

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 59 – The Natural Man, An Enemy of God

By Sharon K. Griffiee

I John 2:15-17 (KJV) – *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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

What John describes in these verses is the worldly (natural) man. He is a man who judges everything by his appetites, by his fleshly desires, regardless of the commandments of God or the judgment of God. The worldly (natural) man lives a life dominated by the five physical senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. He is someone who is servant to his own comfort, pleasure, and ambition. He ignores the direction of the Holy Spirit in his life.

I Corinthians 2:14 (KJV) – *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him...”*

In our opening scripture, the Apostle John gives strong words of counsel to those whom he refers to in **verses 12-13** as *dear children, fathers, and young men*. The common thread among them is their personal relationship with God. They knew what it was like to have their sins forgiven and to have known and experienced true fellowship with God. They had known victory in overcoming the evil one. However, it was precisely because they had matured so well in their faith that John wanted to warn them about dangers, which always exist - no matter how far someone has advanced in their Christian walk. John’s warning to them was plain. *Do not love the world or anything in the world.*

I John 2:16 (KJV) – *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. [Underlined emphasis mine]*

John makes a striking distinction between the ways of the world and God’s way. The “world” as John describes it, is an entity that is hostile to God. The “world”, he illustrates, is always a seductive influence, which Christians must recognize and learn to resist.

We need only to observe the morals in the world today, to see that the “world” portrays sin as something normal. Christians, not wanting to offend anyone, tend to

rationalize, *“Is their sin really any worse than mine?”* It is not a matter of leveling the plane of sin. It is looking at sin for what it is. Sin is an *offense against God*. By definition sin is anything that separates us from God, which grieves the heart of the Father, whose only desire is to *reconcile us to Himself* through Christ. **See: II Corinthians 5:20-21.**

Left to himself, the natural man tends to wander (to drift, to stray) to grow slack in his diligence and discipline toward God. This type of carelessness is among the greatest hindrances of God’s people. Distracted by the world’s latest enticements (leanings or preferences), God’s people forget that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God.

James warned against the world’s distractions,

James 4:4 (KJV) – *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God. This is a very serious matter with God and he confirmed that truth to me. *Why is the natural man an enemy of God?* I posed that question to God in my prayers one evening before going to bed.

The next morning, after a good night’s rest, my answer came flooding into my spirit just as my feet hit the floor. I grabbed the notebook by my nightstand and began to write God’s response.

The Holy Spirit said,

“The natural man is an enemy of God, because he stubbornly sits on the throne of his own life, refusing to step down and give God His rightful place on the throne, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He says he believes in God, but his loyalty is to Satan, the god of the flesh - not to the God of the Spirit, who is Jesus the Christ, the anointed one sent by God.”

The Holy Spirit continued,

“Do not get God and Satan mixed up in your thinking! They are two different beings, with two different purposes (plans).”

The Holy Spirit then quoted the following scripture from **John 10:10**, embedding it into my spirit.

John 10:10 (KJV) – “*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*”

Brothers and sisters, Satan is the counterfeit. He is the thief whose sole purpose is to steal, and to kill, and to destroy your life. How does he do that? He plays on your weaknesses. For example, if you feel you are misunderstood and unloved by those around you, he seizes that opening. He pretends to be your friend, while all the time planning to stab you in the back. Satan tells you, “*God doesn’t love you, come hang out with me for a while where you will be accepted.*”

With this subtle lie, pretending to love you, his only motive is to lead you deeper into sin, and farther away from God. That is the main reason people are attracted to gangs. Feeling isolated – lonely, they want desperately to feel loved and accepted. They want respect from others – to feel important. Watch out for Satan’s trap! His goal is to hook you.

Romans 6:16 (NIV) – *Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

As you join forces with the adversary, his only plan is to *use* you to further his purposes. Now, instead of one person rebelling against God, it soon becomes a whole band of people rebelling against God. Satan uses people all the time, to their detriment. You see this campaign of terror played out daily in the prison environment. It rears its ugly head out in society as radicalism and violence increases in the world. Think about it, gangs not only accept you *in your sin*, they *outright expect* you to sin! That is part of the initiation process. Pressure is the mandate. The order is given. Deliberately plot to inflict physical, mental, and emotional injury on someone. Make the grade; seal the deal for complete acceptance and approval.

The problem is those who desire acceptance and approval from sinful men, ignore the Grace, Favor and Will of God. Genuine faith is unachievable for them, because they seek after the wrong object – man, not God. It is certain, when the natural man attaches himself to the world’s ways; he gives his life to *things*, which have no future. For all that is in the world is

passing away, as our opening scripture from **I John 2:15-17** states. None has any permanency.

However, the man who has placed God at the center of his life has given himself to the things that last forever. The man who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in this life abides forever.

Follow the Word, not the world. The decision is ours to make. Jesus drew the line in **John 10:10**, letting us know the difference in purpose between Himself and *the thief*, Satan. If our choice is Jesus, we will boldly make known through our actions that *the world* no longer has a hold on us. Through the cross of Christ, we can confidently say with the Apostle Paul, “the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Galatians 6:14 (Amplified Bible) - *But far be it from me to glory [in anything or anyone] except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) through Whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!*

Questions for Personal or Group Study

(Please do not mail to CA for grading):

1. The world competes for the love of Christians. Why is it impossible to love both the world and the Father at the same time? **See: I John 2:15-16**
2. By what standard does the worldly (natural man) judge everything in his life?
3. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Why not? **See: I Corinthians 2:14**
4. John wrote sound words of warning to those who had matured well in their faith (**I John 2:12-14**). If they were so strong in their faith, why was it necessary to warn them about the world?
5. The world portrays sin as something normal. The Bible describes sin as an *offense against God*. What does it say about our relationship with God when we choose to be a friend of the world? **See: James 4:4**
6. I used gangs as just one example of how people seek the approval of man for their acceptance. What are some other ways people seek approval from man?
7. Can you see the importance of not getting God’s purposes and Satan’s purposes mixed up? **John 10:10**