

The Regretful Life of a Worldly Christian **08-11-19 AM**

Much of the language of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is language of a battle between light and darkness. Jesus would repeatedly say that He is the Light of the World. His Word is the Light. To walk in the light is to abide in the doctrine of Christ. This is what a Christian is: someone who walks in the light.

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." John 8:12

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2 John 1:9

On the other side of the Walk of Faith is the Walk in Darkness. This is the world. It is in darkness. It stumbles around, picking up things and trying to identify them without sight. They are lost in every meaning of the word.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light Ephesians 5:8

'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'
Acts 26:18

In the middle of this is a line of division. The line is not always clear. We must make judgments to be certain we are not walking on the wrong side. Today we don't walk on roads as much as we drive on them. Many of our roads are light by street lights, to show us the way. If 1 John had been written today, perhaps it would say that we *drive* in the light. The analogy we are making here says that there are some who won't stay fully on the road; they want to be as close to off the road as they can be. They want a grey area that they can keep some part of themselves in darkness. This is like the shoulder of the road, an area that might still be part of the road, but it is not an area we are meant to drive.

Our dilemma is that many Christians WANT to drive on the shoulder of the road! They want to have one foot in darkness, or at least get as close as they can. This Christian plays a game – *"How much can I do before someone says something? Then when I know what the limit of my brethren's patience is, I back it off just a hair"*. This one might be called "a Worldly Christian" (for certain NOT a biblical term, but for our conversation we mean one who drives on the shoulder, who walks mostly in the light but dabbles in darkness).

What does a worldly Christian look like? Maybe they occasionally have a few drinks (but they don't get drunk). Sometimes some vulgar language pops out (not around other Christians of course); maybe only in texts or on Facebook. Maybe this person watches some inappropriate things, but is certain it does not affect them. They attend services when they are able, but this person misses some times to gather too. Just enough to keep the elders from asking about them. They love things (cars, houses, organizations) a little too much. Maybe it shows in their behavior; maybe it is their explosive temper, gossipy mouth or they are emotionally out of control. These are all types of those who drive on the shoulder.

The problem is that we are not to drive on the shoulder. We are told explicitly by God that this is forbidden.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15

Why is God so adamant about not driving on the shoulder? What are the consequences to living in such a way?

First, consider the consequence of your loss of spiritual influence over others. Jesus warned of this in Matthew 7:3-5. He said no one will listen to a hypocrite. In our current illustration consider that no one follows the person on the shoulder. Consider too that if you live your life right on the line, the lost cannot see the line; they cannot see that you are saved and they are lost. They are lost because you have blocked their way!

Second, there is the consequence of unhappy relationships. Much of the lifestyle of being in Christ pertains to living in relationships; husbands, wives, parents, children, employees, citizens. These are all under the law of Christ. When we ignore those commands, we often ignore the best way to live in them. James 4:1-4 describes people who are unhappy because they do not love God, but love the world instead. Certainly this is a description of driving on the shoulder.

Third, there are also the consequences of difficult circumstances that arise because we are not driving in the correct lane. The Prodigal son of Luke 15:13-16 is a great example; he squandered all he had, and then God brought a famine on the land. Prodigal or worldly living brings waste and difficult times. The drunkard is brought to poverty; the vulgar man has no respect. These are clear and obvious consequences of worldly living.

Fourth, as a tie in to the previous point, there is the ultimate result of spiritual weakness and emptiness. Paul declared in Galatians 5:15-17 that the world (the Flesh) wars against the Spirit. They cannot work together. Being worldly prohibits spiritual growth. When you are driving on the shoulder, you cannot drive very fast on the shoulder. Ultimately, you will be left behind. Spiritual weakness makes goals harder to reach

Fifth, we need to see that the lifestyle of a worldly Christian is a spiritual hazard to the saved around them. Paul warned of the danger of being a stumbling block to our brethren in Romans 14:12-13. When you drive on the shoulder, often times debris is thrown back onto the road. What happens when someone loses control on the shoulder? They may hit another car on the road. You endanger others driving on the shoulder; you endanger brethren when you walk with one foot in the world. Spiritual weakness creates stumbling blocks.

Finally, the ultimate consideration is this: you may be lost! It is against the law to drive on the shoulder of the road. It is against God's law to live a careless, worldly life (Proverbs 19:16, Matthew 12:36). When someone drives on the shoulder, they are breaking the law. God forbids your driving on the shoulder in life, and He will ultimately punish our rebellion. Driving on the shoulder has an eternal consequence.

We must consider these things when we consider our walk of faith. One of the most obvious proofs of God is the consequences of the worldly lifestyle. When people walk with one foot in the light and one foot in darkness, there will be consequences and regrets. At best, it makes the Christian life much more difficult. At worst, it causes a forfeiture of our reward!