***Our Purpose is to Please God
RO99-02***

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We are studying Romans 8:5-8. Our subject is "Pleasing God," and this is segment number three.

**The Product of Sin is always Death**

Unbelievers have a mental viewpoint which is governed by their sin natures, and therefore, they live a life, Paul tells us, which is characterized by death. The product of sin is always death, both in eternal terms and in temporal terms. This is what James 1:15 means when it says, "Then when lust (the expression of the sin nature) has conceived, it brings forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, brings forth evil." The pattern is a mental attitude sin – a mental attitude that goes to maturity, and then it is expressed overtly, and the consequences are death. That can be death in terms of your breaking of your fellowship with God the Father as a Christian. It will be death in terms of eternal death for those who are unbelievers.

**Adam and Eve**

This, of course, is what Adam and Eve were told in Genesis 2:17, when the God created them, and set them up in a perfect environment. He was very explicit to them concerning the issue of sin: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." The only sin of which Adam and Eve were capable in the Garden of Eden was negative volition. And the negative volition (sin) was in reference specifically to eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So, they were told from the beginning, "If you do go negative and sin, the consequence will be death."

So, the sin nature of man expresses itself in a variety of ways that lead to death. This death is transmitted through a period of violence, and the violence, which naturally follows from the acts of the sin nature, have filled the world with cemeteries, and is filling Hades with those who are doomed to the lake of fire for eternity.

Believers, on the other hand, have a mental viewpoint which is governed by the Holy Spirit, and therefore are characterized by a life of peace. The Holy Spirit leads a Christian into the will of God, and thus into a meaningful life here on this earth. The Holy Spirit controls the believer, so that believer enjoys the peace of God moment-by-moment in all he does. Furthermore, the Christians daily walk is one that has upon it the real quality of meaningful living. His life is one of peace, and his life is one of significant living. This does not mean, however, that he is free from the sufferings of the angelic warfare. The demonic angels and Satan are always seeking to undermine the Christian in some way – to bring misery into his life. So, you must be careful to realize, while we who are led of the Spirit of God are characterized by true living and peace, that does not mean that we are free from the sufferings that go along with the angelic conflict.

The basic attitude of the sin nature mentality toward God, Paul says, is hatred. It is this hatred toward God which invites death to the unbeliever. If you hate God, you're asking for death. Proverbs 8:36 puts it this way: "But he that sins against Me wrongs his own soul. All they that hate me love death. And that hatred is expressed, Paul says, as hostility toward God. Those who are hostile toward God love death, in effect. And that's exactly where they will end up. This hostility is expressed in total rejection of the Bible with its moral standards, and it is expressed in abuse of the ministries of spiritual Christians.

There is, therefore, a point beyond which spiritual phenomena (spiritual truth) should not be offered to those who are negative. When people turn their back upon the Word of God, you do not keep hammering away at them. The Bible forbids that. It says that if you do that, they will simply trample underfoot what you give them, like dogs or swine trampling upon pearls. They will, furthermore, because of their hostility toward God, turn against the servant, and abuse that individual with some kind of verbal or overt violence. The Word of God says, "Move on. Go to the next person." The Bible doctrine principle, then, is to go on to those who are positive, and to those who are receptive, and to save your efforts for those.

So, today, in Romans 8:7, the first phrase says, "Because the title line is enmity against God" – it is hostility against God. Then it goes on to explain what it means by that. It says, "For." This is the Greek preposition "gar," which introduces the explanation for this hostility toward God. It would seem that that's crazy for a human being to feel that kind of an attitude toward God. But there is a reason for it. It says that the reason is: "That this sin nature is not subject to the law of God," and the word "not" is that strong Greek "not:" "ou." And what it is not is "subject." This is a military word at this point: "hupostasso." "Hupostasso" means "to rank under." It comes from this preposition "hupo," which means "under," and "stasso," the verb, which means "to stand." So this word means "to stand under," or "to arrange under," or "to put in subjection to constituted authority."

So here, Paul, in Romans 7, says about the sin nature: "It is not under the authority of the law of God." It is in the present tense, which means that it's constantly not in subjection. And it's the middle voice, which means that the sin nature just will not subject itself. If you let it go on its own, it's not going to bow down to God. It refers to "the law of God," referring to God as the law-giver in terms of moral standards.

Then it adds the word "neither," and it uses this word "oude," which is a conjunction. And you see our little word "ou" in that word here – that strong negative in the Greek language. And this is a strong word. It says here that it absolutely indeed cannot (it absolutely cannot) – it indeed cannot be subject. The world "cannot" is "dunamai." "Dunamai" means "to be able." The idea is to have power to do something.

**The Unbeliever Hates God's Laws**

So, the Bible says, "Your sin nature is not subject to the principles of doctrine (to the moral code of God). And indeed, it cannot be." It is not possible for the sin nature to be subject to the law of God. The sin nature controlled mind of the unbeliever, therefore, cannot be receptive to God's moral law. The moral laws of God stand in the way of what the unbeliever wants to do. So, he hates the mind of Christ. He hates God's laws (God's restrictions).

Furthermore, he is always championing for society to remove them. He does not want society to take the attitude that they must enforce the moral laws of God Paul upon society. He does not want society to say, "If you steal, we are going to punish you." He does not want society to say, "If you kill somebody, we are going to take your life." He does not want society to say, "If you practice perverted public sex, we are going to stop you." He doesn't want them to do that. Right down the line, whatever the moral law of God says, this is the way you must function if you are going to preserve society in peace, and preserve yourself from violence. The sin nature mentality hates God so much that it makes no difference to him what the consequences are. He does not want to do it. God's existence, in effect, is denied by these people, and the mind is controlled by a set of a moral code of its own invention, to justify its evil ways.

**It is not Possible for the Sin Nature to Obey God**

So, verse 7 has told us something significant. The sin nature mentality is hateful and hostile toward God. It is, furthermore, not subject to God's rules and thinking at any point. And, as a matter of fact, it's not possible for the sin nature to obey God. So, that tells us that anytime we walking out of the Spirit, and anytime we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, we are walking under the control of the sin nature, and we are not pleasing God.

That sometimes is confusing to Christians, because they do the same things when they are out of fellowship as they do when they are in fellowship. When they are out of fellowship, they still show up to run a club meeting, and they don't have the foggiest notion that: "Hey, man, the sin nature is functioning here, I'm not pleasing God." And it's not about to please God. They walk in there, and they teach the same Sunday school class in the same way, even though they are out of fellowship, and now they do not distinguish it. They're completely out of pleasing God. They walk in there, and they lead the same training union. They perform whatever service they're engaged in, that they engage in day-by-day, not realizing that it's possible to do that same thing and be completely out of the category of pleasing God, because sin nature has taken over. When it's in control; when you have grieved the Spirit; when you have quench the spirit; and, when you have refused to walk by means of the Spirit via the principles of doctrine, then you cannot please God.

**They that are under the Control of the Sin Nature cannot Please God**

Verse 8 sums it up. It says, "So then." It begins with this word "so then" as a transition to a conclusion or a summary: "They that are." That's our Greek verb "eimi," referring to the status quo of the lost person – his actual, continual condition: "They that are in." The word "in" is the preposition "en," indicating that you're inside of a situation (a location): in what he calls: "the flesh" (the "sarx"). The "sarx" here refers to the sin nature. So, they that are in (that is, under the control of) the sin nature cannot please God. And again, he uses that same word "dunamai," with the strong negative "ou." They simply cannot please God. The unbeliever – it is constantly true of him, cannot personally please God. He does not have the capacity to do that.

The word "please" is "aresko." "Aresko" means "to do what is acceptable." It means "to walk in fellowship with." Those that are under the control of the sin nature cannot, at any point in time, personally walk in such a way that they please God. This is in the infinitive mood, expressing result here. This is the result of being unsaved. But don't forget that it is the result of being carnal as well. You simply cannot please God. And, of course, he uses the word "theos," indicating of whom he speaks. God is the only one whose opinion counts.

How many crazies we have in the Christian community, who run around making a good impression among themselves, and thinking that somehow this is going to count with God – forgetting the fact that it is God who knows what's going on. It is God who knows whether you are pleasing to Him or not. And that's all that counts. The unbeliever's mental disorientation leads him to pretend that God doesn't exist, or to pretend that God hasn't communicated His mind. The unbeliever has no motivation from his sin nature to please God. He wants only to please himself, including how to go to heaven. Most people don't like God's system for going to heaven, and therefore, they come up with their own system. Most people do not like the grace gift, no-human-effort system. They want to involve something on their own.

Well, where's that going to get them? Are they going to please God with this? No, you're not going to please Him, and you will end up in the lake of fire. The sin nature in a believer or in an unbeliever cannot possibly please God. Positive volition is not possible for those who are under the control of the sin nature.

**Summary of Romans 8:6-8**

So, there are four characteristics that we picked up in this little passage on pleasing God. Verse 6 has told us that everything that the sin nature does dooms a person to death. It has the kiss of death upon it. Verse 7 has told us that the sin nature is hostile toward God, and doesn't want any of His opinions or guidance. Verse 7 also has told us that the sin nature person is disobedient to God's laws as well as to the implications of that law. Verse 8 has told us, consequently, the sin nature person cannot do anything to please God. He cannot merit heaven, and he cannot merit rewards.

Now that's a pretty strong summary. Why is Paul putting that up here right at the first of Romans 8? Because this is chapter where he's going to tell us how to live a godly life – how to be Christians: true members of the royal family of God in our conduct.

**Only God can Please God**

So, the first thing he wants to say is, "Now, people, listen. Let's get it right up front. You cannot do it. You cannot be very pietistic. You cannot meditate. You cannot have personal private devotions. You cannot read the Bible. You cannot do all of these valuable things in their own way, and thus, please God. Only God can please God. When you get that, you can lean back and breathe the same sigh of relief that you did when you discovered that only God can secure salvation for you. Once you realize that it didn't depend upon what you did, then, like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, the burden finally tore loose from his shoulders and rolled down the hill. And he stood up straight for the first time as a free man, because he finally realized that he didn't have to do anything about securing his salvation. He only had to accept it. It had already been secured by God, and that is the only way it could be provided.

Now we have the same principle here. Paul is saying, "We all have a sin nature. When we are on our own, that's the only thing we can fall back upon." Oh, sure, the more educated you are; the more cultured you are; the more refined you are; then, the more of a veneer you have over that brutal sin nature. But he says, "Make no mistake. It's hostile toward God. It hates God. It doesn't want God's opinion. It's not interested in what He wants you to do. It wants to be out on its own. It's going to resist all the way. And whatever it does for you will end up in death. It will destroy your fellowship with the Father as a Christian. It will lead you into the lake of fire as an unbeliever.

So, he's stressing very strongly that you cannot please God as an unbeliever. But as a believer, as a born-again person, you can please God. The Christian has been freed from that absolute grasp of the sin nature. As we've learned earlier in the book of Romans, the sin nature is no longer your lord. The Christian now willingly chooses whom to obey. He willingly chooses to obey his Heavenly Father. He has the capacity for positive volition. With the guidance of the doctrine of Scripture, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is able to please God, just as Jesus did in His humanity. He used the same system. He learned the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit explained it, and illuminated it to His humanity, and He went positive and applied it. This is the same way that you and I can do.

**In Eternity**

So, since God has provided the solution to enable a sinner to please God, all lost people are without excuse, no matter how many other people may agree with their viewpoint on salvation and so on. God has provided a way by which you can please Him. So, whatever human good the unsaved performs, it's evil with God. Yet, people who produce all kinds of human good evil are honored; praised; rewarded; and, esteemed in a variety of ways. In religion; in politics; in education; in science; in social work; and, in business, they are elevated and they are honored. But God says, "It does not please Him." Isn't that going to be amazing when you get to heaven, and you get back in the perspective of eternity? Just think of all the famous people who are receiving Nobel Peace Prizes, and Nobel Science Prizes, and Nobel Literature Prizes, and Nobel Education Prizes, and the people who are honored in the religious world, and they're the big names, and everybody froths at the mouth over them, and they have a powerful, influential voice – only to get to eternity, and to see them as little peanuts, if they're there at all, with the stamp across them: "Displeased:" "God Displeased." That's what's going to happen. There's a great deal of functioning on the sin nature that the world honors, but which God rejects.

**Salvation by Grace via the Holy Spirit**

The unbeliever is so controlled by his sin nature that he will not even accept salvation by grace unless the Holy Spirit enables him to do so? Don't forget that the only reason you sit here born again today is because the Holy Spirit looked at you, and for whatever reason I can't say, and decided to override your sin nature resistance to salvation. That's the only reason you accepted it.

John 16:8 says, "And when He is come (God the Holy Spirit), He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." And this is the only ministry that God the Holy Spirit performs for the unsaved person. He reproves this person of sin because he has not believed in Jesus Christ. He brings him under the conviction of his evil. He knows he has a problem with a holy God. And then He shows this person that there is a righteousness which has been provided by God through Jesus Christ. And suddenly, the unsaved person sees that here is a righteousness: "I am condemned by sin, but here's a righteousness that will wipe it all out, and God's going to offer it to me. But how can he do that?"

The Holy Spirit makes one other thing clear, because God has judged the devil on the cross. The devil was beaten. His hold upon you has been broken. When a person realizes this, he says, "What am I waiting for? Satan's hold on me is broken. There's a righteousness available. It will cover my sin. I take it. That's a good deal." Now that can only be understood when God the Holy Spirit comes through and makes it clear. The unbeliever is totally depraved, no matter how culture; how compassionate; or, what a human good veneer he puts on the outside. He has total inability to meet the standards of God.

**God's Purpose for a Christian's Life is to Please God**

It is the purpose of God for the Christian to live a life that pleases God. Let's look at a few Scriptures on that, just to establish that. It is the will of God that you please Him: not yourself; not other people; not your wife; not your husband; not your children; not your associates; and, not anybody else – that you please God. So, whatever endeavor you go into in life, what is the number one priority that must motivate you? Pleasing God. If you are a teacher, what is the number one thing that must motivate you? Pleasing God. Therefore, you must deal with the truth, not with what's going to please your associates; not with what is going to please the people who may want you to promote something that is evil and false; and, not that which will make you look good in the eyes of your colleagues. Only if you please God. And when you please God, you look bad in the eyes of your colleagues in the field of education. If you're going to be a politician, what should be the motivating factor? That which pleases God.

Suppose that the people who put you into office want something that is wrong. Then what do you do? You say, "Well, I must do that or they won't elect me." At this point, doctrine must come in and say, "First of all, as a Christian, you are required to please God. If you are voted out of office, that you leave with God. The thing you are required to do is what is right, no matter how many people want you to do what is wrong. And you can apply that business, and to every other area of life. The number one criteria for the Christian life is to please God. You do this in all personal relationships within the home, as well as outside of the home – pleasing God. That's number one. When that's in place, everything else lines up. That is what we are called to do.

Notice Romans 14:16: "Let not then your good be evil spoken of. For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he, that in these things serves Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men." We are called to do that which is right. Here it's talking about these things that we enjoy: the pleasures; the food; the drinking; the eating; and, all those things. That must be done in a way that pleases God. Otherwise it becomes an evil.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10: "Wherefore we labor that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." "Present or absent" means whether I'm alive or I'm dead and in the Lord's presence: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." Now that makes it very clear that the best way to go into God's presence is following a life which has pleased Him.

Galatians 1:10 puts it this way: "For do I now seek the favor of men, or of God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ." That is beautifully put. Do I please men, or do I please God. I don't care what your profession is, there's your guideline. The number one calling of the Christian life is to please God. And in a sin nature-controlled society, you can imagine how often pleasing God is going to displease men.

Ephesians 5:15-17: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore, be not advised, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." "Don't waste your life," Paul says. "Know the Word of God. Let it be illuminated by the Spirit of God, and then go positive for that, so that you know how to live." Otherwise, you're pulling your life down a rat hole, and you're going to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and you're going to see that you did not walk circumspectly, which means that you watched your step, but you walked as a fool, and you tripped and you fell, and you wasted your life.

Colossians 3:18-25 put it this way: "Wives, submit yourself unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoked not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ. But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons." Please God, and enjoy rewards, because God is going to give you, at His Judgment Seat exactly what you deserve.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 says, "Furthermore, then, we beseech you brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus that, as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more." That is a good summary statement. Paul says, "I've taught to you in a variety of ways that the calling of the Christian life is to please God.

**How can we Override the Sin Nature?**

Now the sin nature is what undermines that call. It is the sin nature within us that prevents us from doing exactly that. So, how are we going to override it? How are we going to get this Holy Spirit mentality? Remember, that we had this word "phronema" in the Greek. It means "a mindset," or means "a mind attitude," or, a controlling element of the Spirit of God. So, everything that projects from that mind is oriented to divine viewpoint, over against a sin nature-controlled mind, so that everything that clicks out from that mind is anti-God, and in hostility to God. How are we going to bring the mind into control?

**Romans 12:2**

There is an enormously important passage to guide us in that. Let's leap ahead to Romans 12:2. Here you have it all laid out, if you can follow it. If you can pay attention, and if you can get the details of these words, you'll have it all: "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." This is simple little verse, but what does it really say?

Let's take a look at the words: "Be not conformed." The word "conformed" is "suschematizo." "Suschematizo" means "to fashion to some pattern."

When I was a little primary kid, I can remember one memory of enjoying playing with clay. And I used to sit in the kitchen and look out the window through the backyard at the telephone pole. And I would build out of play a telephone pole, with all the long pole and all the arms, and all the little blobs on them. And what I was doing (unbeknownst) was "suschematizo." I was fashioning a telephone pole after a pattern that I was looking at out there, and modeling it after. There was a pattern, and I was reproducing it. That's what this word means.

The first part of this word, "schema" means "a figure." It refers to the external pattern of a thing. That is a very important part of the meaning of this word. When he says, "Don't fashion to some pattern, he's talking about outwardly: the way you dress yourself; what cosmetics you use; the way you walk; the way you talk; and, the way everything is about you externally. It says, "Don't pattern yourself externally. And it's this part "schema" which indicates an external pattern. "Fashion" is a good word that we would use.

In 1 Corinthians 7:31, let's illustrate this. We have this "schema" used, which refers to an external pattern: "And they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passes away." The external fashion of this world passes away. The pattern of life which characterizes Satan's world passes away. Do I have to tell any woman here today that fashions has passed away? Men can wear suits from 25 years ago. I've got some beauties, but you women can hardly wear your dresses from 25 years ago. Well, maybe you can, because the fashions do come back. This is what is constantly changing.

So, "suschematizo" here means to pattern oneself externally after some model. It is used in 1 Peter 1:2 of a Christian living externally according to the pattern of his unsaved days. And Peter said, "Don't do that." 1 Peter 1:14: "As obedient children, not fashioning ("suschematizo") yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. He says, "Don't keep living as a Christian the way you did when you were an unsaved person. When you were controlled by the sin nature mentality, you lived in a certain way. You did certain things. Now that you're a Christian, those things are vile; they're obscene; and, they're evil. Don't talk that way. Don't think that way. Don't act like that. Don't go to those places. Don't find your fun in that way. Do it in a way that is honoring to the Lord Jesus as a member of the royal family of God.

There's another word that is a related word: "metaschematizo." But it's still has this "schema" part – this part that stresses the external. Basically, it's a related word. It means the same thing. Notice how this word is used in 2 Corinthians 11:14 in speaking about Satan. It tells you something interesting about the devil: "And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed ('metaschematizo') into an angel of light." How? Does he change his inward essence? Does he become spiritually godly on the inside, so that he appears as an angel of light? No. This beautiful little word "schema" tells us that when he transforms himself to look like good, when it's human, vile, evil good, it's only an external transformation. He makes himself look attractive outwardly. And that's exactly the way Satan does with sin after sin. You see it on your television all the time – one kind of evil thing after another being promoted, and being advertised. But it's always presented in a very attractive package. So, Satan comes along, and presents his vileness in a package that looks externally attractive. It looks, as a matter of fact, like it's a package of enlightenment.

**Charismatics**

Satan does this on a wide scale in the charismatic movement which borders on the occult in the things they do. What happens in the Pentecostal charismatic movement is exactly, basically, what happens in the occult, and in these experiential expressions. What Satan is doing there is putting on an external appearance that makes him appear (and what he is doing) as something that is godly and enlightened.

2 Corinthians 11:15 indicates something more: "Therefore, if Satan changes himself outwardly to look like he is representing God, therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers (human and demonic) also be transformed ('metaschematizo') as the ministers of righteousness, who then shall be according to their works." There are plenty of religious con men running around out there, who are robing themselves as instruments of righteousness, and who are covering themselves with the image of being representatives of God and His enlightened truth, who, in fact, are agents of Satan, and who, in fact, are speaking in behalf of Satan.

So, we have this word "suschematizo" here in Romans 12:2. Paul says, "And be not conformed." This word refers to the Christian following the external lifestyle of the unsaved world. It has with it the negative ("me"), such that you should not do this. It is present tense. You are to continually avoid patterning your life according to the sin nature mentality. So, don't come along and give us that nonsense of the fact that you're in business, and sometimes you have to do business the world's way, and you have to be a dirty, sneaking, cheat. The Word of God says, "No, you don't. You don't have to say that, "In social relationship, I have to be undermined and deceitful in order to gain good objectives" – the end justifying the means mentality. No, the Word of God said that the end does not justify the evil means that you may use.

This is continually. It is present tense ("suschematizo"), and present tense means you are continually not to pattern your conduct externally after Satan's world. It is middle voice, which means that you're not to do it to yourself, and you ought to have enough brains that when you do pattern your life in all these externals that characterize the world, you're doing it to yourself, and you are bringing injury to yourself.

Furthermore, you don't have any option, folks. It's imperative. It's a divine command. God says, "Just don't you do it." Well, what is it that He does not specifically want us to externally conform ourselves to? He says, "Be not conformed to this world." Well, the word "world" is not really what the Bible uses. In the Greek Bible, the word "world" is "kosmos." That's not the word that is there. The word that is there is this word: "aion." And again, you won't see that from your English Bible, generally. "Aion" means age. Don't pattern your life to that which is characteristic of the church age in which we live. Don't pattern your life according to the church age, which is the age in which we live. The word "aion" means an era of time.

Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of God and our Father." So, the Lord Jesus conveys to us, through the apostle Paul, that the age in which we live is an evil age. Now, of course, he told that to His disciples when He was here. He said, "This is going to be an age where you're going to have wheat and tears growing together. And boy, they are going to look at a certain stage so identical, that if you try to get the tears out, you're going to pull some of the wheat with it. You can't tell them apart. So, you just let them go together. But you be aware of the fact that you live in an evil age where there is this mixture of that which is divine viewpoint and that which is a human viewpoint. Here the age in human history in which the Christians live is equated with the world, and the system of life in this world, whose god is Satan.

**We Live in an Evil Age**

2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "In whom the God of this age (that is, Satan) has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Satan is the God of this age. He has put together a system of life, and that's what we mean when we say "world system." We mean that he has put together a system of education; a system of religion; a system of business; a system of social relationships; and, so on. It's a pattern – an external pattern. This is how people do things and think in these areas. And the age that we have is an evil age. The evil of this present age includes satanic human viewpoint thinking which characterizes the sin nature.

1 Corinthians 1:20 says, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where's the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The wisdom of this world (its sophisticated wisdom) is all around us. And God says, "It's foolish.

In 1 Corinthians 2:6, Paul says, "However, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect (mature); yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the princes of this age that come to nothing." We speak wisdom, but we're not talking about the wisdom that characterizes the human viewpoint thinking of our society. They think they're smart. God says, "They're stupid. They don't have it at all."

In 1 Corinthians 3:18-19, Paul says, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this age (this 'aion' – this evil age in which we live), let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He has taken the wise in their own craftiness."

Where would we come in a political realm, for example, if we had politicians who stood up and said, "I can give you divine viewpoint wisdom? This is what society needs. This is how we should function. These are the kinds of laws we should pass." All that human viewpoint gang out there with yell, "Dumb! Foolish!" They would reject it. God would yell back, "No, you're wrong. That's wisdom. He's right. And that's the course of blessing." And that's the conflict that you and I constantly struggle in – in whatever area of life we deal with. We're always faced with people who think they have wisdom; who think they have insight; and, who do not understand what is really taking place, because they all have the functioning mentality of this age, which is evil.

So, you can see how they came to translate this word "age" as "world," because they are interrelated. The world we live in is a system of evil. It's an evil age. What's characteristic of this evil age?

1 John 2:16 summarizes it for you: "For all that is in the world (the world's system of Satan) is the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and, the pride of life, is not of the Father, but it's of the world." So, that's what you're after, isn't it? What your sin nature physical structure lusts for, that's what motivates the world. What your eyes see, that's what you lust for – the covetousness: the big car; the big house; the big this; the big that; the luxury this; and, the luxury that. You can hardly even find young people who can get married today who don't want to start living at the same level that their parents are already at, who took 40 years to get there, because the lust of their eyes possesses them. They live in an age that makes it much easier to indulge those lusts.

The pride of life – the stupid little things in which human beings take pride under Satan's motivation. Some of the things that they take pride in, the Bible says are things of shame. They ought to be ashamed of them. And they take pride in it – such pride that they don't even mind flaunting it out for public observation. OK, that's the world system.

Jesus tells us, "Do not be patterning your external life according to that system." You analyze it. Don't go along with its fashions; with its styles; with its techniques; and, with its outlook.

So: "Be not conformed to this age" means don't be a worldly Christian. Don't be a slave to the dress fashions of the sin nature. Don't use the vile, obscene language of this age. It dishonors God. It demonstrates a lack of personal character on your part. Do not finance the entertainments which belittle God's moral code: the TV shows and the movies that treat illicit sex and sin as normal and acceptable. Just don't go to them, and don't finance them.

Don't be obsessed with the world's pursuit of temporal things – your greedy and covetousness for things. Do not treat the opposite sex as a sensual toy for you to paw over with your hands, so you can get your jollies. And if you're a girl, try to have the divine viewpoint not to let some jerk paw over you to get his jollies. When we see that happening (and we see it), we pity you. And our heart goes out to you because you got caught up with the vileness, and the trash, and the vulgarity, and the debasement of the world system. Do not be a glutton, and don't go in for social drinking. This is a patterning of your outward lifestyle. When evil is permitted (that pattern), we don't escape it. We bear consequence as a society, as the AIDS syndrome is demonstrating to all of us now.

Well, what is the solution for this kind of worldly conduct, so that we are not conformed to the world's pattern, and so we're not cutting ourselves out to its stupid designs? Well, the rest of verse 2 tells us the secret of that. And we should look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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