
06 Genuine Discipleship: The World, The Flesh, and The Devil

Recap

Last session we talked about the predicament we find ourselves in. When born into this world we are born descendants of Adam and Eve with our propensity to sin.

The World, The Flesh, and The Devil

Today we are going to focus on The World, The Flesh, and The Devil. No matter what Christian author you read they constantly refer to these three things with which we all have to deal. It's easy to wonder how we can possibly survive in this environment. But when we see what Christ has accomplished for us then we understand that the answer is to change, to embrace the transformation which sets us apart.

We will look at familiar verses but always remember that each time we revisit God's Word there is the potential for God to show us more and to understand things at a deeper level.

Ephesians 2:1-4

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked,

Isn't that fine of God to point out? Dead in trespasses and sins?! And we were. We were born into the world under wrath, "in Adam" where we remain until we get born again and get "in Christ."

following the course of this **world**,

What is the course of this world and who set it up? We are going to see that the devil is the god (small "g") of this world, of this age. It is the devil who has set up the course of this world. So, it I no wonder when you watch or read the news of the things going on in the world that everything is moving away from God. You have to deliberately seek out sources to help you follow a different course. We want to follow Christ, follow God, follow the Word.

following **the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our **flesh**,

So now we are introducing the flesh. Not only are we in the world where the devil has setup the course of this world, but we all once lived in the passions of our flesh. What did we do in that flesh over which we had no control?

carrying out the desires of the body^a and the mind,

Whatever our flesh, our body and our mind wanted to do...we did. We had no reason to restrain ourselves. I want to do this...so I do it.

and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Those verses alone are enough to say, "Man! I am in serious trouble! What is the way out for human beings?"

[4](#) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5](#) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— [6](#) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7](#) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus

There is so much in there that we can look at, but it introduces the World, the Flesh and the Devil. How did the devil get the power to set up the course of this world? Didn't God originally give dominion to Adam in Genesis 1? What did Adam do with it? Was he a good steward? No! He sinned so he forfeited it. His dominion, power, and authority over the course of the world was transferred to the devil. He happily picked up what Adam laid down and he then became the god of this world which is better rendered the god of this age.

2 Corinthians 4:3,4

[3](#) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

They are perishing because they have not believed the gospel!

[John 3:16

[16](#) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

All are going to perish who choose not to believe the gospel.]

2 Corinthians 4:4

[4](#) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

It says here "god of this world", but it is important to note that the Greek word translated "world" is [aion](#) which means "age". Although the devil is the god of this world, he is the god of this age...this period of time...until he is dethroned.

If you look up the various Greek words for world you will find that the majority of time it is [kosmos](#). When you see this Greek word, it is not talking about the earth. There is a difference in the words translated "world". One of them means the earth, but kosmos means the whole world's system including the culture, the environment, the norms, the practices. The devil is constantly at work to blind the minds of those who don't believe to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Then after people do get born again, then what does the devil do? Does he say "Well, I give up on Peggy...she's born again now so I am not going to bother with her anymore"? No! He tries to keep believers from seeing the light of the Word and being transformed into Christlikeness, so we are an example to other people!

It is a Battle!

So, this battle goes on. It is easy to get discouraged when you look at the predicament that we are in. It is why Paul, writing in 2 Timothy says:

2 Timothy 4:7

[7](#) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race (course), I have kept the faith. [8](#) Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Paul had not followed the course of the world. He had set his own course to follow Christ.

It is a constant battle. I admit when I first became a Christian I thought “Wow this is going to be great!

John 10:10

[10](#) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

This is terrific! God is going to be working for me. I am going to get good grades. I am going to have a good job. Everything is going to be terrific. Life is going to be wonderful...all smooth sailing!” Then I began to read the Bible! And it is a challenge. We may read about Paul and the kind of life that he led. It makes you ask yourself, “Why did he do it?” Why would anyone choose to do that? Why would anyone choose to live the kind of life that Paul did when it was available for him to live a very prosperous and entitled life? He was a Roman citizen, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he grew up in a good family, and educated at the feet of Gamaliel. Why would he choose to do what he did?

The Devil: The Power of the Devil Can Seem Daunting

I John 5:19-21

[19](#) We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

It does not seem fair, but we can blame Adam. It was not God’s fault.

[20](#) And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true;

As opposed to the devil who is a liar!

and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. [21](#) Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

When we recognize that and learn who we are in Christ and how we are equipped to do spiritual warfare and be victorious, then we can do so.

Look what the devil said to Jesus when he was tempting him!

Luke 4:5-7

[5](#) And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, [6](#) and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. [7](#) If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

Christ didn’t say, “You are a liar, you don’t really have it!” No! The devil really did have it! But because of Christ we can be victorious in this life.

It is astounding in the gospel of John to see how many times the word “world” shows up. In the entire Old Testament, it only shows up 55 times. The Old Testament believers were not

equipped to deal with the world the way that we are. In the New Testament it shows up 206 times and 75 of them are in the gospel of John. Speculating here...we are not sure why. But if you consider that John wrote his gospel late in the first century around 90-95 AD.

Christ had been on the earth, Day of Pentecost empowered believers with holy spirit many great things happened in the Book of Acts. 28 AD – 65 AD Peter and Paul are both executed, 70 AD the temple is destroyed, because of Nero there is a lot of persecution against Christians it is really a dark period from 70 AD till John penned his gospel. They had experienced THE WORLD in a very dramatic way. Again this is conjecture, my opinion, speculation. But then John wrote his gospel and so much of it talks about “the world”. From then on all believers including us have to deal with “the world”.

John 17:11

[11](#) And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

When speaking to the Pharisees Jesus said:

John 8:23

[23](#) He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

John 12:31

[31](#) Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

What a hope this is to know that the prince of this world will be driven out!

John 14:30

[30](#) I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,

Foretelling that he would be taken to be arrested and crucified.

John 16:11

[11](#) concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The prince of this world stands condemned. Christ did defeat the devil. So, you may think then why are things in such chaos and disarray? It is because Christians have to be educated about who they are in Christ and with Christ in them how they are able to defeat the devil the way Christ did!

The High Priestly Prayer – What Christ Prayed Just Prior to Being Crucified

Think about the apostles hearing this and how often they must have remembered this! He mentions the world 18 times in this prayer!

John 17: 5-25

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before **the world** existed.

6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of **the world**. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. **7** Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. **8** For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. **9** I am praying for them. I am not praying for **the world** but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. **10** All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. **11** And I am no longer in **the world**, but they are in **the world**, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. **12** While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. **13** But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in **the world**, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. **14** I have given them your word, and **the world** has hated them because they are not of **the world**, just as I am not of **the world**. **15** I do not ask that you take them out of **the world**, but that you keep them from the evil one.^a **16** They are not of **the world**, just as I am not of **the world**. **17** Sanctify them^b in the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into **the world**, so I have sent them into **the world**. **19** And for their sake I consecrate myself,^c that they also may be sanctified^d in truth.

20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **21** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that **the world** may believe that you have sent me. **22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **23** I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that **the world** may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. **24** Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of **the world**. **25** O righteous Father, even though **the world** does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. **26** I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

He is not praying for the world but for those who have come out of the world, i.e. believers. He says the world has hated them. Of course, the world hates believers! Why? Because Christ was the light of the world and believers who walk with the Lord are the light of the world. People love darkness more than light, why? Because their deeds are evil and they don't want them exposed! He prays that he does not want to take believers out of the world. Why? Because someone has to stay here to do the work that Christ did. He prays that God will keep them from the evil one.

Flesh

When the Bible talks about the flesh it simply means that we are born body and soul people with the DNA makeup that we inherited from Adam. Its propensity is not to move towards God but towards “self”. It does not want to give, love, and serve. It wants to take and be concerned with self.

The Bible from beginning to end is filled with examples of people walking by the flesh! The vast majority walk by “what can I get”, “what is in it for me?” How can we overcome the world and the flesh? [Romans 7:18](#) states “In my flesh dwells no good thing”.

Two Examples of Turning Away: Demas and Solomon

There are two biblical figures who come to mind. First let us consider Demas. At the end of Colossians Demas is with Paul and Paul says Demas sends his greetings. So, Demas was walking with Paul and doing the work of the ministry. Look at what happens to him! This is at the end of Paul’s life and ministry.

2 Timothy 4:9,10

9 Do your best to come to me soon. **10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.** Crescens has gone to Galatia,^b Titus to Dalmatia.

What happened to him? We don’t know for sure but we know he was in love with this present world. Why did he no longer stay faithful. What is the “present world” allured him away? Could have been a romantic interest? When things got tough...everywhere Paul went he experienced opposition and persecution. Demas may have decided it was just too much; not what he had signed up for. Can you imagine being Demas and have this written of you in the Bible for all believers of all time to read and know of you? I would not want to be Demas!

1 John 2:28

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

We don’t want to be ashamed when we face the Lord at His Coming. It is serious business. Every day that goes by we have the opportunity to live for God and we will be rewarded for it. Demas like all of us had a target on his back. We must be on guard at all times!

What about Solomon? How could he have walked away as he did? [1 Kings 11](#) Solomon was king for 40 years. That is a long time. He had great power, wealth, and wisdom. I often think about our affluent community. Why do people do what they do? It is because A., they want to and B., they have the resources.

“Few men have the virtue to withstand the highest bidder.” George Washington

So true. Money has allure because of what we know it can do for us. The word “virtue”, if it means moral excellence, it shows up in 2 Peter 3 about moral excellence.

The point was brought up concerning Solomon having 1000 wives and concubines that in the ancient world a king would marry the daughter of another king as a form of peace treaty. The

idea being you would not go to war with a relative. So that may have been behind some of the unions. This however might have led to not trusting God and trusting this relationship instead.

Concerning the Flesh our friend Ken wrote a piece entitled “Body and Soul Man is Weak”. People don’t like to hear that do they?! We like to think we are strong, proud, able to handle any situation that comes up. We think we can control it. We will read a portion of Ken’s piece and of course this is all leading to “how can we overcome this weakness?”

Body and Soul Man is Weak

Since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, doing what He commanded them not to do, every person born into this world is born spirit-less, that is, they are only body and soul. Being only body and soul means that all men and women are inherently “weak.” They are particularly weak with respect to death—death is inevitable no matter what the body-and-soul person does or does not do. They are also “weak” with respect to fighting and resisting the “god of this world” who is a spiritual entity and therefore not visible. And they are also “weak” in that they are incapable of enjoying the fullness of a life lived in communion with God.

2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing [[apollumi](#)], **4** in whose case **the god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelieving **so that they might not see** the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This “blindness” applies not only to the gospel but life in general. This “blindness” began when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s direct command and lost spirit. From then on, the body-and-soul-only person has lacked “spiritual sight” in part or in whole. There has always been some sense of right and wrong in mankind or available to mankind (Rom. 1:[19](#) and [20](#)). For example, a man without spirit can know that stealing or adultery are wrong, and these are spiritual truths. Also, when God revealed the Law to Moses, right and wrong were spelled out more specifically. Again, these are spiritual truths that people could understand at least to some extent. However, the absence of spirit seriously limits a person’s capability to fully grasp and, perhaps most importantly, to live out spiritual truths. The body-and-soul-only person is ignorant of the existence and capabilities of a wicked spirit known as the devil. As “the god of this world,” the devil can influence people directly or indirectly by promoting some information and suppressing other information. People in this world without spiritual sight are at the mercy of the ebb and flow of information and opinions that are constantly being promoted by the “god of this world” (see [Eph. 2:1](#) and [2](#)). This is a significant aspect of the external conditions in which all people live.

The body-and-soul-only person lacks the capability to fully grasp spiritual truths.

1 Corinthians 2:14

14 But a natural [[psuchikos\[1\]](#)] man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand [[ginóskó](#)] them, because they are spiritually appraised [[anakinó](#)].

A “natural man,” a person who is only body and soul—spirit-less—cannot understand things of the spirit or wield spiritual power. [\[2\]](#) This would include those born again who live as if they are body-and-soul-only.

Most significantly, the person who is body-and-soul-only is incapable of accomplishing his own redemption and salvation—every person needs a savior to save them from death.

Romans 5:6 (ESV) [6](#) For while we were still weak [\[asthenés\]](#), at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Here are other occurrences of “weak” and “weakness.”

Hebrews 4:15

[15](#) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses [\[astheneia\]](#), but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 5:1–3

[1](#) For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; [2](#) he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness [\[astheneia\]](#); [3](#) and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

He endured everything that we will ever have to go through so we can rely on Him.

Mark 14:38

[38](#) “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit [\[3\]](#) is willing, but the flesh is weak [\[asthenés\]](#).”

How dare you tell me that my flesh is weak! No! I am telling you so that you know what you have to deal with and so you will rely on me.

Romans 6:19

[19](#) I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness [\[astheneia\]](#) of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

You would not use these scriptures in a self-esteem building course, would you?

1 Corinthians 15:43

[43](#) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness [\[astheneia\]](#), it is raised in power;

“Flesh” is weak. A person may want to do the “right thing,” but they have limited resources to carry it out. Having spirit is no guarantee that a person will do the right thing (see Eve and Adam), but the spirit is an added resource to help a person to do the right thing. These verses can be read in conjunction with the description of the weakness described in Romans 7.

It may also be worth considering the possibility that some genetic damage or weakening occurred when Adam disobeyed God. The science of epigenetics is documenting how environments, thoughts, and actions can activate or suppress various genes. Plus, actual genetic damage is a possibility. Such damage or weakening could, at least in part, account for mankind's propensity for unrighteousness, but this is speculation.

The spirit is an enablement—an added capability for man.

Galatians 5:16

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit [spirit], and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

This is how we overcome the weakness of the flesh. This is a huge "BUT"!

You can read the complete article [here](#).

Characteristics of The Flesh: Blind, Weak, Prone to Wander

What is the flesh prone to do? As if we don't already know! It is a wanderer. Some of the characteristics of our flesh include:

It is blind.

It is weak.

It is prone to wander.

Jeremiah 14:10

10 Thus says the Lord concerning this people: "They have loved to wander thus;

For instance the children of Israel would wander off to the gods of the inhabitants of neighboring lands like the Moabites.

they have not restrained their feet;

So often that is true of people who get into trouble.

therefore, the Lord does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins."

A comment is made that this wandering is true of our minds as well. We will be covering more about the mind. But yes, our minds are prone to wander and then our feet follow our minds. One of the interesting things about getting older is that we see ourselves so clearly in the written Word.

Think of Israel and all that God did for them. Think of Solomon and all he had been given!

Jeremiah 2:5-8

5 Thus says the Lord: What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, Why did they wander off? Why did they look for other gods? Why did they go to other places? Why did Demas wander off? Why did Solomon wander off?

What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?

That is a pretty harsh scripture, isn't it? They went after worthlessness and became worthless!? You would not use it in trying to bring someone to Christ. Rather you would say God loves you. Christ died for you. You can have eternal life.

6 They did not say, 'Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?'

This ties in with what we do with our minds again. They did not *remember* the God that had saved them. They didn't retain the Word in their minds. We have a tendency to forget. That is why so often in the Word you see the word "remember". We are to remember what God did for us!

7 And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things.

They were brought out of Egypt and into the promised land, but they forgot. We have been rescued out of the world and placed in Christ, but we can also forget as Demas did when he was enticed by some aspect of the world and wandered off.

But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination.

8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'

Oh, my goodness, this is key! You mean the leaders did not remind them of the Word?

Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds^a transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit.

The leaders, the teachers, the pastors, those in charge, even the prophets got involved with unclean spirits. So, the nature of our flesh, even the nature of the flesh of leaders is to wander.

What Do You Love? How Do We Know What We Really Love?

When Christ addressed the scribes and pharisees, the leaders of the time, he said "You love the chief seats." You like everybody looking up to you and saying, "Hey that guy is pretty important!" "That scribe really knows the Bible."

Another place it says, "You love the praise of men." You love it when people say, "That was a great sermon, pastor!" You love hearing such accolades and live for them. And what happens with leaders? They don't want to tell people the really hard things. Really truthful things like, "You are sinning, and you need to get back on track."

Examine Ourselves - Discover Our Blindspots

We have rec the mandate in scripture to "examine ourselves" from 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 13:5-7

5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you fail to meet the test! **6** I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. **7** But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed.

How does this actually take place where we see the blindspots in ourselves. For example, within marriage lets say you and your spouse each have five things that you consistently do that are just not quite in alignment with the Word. You each have to deal with your own five and your spouses five and the repercussions of them all...it is astounding that any marriage lasts!

This is how the body of Christ is to function. We can lovingly share with one another areas that are “off of God’s Word” and help one another. This is where accountability comes in.

James 5:16

[6](#) Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

God is going to make it known to us one way or another and as it says in Hebrews...

Hebrews 12:11

[11](#) For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

How is God going to make known to me things that I can correct, change, improve? How is He going to show me the blindspots I have etc.? First, it can be just by sitting down and reading the Word and as you read you realize that you are doing or not doing what you read. Second, the spirit of God can work within you when you are listening to a teaching be it live, on the radio, or from a recording. Third, another believer can bring it to your attention in a loving way. The Greek word is [noutheteó](#) which means to help one another, to warn one another, admonish one another, correct one another, exhort one another. This requires great trust in one another.

Colossians 3:16

[16](#) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing ([noutheteó](#)) one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

It can't be, “Okay Angela I am out to get you!” But rather, “I love Angela, I want her to grow to maturity too.” And then on the receiving end Angela has to realize that I have her best interests at heart, and I am offering encouragement in the spirit of helping her to grow and change even though it may sting a bit when it is first pointed out. Then as a body, the whole body together becomes more Christlike. That’s why we can be unified and other people will say, “Wow! Those people are different! They are not like the world. They are actually living unselfishly and not just with an everything-for-themselves attitude.”

I recently experienced this in my own life where someone lovingly pointed out a blindspot to me and I had to acknowledge the need to change in that area. This is one of the benefits of teaching. You may be aware of the cycles in the Word. We are supposed to receive, retain, and release. These are known as the “3 R’s”.

James 1:21 (Receive)

[21](#) Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and **receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

Psalms 119:11 (Retain – hundreds of places)

[11](#) I have **stored up your word in my heart**, that I might not sin against you.

Ephesians 6:19 (Release)

19 and (pray) also for me, that words may be given to me in **opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,**

As you release God's Word more of it comes in and this cycle should go on and on so that we can continue to grow and change.

How do we know what we love? Some people love the limelight. Some love recognition, acclaim, competition, alcohol, or sex. Some love music, entertainment, or sports. We should each examine ourselves and discover: "I love this _____ so much that I do this _____." There are so many things that can allure us away from the "true riches" which is the Word.

In our next session, we will begin to look at the change process and what we do with our minds. We have looked at the world, flesh, and devil. There is a way out!

Colossians 1:13

13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.