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'Things God Hates' Series  
#10

## "God Hates Worldliness" Deuteronomy 12:28-13:5

### Introduction

We have just a couple of more sermons in our series *Things God Hates*. Today we will talk about how God hates worldliness. What does it mean to be worldly? Certainly whenever we imitate the attitudes, convictions, and practices of our culture, we are being worldly. Worldliness is nothing more than putting culture over Scripture.

But there are different ways that we can do that. Usually we think of worldliness in terms of being conformed to current cultural trends. Dressing the way the world dresses; talking the way they talk; watching what they watch; thinking the way they think. Not all of those things are sinful, but often they can be. Cultural attitudes have shifted mightily in the last 50 years in areas like abortion, divorce, sexual standards of morality, child care, and money management. And, in quite a few of those areas, the average Christian's convictions and practices have followed the culture. And these cultural standards have not been shaped by the Word of God.

But it is also true that in some areas and circles people have put culture over the Scripture, not by adopting current cultural trends, but by holding onto passed cultural positions, not because they are biblical, but because they are comfortable and familiar. We've been protected from the biggest

one in the church today because of our understanding of worship. Because we sing the Psalms a cappella we have been spared the war between traditional worship and contemporary worship. But without a solid theological foundation for singing praises, one is left to preference. In conservative circles people are often tied to yesterday's culture norms of dress, ministry techniques, and lifestyles.

What we are going to see today is that we are to be and live by the Word of God. God is not pleased when we imitate the world.

### [Deuteronomy 12:28-13:5]

Our text teaches us that *God hates every abominable act which they have done for their gods*. What does this mean? What is it that God hates?

The context of this chapter is worship. But the idea here is broader than just worship/temple services. There are two things that are at the heart of God's concern. One is the lifestyle – the acts – of people that are contrary to His revealed will. Anything we do that violates His commandments is an abominable act. Secondly, He hates anything, whether it is wicked, or morally neutral, or even good intentioned, if it is offered to another god. Good things done for false gods is idolatry. *Every abominable act which they have done for their gods*.

There are various biblical terms used to describe these things: lawlessness, rebellion, worldliness, idolatry, hard heartedness, etc. Anytime we live independently of God – or live to please someone or something other than God, we are guilty.

God also knows that we are prone to wander. We are susceptible to worldliness. We face

enormous pressure to conform to the standards of the world. It's interesting to note that here in Deuteronomy 12, God warns them about this – but points out that one of the times they may be most likely to succumb is when they are experiencing success and when they are most involved in the things of God. Look at verse 29 & 30 (read).

It is often while we are engaged in the things of God – while we are laboring for the Lord, that we can fall into worldliness. Think of all the well-known pastors who have fallen into the sin of the world. But you too are vulnerable. You may be deeply engaged in your work and see it as a mission field – you may know that God has called you to your work (I hope you do.) But there are traps. Money, power, sex, deception. The fact is if you are engaged in ministry to the world you are in close proximity to temptation and the lure of idolatry.

How does it happen?

There are two things that can easily happen. And God points them out to us here.

1. We become curious.
2. We admire sacrifice.

God warns us about being ensnared by their gods saying *How do these nations serve their gods*. When we see the worldly success of those around us, we can easily begin to wonder what it would take to gain those things for ourselves. And in spite of the struggle many have with laziness and slothfulness, God actually created us to work and to work hard. Many people are attracted to a challenge and something worth sacrificing for. Sacrifice is actually an appealing thing for many people because it validates them. It gives them a feeling of accomplishment and value.

We read in verse 31 about how the heathen nations burned their sons and daughters in fire to

their gods, and we are rightly abhorred. But for them it was done not because they hated their children but because they viewed it as a worthy sacrifice to please their gods.

While we don't offer our children in fire to our gods, how many times do we sacrifice our families and our children at the altar of the next promotion? Or for the sake of the next bonus or completion of the next big project at work? Do you remember that song from way back – The Cat's in the Cradle?

A child arrived just the other day, came to the world in the usual way,  
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay, he learned to walk  
while I was away He was talking before I knew it and as he grew  
he said I'm going to be like you Dad, you know I'm going to be like  
you.

My son turned 10 just the other day, Said thanks for the ball now  
c'mon let's play Will you teach me to throw, I said not today,  
I've got a lot to do, he said that's ok And he walked away and he  
smiled and he said You know I'm going to be like you, Dad,  
you know I'm going to be like you.

As the song goes on, the boy grows up to be just  
like his dad. And his dad begins to long for time with  
his son – but he has no time for him.

And the cat's in the cradle, and the silver spoon, Little Boy Blue,  
and the Man in the Moon, When you coming home son, I don't know  
when We'll get together then, you know we'll have a good time then.

So what does this mean? Does God hate success? Is sacrifice wrong? To the contrary. God not only loves success, He promises it. The issue is not that we do well or that we work hard – the issue is how we work and how we live.

Let me ask you some questions. Especially if you are working out in the world.

- Do people know you are a Christian?
- If they do, do those same people view Christianity positively or negatively because of you?
- Is your life consistent?
- Do you talk the same way at work that you do at home and at church?
- Do you treat people the same way – with kindness, respect, dignity and compassion?
- Is your moral compass consistent? Are things like integrity, purity, faithfulness, and humility part of your life at work?

Sometimes we can live a pretty decent Christian life in the right context and when we are around Christian people. But what are you like when you're in the world?

God tells us how to avoid worldliness. We avoid worldliness by living biblically. But before we look at the instructions in this passage, there is something we've got to come to grips with. It's not easy to work this through and it can be really tough to face it. I'm talking about rejection. To live biblically means we have to be willing to live with rejection. Listen to few of these verses.

*John 15:18-20 - If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

*II Timothy 3:12 - Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

I Corinthians 4:9-13 – Paul is writing and he says *we have become a spectacle to the world, . . . We are fools for Christ's sake, . . . and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.*

Our goal should never be to be like everyone else. Our aim is not ultimately to please men, but God. Galatians 1:10 says *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

So what should we do? Deuteronomy 13:4 shows us how to live biblically by developing a deep love for God. And it's here that we find the power and ability to overcome the world. (Read 13:4).

1. Follow Him. It all begins with a basic commitment to Jesus Christ. At some point we must bow our need to Jesus and confess Him as our Lord
2. Fear Him. We need to train ourselves to live in the light of our accountability to God. We will give an answer to Him for our lives.
3. Keep His commandments. This is how our passage began this morning. 12:28 – *Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you . . .* Verse 32 adds this warning; *Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.* Be careful about how you keep the commandments. If you pick and choose which commandments you like, you will be guilty of lawlessness. Taking away from the Word means that you simply decide to ignore certain requirements of God. But we are not

to add to the Word either. More is not better when it comes to the Word of God.

Sometimes we so want to obey God that we become overzealous in our applications.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:6 that we are to learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. You are not more spiritual if you add things to God's commandments that He never included. We need to simply obey. Jesus said, *He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me.*

4. Listen to His voice. There is a dynamic aspect to your relationship with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit lives within you. He bears witness with your spirit. He communicates with you. Learn to hear the voice of God as He speaks to you through the Bible.
5. Serve Him. *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.* Use your gifts for the glory of God. See your work as advancing the kingdom of God. Learn to live your life in service to others with the gospel always at the center of what you do.
6. Cling to Him. You will overcome worldliness if you pray without ceasing. If you live in union with Christ and trust Him throughout your day.
7. Purge evil from your life. Verse 5 reminds us that there will be things that seduce us. We must be quick to repent of our sins and confess them daily to God.

If we live our life this way, we will not only overcome worldliness, we will also enjoy the promise of 12:28. It will be well with you. You will find your life filled

with joy and gladness and the presence of God. And it will go well with your children. Our lives, lived in holiness and without compromise with the world, will have a powerful testimony in the lives of our children.

I'll leave you with a wonderful New Testament parallel passage to what we've read here in Deuteronomy. It is found in I John 5:1-5.

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*