

The World: Overcoming It

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 May 2008

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] The world as an enemy of the Christian. We saw that the world is the sum total of all unbelievers! It's ruled over by the devil.

Okay, so the devil is the mind behind this world system that's coordinating things in an anti-God way.

How is the world related to the flesh? Alright, the world is corporate flesh. Take all the flesh, the sinful nature of every unconverted person and put it all together and there you have something of a view of how evil and powerful is this world.

What's God's plan for the Christian with regard to the world? Is he to withdraw from it to the point where he's isolated from the world?

No, he's to be in the world and he's to be so close to the world that the world might see our good deeds, that they might see our transformed lives of holiness, that they might receive our witness.

[1:45] But being that close to the world also means that we are to be so close to the world that we will be exposed to its temptations. By the very nature of our contact with it, it puts us within reach of the world's temptations that would pull us away from our God and away from obeying his commands.

I love Isaac Watts' phrase, Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? And the answer is obvious, no.

Did any of you find the world to be a friend to grace this week? A friend to help you on to God? Anybody have an unconverted man walk up to you and say, You know, you really ought to pursue righteousness today?

Did the television say, Oh, you've seen enough of me, go pray for a while? Well, the internet say to you, You know, you need to go read your Bible for a while. No, all the influences of this ungodly world are not friendly toward grace.

They're rather our enemies and would pull us away from God. So, we've come that far in our study of the world. Now, God has given us some very clear instructions and commands concerning our relationship to the world and instructions on overcoming it.

[3:10] Let's consider then three negative commands and then we'll look at some of the positive commands. First of all, don't love the world. 1 John chapter 2.

Let's turn that up and read that passage. Don't love the world. 1 John 2 and verses 15 through 17.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has done come not from the Father, but from the world.

The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. How is the Christian to live in this world?

Without loving it. Without loving it. Now, right away he tells us, do not love the world or anything in it. Does that mean that I am not to love the flowers, the trees, the birds, material things of this world?

[4:32] Is that what John's saying? Do not love the world. Lou? Do not love the world system. It is the foe of God's law. All right. So, it's that anti-God system of the world that John's talking about here when he says, don't love the world or anything in it.

He's not saying you can't love the flowers. You can't love because the flower is in the world. I mean, some people could press this and say, anything in the world, therefore you were not to love.

How do we know that's not true? Are we commanded husbands to love our wives? Is she not something that's in the world? To love our children?

Yes. We're not being commanded to refrain from loving anything in the world. It's rather the world again as that anti-God system, that enemy of the world that we're being commanded to not love. Not just created things, but created things as organized and directed against God. To love our wives, to love the birds, is not worldliness, it's godliness.

[5:47] But you can so love those things in a way that is world-like and thereby it becomes worldly. Rather, the things in the world that we're forbidden to love are stated.

Don't love the world, stated in verse 16. Don't love the world or anything in the world, verse 16. For everything in the world, dash, now he's going to tell us those things that we are not to love. Everything in the world, the cravings of the sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does come not from the Father, but from the world.

So this is his definite, this is what he's telling us not to love. I don't think it's an improvement upon the King James at all here as far as memorableness. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

This is the world that we are not to love. These are three vital principles of the world system. This is the way the world operates. These are the idols of the world, its pleasures, its profit, and its power.

[6:56] And John is speaking of loving what by very definition is opposed to God. Lust of the flesh, or the cravings of sinful man, as our New International Version says.

The lusts means desires. It's a word for inner desires. But they're lusts of the flesh.

And the flesh here stands for human nature as controlled and directed by sin. It's that sinful nature, that indwelling sin, that part of us that is hostile to God, that we are not to love.

Right away we see that our battle with worldliness is not something out there. If it was, all we would need to do is isolate ourselves from it, and so we would be kept from worldliness.

But rather we see that, oh, the battle against worldliness is the battle against my own inner sinful desires. That's helpful for us in knowing our enemy.

[8:05] In Ephesians 2, we saw last week that the ways of the world are the ways of gratifying the cravings of our flesh. Ever wonder why the ways of the world are so appealing to you, Christian?

Why you must battle worldliness even yet as a believer? Here's the answer. Because there's still a part of you that loves the world. And the world as opposed to God.

There's a part of you that loves to gossip, to be the one to pass on the juicy morsel to another. There's a part of you that loves to run down others, and it makes you feel better yourself to run them down.

There's a part that craves forbidden fruit, and is not happy until you have tasted it. And that's the part of you that must not be allowed to live on.

The lust of the flesh. The world says, gratify them. Christ says, crucify them. The lust of the flesh. The lust of the eyes. John is saying that these inward cravings of worldliness are stirred up through the eye gate by seeing.

[9:15] But the world often gets at our inward desires through our eyes. Isn't that the message of the Bible? Eve has all the trees in the garden to gratify her wholesome desires.

Why would she eat of the one forbidden one? Genesis 3.6 says, when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She saw it was pleasing to the eye. Achan fighting in that battle of Jericho. Everything in the city was to be devoted to God.

It wasn't to be taken by men. And you remember how Achan took some of the gold and silver and some of the material and kept it and buried it under his tent.

And when he was found out, Joshua says, how could you then sin against this great God who's just acted on our behalf and brought us across the river Jordan and into the promised land?

[10:35] How did it happen, Achan? And Achan says, I was okay until I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels.

I coveted them and I took them. I saw, I coveted, I took. that's the way the world works.

It, the lust of the eyes, it works our eyes. King David, was God not good to you to give you victory over the nations, to give you wives and how could you, favored of the law, of the Lord, fall into adultery with another man's wife?

I underestimated the power of a look, he would tell us, a look that inflamed desire and then he took.

So, don't miss how worldliness works, John is telling us. The lust of the flesh are inflamed by the lust of the eyes. Vanity Fair in Pilgrim's Progress displayed the wares, put it right out where travelers walking by would see them in the hopes that they would buy their forbidden pleasures. [11:56] I wonder if we're aware of the specific ways that worldliness powerfully plays upon our sinful desires through our eye gate. And that's why Jesus says, if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.

It's better to enter into hell with one eye or into heaven with one eye than to enter into hell with two. So, if we would not love the world, we must guard our eyes, John's saying.

Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and then lastly, the pride of life. We see it in its more patent forms when the football player sacks the quarterback and then he struts and he points at his numbers and he's proud of what he's done and he wants everyone to know how important he is.

But we can do it by the clothes we wear, the car we drive, the house we live in, impressing others, making others to think we're important because we have this, because we own that.

It's worldliness right at the heart as if a man's importance consisted in the abundance of things that he possessed or in the popularity he enjoys.

[13:20] Worldliness is driven by pride, by this love of self. William Barclay says he seeks to impress everyone he meets with his own non-existent self-importance.

So it's non-existent, but in his mind he's important. And so he seeks to impress. Your battle with pride then is the battle with worldliness. So I trust that John is helping us understand the battle.

It's a battle with evil desires. It's a battle with eyes. It's a battle with a mindset of pride. And then he gives us two reasons not to love the world in its ways.

The last half of verse 15, because he says if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. These two are mutually exclusive. You can't love them both.

Just as no man has ever truly loved two wives at the same time. To love one is to not love the other. So to love the Father is to not love the world which is anti-Father.

[14:25] So that's a reason not to love this world. The second reason is found in verse 17. The world and its desires pass away.

But the man who does the will of God lives forever. Heaven is promised to the Christian, isn't it? But heaven's not seen. We don't see it.

And so we can think, oh, that's not so real, is it? But the world has things to show us that our eyes can see and our hands can touch and pleasures that are at hand and they seem so substantial.

This is the way to go. And John is correcting that notion. He's saying the world is passing away. Present tense. Right now, as we sit here, this world is on its way out.

It is lost. It is bankrupt. Don't pursue this world. It is passing away with all of its pleasures.

[15:22] It's coming to nothing. You'd call him a fool who invested his life savings in a bankrupt company. It's on its way out. But it's real cheap.

You can get a lot. A lot of shares for a little money. But it's on its way out. It's passing away. And how many people are investing their lives in a world system with all that it offers?

It's bankrupt. It's passing away, John says. They're going to have nothing to show for their lives for all eternity. They'll have nothing of value that will last forever.

Nothing that will make it through the fires of judgment. John is helping us see the bankrupt world for what it is. For all it offers, it's bankrupt. No, the disobedient lovers of this world are on their way out. The lovers of God are the ones who do His will and they will live forever. The future belongs to them.

[16:31] So, don't love the world. That's how the Christian is to relate to this world. In the world, like a boat in the water, but don't let the water get in the boat.

Don't let the world get into your heart to where you love it. Second, don't be polluted by the world. James 1.27.

James 1.27. Verse 26 talks about worthless religion. There's a lot of worthless religion today. And verse 27 talks about pure religion.

So, we'll start at verse 26. If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself. And his religion is worthless.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

[17:34] You see, the definition of pure religion involves keeping ourselves from being polluted polluted by this world system. Now, again, what the Bible confronts us with is not an easy duty here.

It's not an easy thing to keep yourself from being polluted by the world. It's not like coming home from church and mother tells the child to not get their clean clothes dirty.

and so they just need to, I don't know, stay away from the spots where there's some dirt and they'll be all right.

It's rather like standing at the end of a muddy field and it's rained all day and there's a hundred yards of mud puddles and you need to make your way from one end of that field to the other without becoming spotted.

Getting anything on your clothes. And by the way, the devil and all sorts of his agents and many worldlings are in these mud puddles and they're throwing it at you.

[18:46] Now, don't let it spot your raiment. Don't let it spot your clothing. Keep yourself unpolluted from this world. That's the picture that we have of keeping ourselves unpolluted in a world so full of sin.

No small challenge then. I think someone said that you don't put your lips to the exhaust pipe and breathe in if you want to keep yourself from pollution.

But the pollution of the world has far more subtle ways of polluting this. Ever been watching a movie and you find yourself pulling for the wicked guy?

the bank robber? The criminal? The world system slyly bringing us on board with its way of thinking. Turning upside down right and wrong. We start thinking their thoughts and we start valuing their values and their priorities start ordering our lives and their treasures become the things we start running after and their standard of what is important in life becomes ours.

[20:04] Keep yourself from being polluted is the duty. 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 17 is in the context of being separate from this world.

We're told to come out from this world and be separate and touch no unclean thing. and I will receive you and I will be a father to you and you will be my sons and daughters says the Lord almighty.

And then chapter 7 and verse 1 of 2 Corinthians continues. Since we have these promises dear friends that if we will come out and separate ourselves from the world and not touch the unclean thing that God would be a father to us.

Since we have these promises dear friends let us purify ourselves from everything that pollutes or contaminates body and spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

So separation from the world means separation from anything that contaminates body or spirit. The pollution of the world.

[21:16] So don't love it. Don't be polluted by it. Third don't be conformed to it. Where do we need to turn to for that verse? Romans 12.

Romans 12. Don't be conformed to it. Romans 12. 1 and 2. Therefore I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. Here it is. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is.

His good pleasing and perfect will. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world. Here's a call to be a nonconformist.

To walk to the beat of a different drum. That's what you're being told to do today. to live counter-culturally out of step with the world. You should be out of sync with this world not conforming to it.

[22:29] Now the passage infers a tremendous pressure coming from the world to conform. Indeed I think it's Philip's amplified version of the Bible says don't let the world squeeze you into its mold.

that there's this pressure to conform in the world out there. That's all part of the enemy. It has this pressure to conform.

It tries to squeeze us in its mold. The Bible recognizes this. In Exodus 23 and verse 2 it says do not follow the crowd to do wrong. It doesn't just say do not do wrong.

It says do not follow the crowd to do wrong. Because the crowd exerts a pressure to do wrong. That is more powerful than you just by yourself contemplating doing wrong.

The fear of man is worldly pressure to conform. The world tells us fit in be like us. Don't be the odd man out.

[23 : 36] Now there's a two pronged pressure of the world to get us into its mold into its pattern. And it uses both. They're sweet and sour. There's first the allurements.

The offering of pleasures and ease and gain. The temptations you see. Come on. Come. Come with us and we'll show you a good time. The allurements.

That's the pressure you see. It's a drawing pressure. Come on. But there's also the pressure of persecution from the world.

It's the threat. loss of property. Loss of life. Loss of job. If you don't conform to the world.

Loss of reputation. Maybe something painful will happen to you. Something of hardship will come to you if you don't conform. There's the pushing influence of the world.

[24 : 37] They're pressuring you to conform, to be like it. So whether it's the allurements or the persecution, the pull or the push, the world wants you in its mold.

Pilgrim's progress reflects this when you have Christian and faithful going through vanity fair, which is the world. And you see these two ways of pressure being exerted upon them.

First, the allurements, because they put out all their forbidden pleasures out for display for them to buy. And it says these pilgrims showed no interest in their goods and this worried the people of the fair most.

Christian and faithful did not even care to see them. There's the eyes, you see. And when they were asked to buy, they would stop up their ears and say, turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, looking upward as if they belonged to another country.

Well, one who had already heard of the men observing their peculiar behavior mockingly said to them, well, what will you buy then? They then fastened their eyes upon him and said, well, we buy the truth.

[25 : 49] And at this an occasion was taken to persecute them. Finally, the haters of the pilgrims created a mob in such commotion that all ordered was destroyed and before they get out of town faithful is executed.

He's martyred. Allurements followed by persecution. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 4 and see if you don't see the same one-two punch of the world coming at us.

1 Peter chapter 4 the world pulling with its allurements and then pushing with its persecution. 1 Peter 4 chapter 4 and verses 3 and 4 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lusts, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.

They think it's strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation and they heap abuse on you. So first they want you to join them.

come join us in our sin. But when you refuse to do so they think it's strange and they heap abuse on you.

[27 : 09] There's the persecution. So this is the pressure of the world and yet the command is clear. Don't give way to the pressure. Do not conform any longer to this world.

Now the fact that it says do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world reminds us that we have been conforming to this pattern. In fact we were the world weren't we before we were saved out of the world.

We were part of this evil system. We used to walk in its ways Ephesians 2. God has saved us out of the world.

We no longer belong to it. Now we're to stop conforming to it. But how do we do this? Well here we turn the corner then from the negative to the positive.

Don't love it. Don't be polluted by it. Don't be conformed to it. Here's the positive. Paul says in Romans 12 to but be transformed. Don't be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[28 : 12] Transformation from worldliness to godliness. That's the transformation from the worm to the butterfly from being like the world to being like Jesus Christ.

Christ. And it's a present tense. Go on being transformed. It started the day you were saved. The day you were converted. And now you need to go on with this transformation.

All forms of worldliness are not gone at conversion. Have you found that? That there are patterns of worldliness that die a slow death. life.

I remember when we were in Switzerland and Olivier Favre was preaching on this text and he pointed out the present tense. Go on being transformed.

And it hit me like a ton of bricks like I've never seen it in this verse before that if I need to go on being transformed that means that I still have areas in my life that are conformed to this world. [29:16] Otherwise I wouldn't need the command. Go on being transformed. I'd already be there. I've already arrived. So that means right now in my part and in my mind and in my lifestyle I have ways that are conformed to this world.

Wow. I woke up that day and I said what are they John? Where are you being conformed to this world? Where do you need to be transformed? It's not always readily apparent to us because we live in the midst of it.

And we just fit in with everyone else. And so it doesn't stand out as something strange you see. It's what everyone else does with their time. It's what everybody else does with their money.

It's what everybody else does. And so it's hard to find it. We're just doing what we see everyone else doing. And almost unthinkingly then we can be adapting ourselves or adopting the world's ways of thinking, its priorities, its values.

values. What's the answer? What is the way to pursue this transformation and to reject conformity to the world? He says by the renewing of your mind.

[30:28] It reminds us that worldliness is a mindset. Remember? It's not just material things. You can make use of material things in a way that is godliness. It's the mindset behind it.

And so should we be surprised when he says the way to not be conformed to the world is to get your mind renewed. Get your mind renewed.

Serious mind renewal is what we need. Saturate your mind with God's thoughts, with God's priorities, with God's values, with what's important to him so that you start to think like God instead of thinking like the unconverted man that you were and that lives all around you.

This is why we press the importance of daily reading in the scriptures. It's like that steak that needs to marinate in the juices until it becomes a part of it so that you bite the steak and you taste the flavor.

We need our minds renewed so that when we think, we think God's thoughts after him. rather than thinking like the world. That's why memorizing scripture is so important.

[31:42] Why meditating on scripture is so important. I don't know about you, but it doesn't work that once you get it, it's done for life. But once you see a principle, once you see a promise that, oh, well that's fixed now and we go on and it's never a problem again.

No, we need to constantly keep our minds saturated with God's word. And the whole thing is driven by gospel motives.

Verse 1, I beseech you to do this, you see, to not be conformed to the world, but to be renewing your minds and be transformed. And what do I beseech you by? By the mercies of God in Christ. Has Jesus not done enough for you to make you roll up your sleeves and get busy at killing conformity to the world and being transformed in the renewing of your mind.

By the mercies of God, I urge you to do this. Jesus shed his blood to make you his child. Be like him. The world put him to death.

[32:50] Don't be like it. Gospel motives. Well, there's further positive directives in God's word with regard to our relationship to the world.

Turn to 1 John chapter 5. Don't love it. Don't be polluted by it. Don't conform to it. Then positively, be transformed by the renewing of your mind if you would not be conformed to it.

And now we see another positive word of command and it is to overcome the world. To overcome the world. The reality is the world's trying to overcome us.

It's trying to conquer us and to squeeze us into its mold. But we are commanded to overcome it. 1 John chapter 5 verses 4 and 5.

For every one born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

[34:01] Verse 4. Everyone born of God overcomes the world. The world would have you join them in breaking God's commands. That's the context of verses 2 and 3 of obeying God's commands.

But here is a tremendous encouragement. Everyone born of God overcomes the world. That's a statement of reality.

It's not saying you should overcome it. It's saying everyone does. Have you been born again? This is meant to be of great encouragement to you. You have a seed planted in you, a new birth, a new nature planted in you that will overcome the world.

The new birth brings us out of the world, out of the kingdom of darkness where Satan rules and translates us into the kingdom of his own dear son. And the new birth detaches us from the world and attaches us to God.

And the new birth plants a love for God and his commandments into our hearts so that we're no longer mastered by the world. We're no longer conformed altogether to it.

[35:08] But we persist in serving God and living a life of obedience to his commands in spite of all the contrary pressures and influences from a godless society around us.

Everyone born of God overcomes the world. That's how you overcome the world, by the new birth. That's the beginning. And then verse 4b says, this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Our faith. The born again man now has faith, doesn't he? He has a new *modus operandi*, a new method of operating, a new way of living.

He lives by faith. And this faith is the victory. It's the means of victory. It's the power that gives victory over the world. This is the power to overcome all the temptations of the world.

As they try to get you to break God's commands, as they try to squeeze you into conformity to itself, faith opens up a whole world to the eyes of the believer. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

[36:21] So how does this work? How does faith overcome the world? The world's lost in darkness, but faith is like night vision goggles or glasses.

And we see with these night vision glasses things as they really are. The world can't see them. They don't have any faith. So things are fuzzy.

Things are dark. But with faith we see things as they really are. And with that faith we overcome the world. So here comes a temptation from the world.

Let's take the temptation to love money. We just had a sermon on that, didn't we, in 1 Timothy 6, a few Sunday nights ago. The world comes and tempts me to love money, to stake out my claim here as if this is all there is to life, to get all I can get.

and it offers me pleasures, and it offers me ease, and it's got all this looking good for me. And then I look at the temptation with the eyes of faith, and I see what it's offering me.

[37:38] I see what is held before me in Christ, and there's no comparison. Why would I give up this for this? Faith sees the hook behind the bait of the world.

Faith trusts the interpretation of the Bible on life and follows it. And it's that faith that is the undoing of the world's power over me.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. By faith I see the unseen worlds to come. That the whole world is mine if I belong to Christ.

I don't have to stake out my claim here. The whole world is one day going to be mine. All the treasures of Christ, I'm a co-heir with him. With faith, I see that.

And so this looks awfully puny, what the world's offering. By faith I see 1 Timothy 6, 9 and 10, that people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

[38:54] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. And so faith, seeing that, breaks the back of the world's temptation.

It unmasks its lies. It's not so desirable when I see the trap behind it and I see the end after it. So faith transports me then to the greater wonders of heaven and the fascination with this world rings hollow.

Faith makes vanity fair. Look to be offering me stones and ashes compared to the solid joys of Christ's kingdom. That's what Newton was writing about and we sing about in that song.

Fading is the worldling's pleasure. It's fading. It's on its way out. All is boasted, pomp, and show. Solid joys and lasting treasures none but Zion's people know.

But it's faith that sees them as solid. These are the real treasures. These are the real pleasures worth running after. And so faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

[40:07] Jesus said in this world you will have trouble. but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world. That's why the Christian takes courage against this enemy.

I'm united with this Jesus. He has conquered the world. I too will conquer it. I've been born of God. I've been given a new nature. He's not going to let me be overcome by this world.

He's given me faith that I might overcome the world. He's given me promises that by these promises I might be a partaker of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through evil desires.

2 Peter 1:4 Apostle Paul says, May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to it.

keep Christ and him crucified before you if you would be crucified to the world and have the world crucified to you. So, positive armor, weapons to enable us not to be conformed to the world, not to love it, not to be polluted by it.

[41:23] May the Lord help us then with his grace. We're dismissed.