

# SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SIN

## PART 26

### KEY TERMS: WORLD, PART 3

What is the key to operating in the world with a biblical worldview that does not embrace the tenets of the world and, in fact, rejects them and works against them? We are not only to reject being of the world, we are to actively oppose that world system. Daniel provided us with one key and Proverbs has a lot to say about wisely operating in the world without being of the world.

Daniel 2:14 <sup>14</sup>Then Daniel replied with discretion [עֲטָה] and discernment [טִעָם] to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

Discretion, עֲטָה, refers to the manner in which someone replies or acts with discernment, prudence, and wisdom. Discernment, טִעָם, is used figuratively and it means to use judgment or discretion. The Lord said we are not to be removed from the world and we are to represent Him in and to the world; therefore, we have to do it with a properly prepared mind. Discretion and discernment are keys to interacting with and being in the world but not of the world. It takes biblically informed wisdom to exercise discretion and discernment when dealing with the people of the world system.

The primary order of business for the believer coping with and living in the world system is to fear the Lord and learn sound doctrine. We also need to realize we cannot succeed by relying on our own strength; we have to rely on the God who has saved us and the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

Proverbs 1:7 <sup>7</sup>The fear [יִרְאָה] of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge [דַּעַת]; Fools [אֱוִילִים] despise wisdom [חֵכְמָה] and instruction [מוֹסֵר].

Fear, יִרְאָה, means reverence or fear. It can mean worship and it can refer to wonder and astonishment. It is a state of piety and respect toward a superior. In this case, it appears to refer to both “shrinking back in fear and of drawing close in awe. It is not a trembling dread that paralyzes action, but neither is it a polite reverence. ‘The fear of the Lord’ ultimately expresses reverential submission to the Lord’s will and thus characterizes a true worshiper” [Allen P. Ross, “Proverbs” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 5:907].

Knowledge, דַעַת, means understanding and wisdom. It pertains to knowing the information about a person with a strong implication of relationship to that person. It is more than simply accumulating intellectual information; it encompasses a relationship with God and an ethical system of living. Today, an ethical system of living means living according to the precepts of biblical truth.

Fool, אָוִיל, is a person operating without understanding and so not using his capacity for understanding. It is a rejection of the desire to understand. Fools reject wisdom and instruction. The fool is "shortsighted, poor in management, and not receptive to advice....the foolish people are those who do not know God; they do not have spiritual and ethical understanding, they are clever to do evil but do not know how to do good. The way the redeemed of the Lord will walk is the way of holiness, where the unclean and [the fool] will not walk" [*Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, s. v. "אָוִיל"]. In the New Testament, the concept of the fool does not necessarily refer only to unbelievers; believers can walk in the way of the fool as well.

Instruction, מוֹסֵר, means instruction, correction, chastisement, discipline, or punishment. It has to do with teaching by exhortation and example with the understanding that there are consequences for disobedience that will be enforced. This word is used in connection with oral instruction so it is associated with studying, knowing, and applying the Word of God. Fools reject the instruction and the correction of God, in whatever manner they are subject to it, and they fail to learn any lesson from Him. It is used here as comparable to employing wisdom both of which are something the fool rejects. The believer is to seek out instruction and then put what he has learned into practice. This is a major component for enabling believers to live in the world but to not be of the world.

Proverbs 2:1–15 <sup>1</sup>My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, <sup>2</sup>Make your ear attentive to wisdom [הַחֲכִמָּה], Incline your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup>For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; <sup>4</sup>If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; <sup>5</sup>Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup>For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. <sup>7</sup>He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, <sup>8</sup>Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. <sup>9</sup>Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course. <sup>10</sup>For wisdom will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; <sup>11</sup>Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, <sup>12</sup>To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things; <sup>13</sup>From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness; <sup>14</sup>Who delight in doing evil And rejoice in the perversity of evil; <sup>15</sup>Whose paths are crooked, And who are devious in their ways;

Wisdom, חָכְמָה, is the capacity to understand and so have skill in living implying adherence to a set standard. Wisdom flows from the knowledge and practice of sound doctrine which Solomon defines as His [God's] "words" and His [God's] "commandments." Knowing the Word of God instills wisdom that guards you, watches over you, and delivers you from evil. Wisdom in practice allows believers to interact with the world for the purpose of glorifying God and it allows them to avoid becoming part of this evil world system. "...wisdom is intimately related to the divine knowledge, manifesting itself in the selection of proper ends with the proper means for their accomplishment...in the highest sense it is the theoretical and practical acceptance of divine revelation" [Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s. v. "wisdom"]. Wisdom flows from the Word of God; therefore, knowing the Word of God is foundational to exercising wisdom. The believer who is not only in the world but of the world lacks wisdom and renders himself defenseless and useless as an ambassador for Christ.

This evil age is actually in the process of dying and once it is finished, it will be replaced by the Messianic Kingdom. A dead and dying world has no wisdom to offer those who are in Christ. It is not the Lord's desire for those who are His to love an evil system that is antichrist in nature.

1 Corinthians 2:6 <sup>6</sup>Yet we do speak wisdom [σοφία] among those who are mature; a wisdom [σοφία], however, not of this age [αἰών] nor of the rulers of this age [αἰών], who are passing away;

In Greek, wisdom, σοφία, means wisdom, prudence, and discretion. It refers to the capacity to understand and therefore to act. In relation to God, σοφία means "wisdom, knowledge, insight, deep understanding, represented everywhere as a divine gift, and including the idea of practical application...*Sophia* stands for divine wisdom, the ability to regulate one's relationship with God..."[Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s. v. "σοφία"]. "For as wisdom is not essentially the accumulation of a body of knowledge but a mode of existence before God, so, too, folly is not a lack of knowledge but a life apart from God...worldly wisdom that rejects the cross, whether in its Jewish or Greek variety, is proved to be foolishness, i.e., rebellion against God in the form of human self-exaltation and boasting" [*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s. v. "σοφία"]. The wisdom of the world is man centered and it flows from Satan; the wisdom the Christian should be utilizing is Christ centered and it flows from knowing sound doctrine. The Christian should be exercising wisdom that is qualitatively and wholly different from the wisdom employed by those in the world system. There should be a difference in the way believers think, live, and view the world and that difference should be visible to the people of the world.

1 John 2:8 <sup>8</sup>On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

1 John 2:15–18 <sup>15</sup>Do not love the world [κόσμος] nor the things in the world [κόσμος]. If anyone loves the world [κόσμος], the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world [κόσμος], the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world [κόσμος]. <sup>17</sup>The world [κόσμος] is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. <sup>18</sup>Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

“John is not so sanguine as to believe that his readers do not need to be warned against ‘loving’ the world. Even though he has just praised their spiritual attainments (verses 12-14), this warning is necessary. The world, conceived of as a moral and spiritual system designed to draw humanity away from the living God, is profoundly seductive (see verse 16) and no Christian, however advanced, is fully immune to its allurements. If Christians think they are impervious to its blandishments, they do not understand the intrinsic sinfulness of their own hearts. By their overconfidence they invite the very failure to which they feel they are immune: ‘Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall’ (1 Corinthians 10:12). So the Christian must not love the world as a whole, neither should he love any of its sinful components, the things of the world. A Christian can easily delude himself into thinking that he does not love the world at all, when, in fact, he is deeply attracted to one or another of its sinful aspects....Our attitude toward the world is a touchstone of our love for God or of our lack of love for Him. It is impossible to love both the world and God at the same time. Christians are often eager to deny this impossibility and are tempted to compartmentalize their affections and to claim still to love God while obviously loving some sinful aspect of the world system. But the apostle denies this as a possibility” [Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God’s Love*, p. 101-102].

Luke 16:13 <sup>13</sup>“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

James 4:4 <sup>4</sup>You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

These are very strong words. Christians have a decision to make; are they going to commit to the Lord or are they going to capitulate to the world system? The lust of the

flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are the core elements of the world system. These things are not from God. God created the physical world but the moral value system of the world that is evident in religion, economics, and politics was instituted by Satan when Adam rejected the Word of God, rebelled against His Creator, and gave Satan what God had assigned to him which was the rulership of the world. It is very significant to note that during the Temptation Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to the Lord and the Lord did not deny his authority to make that offer. To the extent God allows, the world system—religious, political, and economic—is under the control of Satan and it will be under his control until the Lord returns to begin the Millennial Kingdom. We don't know exactly what Satan's limits are in this age but it is clear that those limits are quite broad for now.

Matthew 4:8–10<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; <sup>9</sup>and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ”

It is instructive that the Lord immediately went to the Word of God in order to combat Satan's efforts to destroy Him. The only offensive weapon we have in our arsenal to fight the spiritual warfare battles of this age is the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:10–17<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup>Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, <sup>15</sup>and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; <sup>16</sup>in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

We must be strong in the Lord in order to be enabled to stand firm against the satanic forces at work in this evil age. It is the Lord whose strength is at work in us. Anyone who tries to engage the enemy in his own strength will be defeated. The armor is provided by God and it is everything we need and it is particularly suited for fighting this spiritual battle. Believers who are walking apart from the Lord and in consort with the spirit of the age are like Samson without his hair; their strength is gone and they are defenseless. This battle is a defensive battle; we are to stand firm against the lying, evil schemes of this age whenever, however, and wherever they strike.

We simply cannot love God and love the world at the same time; they are mutually exclusive positions to hold. As an observer of the contemporary Christian scene, I believe this is an extremely serious problem in not only the American church but in the world church. Christians not only love the world but their leaders have invited the world into the sanctuary. If the world is in the pulpit and the sanctuary, the written Word of God and the living Word of God are both missing. I'm not suggesting that Christians completely forsake being in the world in order to isolate themselves and engage in aesthetic practices as the monks and nuns of the Roman Catholic Church do. Constable notes, "Many Christians today struggle with an unbiblical view of separation that tends more toward isolationism than sanctification" [Thomas L Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible*] and we are not to isolate ourselves from the world. We are called to be in the world in order to engage the world as ambassadors of Christ. The prohibition is not to become a person of the world.

1 Corinthians 5:9–11 <sup>9</sup>I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup>I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother [anyone named a brother, *τις ὀνομαζόμενος ἀδελφός*] if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

Notice how theology was slipped into this verse by the translators. Paul is not referring to a "so-called" brother as though a believer could not commit the listed sins. Paul is saying believers can and do commit these sins. I'm suggesting that by virtue of that behavior, they are loving the world and bringing that attitude into the assembly. At the least, Christian discipline needs to be exercised; believers are to correct the sin among them while still reaching out to the world. That allows them to control access to the assembly to minimize the intrusion of the world system while they can go out into the world to do their work for the Lord. Constable understands Paul to be saying the church is not to keep this person out of the worship service but not to socialize with this believer either, i.e., cease fellowshiping with him until he repents of that sin. [Thomas L Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible*]. The point I'm making is to allow overt, public sin to exist in the church is to give tacit approval to the ways of the world system in the assembly. We are not to fellowship with unbelievers at their level but to associate with them in the world in order to show them the true Light and to be Christ's ambassador to them. That is not the same thing as becoming one of the world and fellowshiping with the world; it is representing Christ to a lost and dying world. The KJV and the NKJV translate this "anyone named a brother" and the ASV translate it "anyone that is named a brother" and those are straightforward, literal translations. The HCSB renders it "anyone who claims to be a believer" so that is somewhat ambiguous

and the RSV has it “anyone who bears the name of brother” which is also just a bit ambiguous but better.

In practical terms, what does this look like for the believer trying to follow the Lord's recognition of his position as being that of a person who is in the world but not of the world? We still have to interact with this world system in various ways. We have to make a living according to the dictates of the world's economic system that is in force at this time. We are still subject to a government that is corrupt and beholden to its commander Satan. We are daily bombarded by the world's mode of thought in the news media, education, entertainment, sports, and so on; it is impossible to completely escape it and it seems the Lord's will is not to remove us from it at this time. It is also becoming apparent that our government is beginning to actively and seriously attack Christians and Christianity. While, thankfully, it isn't a problem in our local body of Christ, many professing believers and their local churches are operating according to the tenets of the pagan world religious system. How then can we be effective ambassadors for Christ while surrounded by and living in this evil world system? Stated in biblical terms, how can we be in the world but not of the world?

In order to live in the world and, at the same time, not live as a person of the world, the first order of business for the new believer is to become attached to a faithful local body of believers. This body must be led by a pastor who is faithfully teaching sound doctrine. We all exist in our own local environment. If a new believer is not interacting within a community of believers and being exposed to sound biblical doctrine, then that person is only interacting with the world system and that system remains their only frame of reference. People will be influenced by the things with which they most surround themselves. When they separate themselves from associating with believers, people have experientially remained not only in the world but of the world and that is a dangerous place to be for any believer. As believers, they are positionally not of this world and with Christ but experientially they are still in the world.

The second order of business is to study the Bible and adopt the precepts of sound doctrine and put them into practice in one's daily thinking patterns and living arrangements. As that happens, the new believer's thinking can be altered, developed, and grown or matured into accepting and adopting a biblical worldview and that worldview will shape his manner of thinking and living. We have to operate in this world system with a biblical worldview. If we don't, then we are operating with the worldview of the world system. It has to be one or the other; those are the only two worldview options available to us. Unbelievers can only operate with the worldview of Satan's world system but believers can depart from that worldview and move into living with a biblical worldview. That has to happen in order for believers to be in the world but not of the world.

All believers have, in Christ, a perfect standing before God and they have been freed from His wrath. It is improper for the person who has been freed from the law of sin and death to continue to operate according to the dictates of a sinful, dying world system. It is improper then for that believer to stand in the world as one of the world. It is the duty and responsibility of the Christian to walk in a manner worthy of the one who has rescued him from sin and death. That walk can only be successful in unity with other believers the basis of that unity being doctrinal truth. "...a Christian's conduct concerns both his personal life and his responsibility to other believers in the church" [Harold W. Hoehner, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 632].

Ephesians 4:1 <sup>1</sup>Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

1 Thessalonians 2:11–12 <sup>11</sup>just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, <sup>12</sup>so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Walk, περιπατέω, means to walk (around), to behave, live, or conduct one's life. It is to live or behave in a customary manner with the possible focus on continuity of action. In this case it refers to living one's life. In other words, the believer is to live life in a manner that glorifies God. It is to live life in the way that He prescribes and that, by definition, precludes living life the way the world prescribes it to be lived. Walk in a manner worthy.

Paul wrote about the unity that should exist between believers, that is, those people who make up the body of Christ. The body cannot function at its optimal level without being unified. If some believers are living as part of the world and are absent from the body, the entire body suffers loss. If some believers are trying to be a part of both systems, they confuse the body and to the extent they bring the world into it, they damage it. Believers who are of the world remain immature and become subject to the corrupt influence of the world and the false teachers who represent it.

Ephesians 4:11–16 <sup>11</sup>And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup>but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what



every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

This is nothing new; Elijah had a similar problem. The people of Israel were remaining in the world of Baal rather than operating in the world of the living God. Elijah told them to make up their mind and follow one or the other.

1 Kings 18:21 <sup>21</sup>Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

The lesson is clear. If you are a believer, then live a life befitting your position in Christ, that is, live a life that is in the world but not of the world. Be connected to a Bible teaching body of Christ and learn sound doctrine. Develop a biblical worldview and live it out each day. The life lived of the world will miss out on the blessings that come from living life that is solidly in Christ and that life will forfeit some measure of reward and that loss will never be regained. It is worth noting Paul's imperative once more: walk in a manner worthy.