature; it judges the importance of things by the present and material results; it weighs success by numbers; it covets human esteem and wants no unpopularity; it knows no truth for which it is worth suffering; it declines to be "a fool for Christ's sake". Worldliness is the mind-set of the unregenerate. It adopts idols and is at war with God.

John Calvin wrote, "the evil in our desires often lies not in what we want, but in the fact that we want it too much."

Mahoney observes: A sinful craving is when a legitimate desire for financial success becomes a silent demand for financial success; an interest in clothes and fashion becomes a preoccupation; love of music morphs into an obsession with the hottest band; or the desire to enjoy a good movie becomes a need to see the latest blockbuster.

There may be nothing wrong with these desire in and of themselves; but when they dominate the landscape of our lives — when we must have them or else! — we've succumbed to idolatry and worldliness.

Notice once more what John says in I John 2:17, "the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." John Owens speaks of them as, "living affections for dying things."

We are surrounded by formidable foes — the world, the flesh and the devil. At the beginning of each year there are many who try to bring needed or desired changes in their lives by making resolutions.

What should consume our thoughts and affections is not resisting worldliness but the glory and grace of God revealed at the cross. It is there that we will be overcome by the love of God for us. Paul wrote, "the love of Christ controls us."

It has been said that, "the Jew proposed the terrors of the law, the philosopher advised the crucifixion of feeling; neither could suppress the passions of the soul. But when love came it conquered the old passions by a new passion."