

Text: Titus 2.12

I find I am borrowing from previous material to answer the question “what about the Christian and media?”

In our first session we talked about the Christian instinct for sanctification, which prompts the question in the first place.

The media (however you define it) is part of the world. You don't have to go far in the New Testament to discover that the world is a problem.

In the second session, I mainly was occupied in working on a definition of worldliness. I have to say I was less happy with that message. It heavily relied on old notes, so without “new input” from studying deeply, I felt the message was a little flat. I hope you got the gist of it.

We will review part of that message to get started.

The last verse we looked at in considering aspects of “the world” in the New Testament was Titus 2.12. That is our text for today.

Tit 2.11-12 ¶ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

This is another passage pointing us away from the world. The Holy Spirit witnesses this in our hearts, so we know automatically that some things “just aren't right” for Christians.

I. Seven aspects of “the world” in the New Testament

1. It is common or profane – ‘babelos’, “worldly fables, worldly chatter” (1 Tim 4.7, 6.20, 2 Tim 2.16)
2. It is not spiritual, but is natural – ‘psukikos’, worldly-minded (natural minded) Jude 19, 1 Cor 15.44-49
3. It is oriented towards life in the flesh, humanity – ‘worldly troubles’ [‘according to the flesh’] (1 Cor 1.26, 7.28)
4. It is oriented towards concerns that are of this world as opposed to concerns of heaven – ‘worldly things’ [‘of this world’ things] (1 Cor 7.33, 34)
5. It is self-centered rather than God-centered – ‘worldly sorrow’ [‘sorrow of this world’ — as opposed to ‘godly sorrow’] (2 Cor 7.10)

6. It is earthly rather than heavenly – ‘the worldly tabernacle’ (Heb 9.1)
7. It involves worldly desires, the passions that motivated the lost mind (Titus 2.12)

A working definition:

Something is worldly when it belongs to the affairs of life on this earth, especially as opposed to the life of the spirit or of heaven.

II. The impulses of the Spirit (Tit 2.12)

A. Two denials

1. Deny ungodliness

- a. “in general ἀσέβεια is understood vertically as a lack of reverence for deity and hallowed institutions as displayed in sacrilegious words and deeds”¹
- b. Ungodliness “describes a way of life which shows no concern for duties to or worship of God. Such a person has a total disregard for what God says about any particular subject.”²
- c. Always has to do with bad conduct: esp. with respect to true religion

2. Deny worldly desires

- a. Desires characterized by this world (no upward look, as if there is no heaven)
- b. All that matters is grasping the things this world offers
 - 1) This can be something like power or the rush that comes from drugs, sex, or any other thing
 - 2) No consideration for consequences, in this world or the next

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

² W. Stanley Outlaw, “Commentary on the Books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy & Titus,” in *1 Thessalonians through Philemon*, ed. Robert E. Picirilli, The Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 1990), 389.

- 3) The consuming desire for possessions is worldly (even if it is something you need for life)
 - a) You need shelter: but if you are driven by worldly desires you are never satisfied with the shelter you have, you want more
 - b) You need food: but if you are driven by worldly desires, you want more

B. Three pursuits

1. Live sensibly: soberly, sensibly, under control
2. Live righteously: according to God's standards, submissive to God's authority
3. Live godly: reverently, in the fear of the Lord

C. Instruction

1. Grace (salvation) instructs us in this (child-training, discipline)
2. Instruction can be painful

"Education in Christian behavior is seldom a painless process since it involves the correction of human behavior which by nature stands in opposition to God."³

² Tim 2.3 Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

*Something is **worldly** when it belongs to the affairs of life on this earth, especially as opposed to the life of the spirit or of heaven.*

***Worldly lusts** are desires for worldly things without regard for God or God's perspective.*

III. Applying principles to media

For this part of the message, I want to give you an extensive quote from Malcolm Muggeridge. Dayle loaned me a book by Muggeridge this week called *Christ and Media*.

³ "Titus," in *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, by Hayne P. Griffin, The New American Commentary 34 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1992).

- A British journalist, former spy (during the war), former Communist, former atheist
- Converted to Christianity as an adult (but Anglican), not completely well taught, ended up converting to Catholicism before he died
- Was a popular commentator on TV in the 70s, often appearing on Canadian TV when I was a teen
- He died in 1990

Muggeridge on Television

The first quote opens with a quotation from Simone Weil, someone Muggeridge calls “one of the most luminous intelligences of our time.” Here’s what she said:

“Nothing is so beautiful, nothing is so continually fresh and surprising, so full of sweet and perpetual ecstasy, as the good; no desert is so dreary, monotonous and boring as evil. But with fantasy it’s the other way round. Fictional good is boring and flat, while fictional evil is varied, intriguing, attractive and full of charm.”⁴

After quoting Weil, Muggeridge says:

“These words were written a decade or so before television had been developed to attract its huge audiences all over the world, becoming the greatest fabricator and conveyor of fantasy that has ever existed. Its offerings, as it seems to me, bear out the point Simone Weil makes to a remarkable degree. For in them, it is almost invariably *eros* rather than *agape* that provides all the excitement; celebrity and success rather than a broken and a contrite heart that are held up as being pre-eminently desirable; Jesus Christ in lights on Broadway rather than Jesus Christ on the cross who gets a folk hero’s billing.”⁵

⁴ Simone Weil, quoted in Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 46.

⁵ Muggeridge, 46.

“... The transposition of good and evil in the world of fantasy created by the media leaves us with no sense of any moral order in the universe, and without this, no order whatsoever, social, political, economic or any other, is ultimately attainable. There is only chaos. To break out of the fantasy, to rediscover the reality of good and evil, and therefore the order which informs all creation — this is the freedom that the Incarnation made available, that the Saints have celebrated and that the Holy Spirit has sanctified.”⁶

(Note: if there is time, could read parable of the “fourth temptation” Muggeridge imagines when a Roman TV producer offers Jesus a slot on Imperial TV, pp. 37-38, 39-41)

Conclusion:

What are we saying? Muggeridge gave these lectures in 1976, they were put in book form in 1977.

All that he says about television we can transfer to all kinds of media we have available today.

What should we do about the media?

At a *minimum* we must view all media *critically*.

This includes so-called “News” programs as all other forms of entertainment.

It is infused with the world. It is steeped in the world. It communicates the values of all those “under the sun” things that makes up worldliness.

We can use the “things of this world,” to be sure, and we must, to some extent. But the media builds a fantasy where power, desire, this earth and its things, are all part of the greatest good.

We need to learn discipleship, and that will mean saying no to many things we find in the media.

⁶ Muggeridge, 46–47.