

Trials After Embracing Christ

Part 2: The World a Subtle Threat to Our Faith

By Marc MacArthur

In our journey as Christians, we confront a profound challenge known as *spiritual warfare*. This battleground encompasses not only direct assaults from demonic forces but also internal struggles within ourselves. Yet, among these well-recognized adversaries, there exists an often underestimated foe: the world. The world stands as a cunning and deceptive adversary. Unlike the devil's overt attacks or the flesh's internal struggles, the world's influence is often subtle and deceptive.

Ephesians 2:2¹

[2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The term "*world*" carries a weighty significance in biblical context, as articulated in Ephesians 2:2. Here, it signifies not the physical planet but rather the prevailing attitudes, values, and systems that stand in opposition to God's teachings. At the core of the world's allure are its promises, its enticement, of fleeting pleasures, material possessions, and worldly success, most often at the expense of our spiritual well-being, as it weaves temptations into the fabric of our daily life.

It whispers seductively, enticing us to prioritize these transient gains over our spiritual well-being. The allure it offers is powerful, drawing us away from prayer, scriptural study, and meaningful fellowship with fellow believers. In doing this, it creates a chasm between us and God, which leaves us overly vulnerable to its deceptive charms.

One of the world's strategies is to divert our focus from spiritual growth to worldly pursuits. Careers, possessions, social status, these become the benchmarks of success, overshadowing the importance of nurturing our relationship with God. We risk becoming ensnared in a cycle of materialism, where the pursuit of temporal pleasures eclipses the pursuit of eternal truths.

Moreover, societal norms often clash with God's principles, pressuring us to compromise our morals and engage in behaviors that contradict our faith. Engaging in gossip, dishonesty, selfish ambition, and other activities that displease God; these are just a few examples of the moral compromises the world encourages. Standing firm in our Christian values among such pressures is a daunting task, which demands an unwavering commitment and courage. It is crucial that we remember our ultimate allegiance lies with God, that our actions should reflect a commitment to Him.

1 John 2:15

[15] 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.

¹ All Bible Verses are KJV unless otherwise noted.

Here the apostle John warns us sternly. This serves as a poignant reminder of the dichotomy between worldly allure and spiritual devotion. The materialistic mindset of the world's fleeting pleasures can cause us to lose sight of the eternal rewards that await those who remain faithful to God and prioritize our spiritual growth over material pursuits.

Overcoming the world's influence requires a conscious effort on our part to realign our priorities with God's will. This process involves several key strategies:

Romans 12:2

[2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Firstly, renewing our minds through immersion in God's Word. Romans 12:2 urges us to be "*transformed by the renewing of your mind*," emphasizing the pivotal role of scripture in shaping our worldview and discernment, allowing us to distinguish between the values of the world and the principles laid out in the Bible. As we internalize God's word, we gain the strength to resist the allure of the world and remain committed to our faith.

Secondly, seeking and surrounding ourselves with a fellowship of like-minded Believers provides crucial support and accountability. A strong Christian community bolsters our resolve and encourages us to stay steadfast in our faith, even in the face of worldly pressures. A strong Christian community can uplift us during challenging times. Sharing experiences, offering prayers, and participating in acts of service together can remind us of the importance of prioritizing our relationship with God.

Lastly, setting clear boundaries and priorities is paramount. This includes managing our time and resources in a manner that reflects our commitment to spiritual growth, how much time we dedicate to work or entertainment, selecting carefully what media we consume, and choosing friends who share our Christian values. With clear boundaries, we can create an environment of spiritual growth that protects us from the world's temptations.

Matthew 5:13-16

[13] Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

[14] Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

[15] Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

[16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

However, it's vital to note that we are not called to withdraw entirely from the world but rather engage with it as ambassadors of Christ. Matthew 5:13-16 illustrates this beautifully, describing believers as salt and light, influencing the world with the love and grace of Christ while remaining distinct from its values.

In essence, navigating the challenges posed by the world requires vigilance, discernment, and unwavering faith. By prioritizing our relationship with God, cultivating a supportive Christian community, and setting clear boundaries, we can navigate the complexities of spiritual warfare and emerge as beacons of light in a world fraught with darkness. We can live in the world without being conformed to it, influencing those around us through our actions and exemplifying the love and grace of Christ.

To be continued in Part 3: Wrestling with Our Sinful Nature