

The Lust Of The World

I John 2:16

Thus far we have considered two modern idols, wrong friendships and apathy towards Christ.

Thousands of people bow to the idol of wrong friendships. We learned that we must choose our friends wisely and prayerfully. If we are not careful, we can choose the wrong kinds of friends and this can lead to terrible consequences.

If thousands bow to the idol of wrong friendships, then tens of thousands bow to the idol of apathy.

Apathy is defined as the absence or suppression of passion, emotion or excitement, lack of interest in or concern for things that others find moving or exciting. A man does not wake up one morning apathetic toward Christ; rather, he drifts away from Him gradually over time.

Tonight, I would like to consider another modern idol, the lust of the world.

We read in I John 2:16, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

All idolatry of self has at its core in the three lusts found in I John 2:16. The lust of the world is rampant today. It is not of God, but of Satan, and in it we will never find fulfillment. We need only to go back to the first sin to see these three underlying facets of sin at work.

Genesis 3:6 says, “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

God told Eve that she couldn't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This would keep her from being aware of sin which would destroy her innocence and ruin her joy. Yet the serpent told her that she would be like God if she ate of the tree, appealing to the pride of life. She saw that the tree was “desirable to make one wise,” and she ate. This is the pride of life, a motive wrought in arrogance, boastfulness, and self-centeredness.

Rather than bowing down, trusting, and worshipping God, the pride of life motivates us, as it did Eve, to want to see god in ourselves.

Eve also saw that the tree was “good for food,” meaning that it looked like it would taste good and be satisfying and enjoyable to eat. But the pleasures of sin are temporary, and Eve fell for the lust of the flesh, trusting in her feelings rather than in the word of God spoken to her. The lust of the flesh trusts man’s judgment, feelings, and temporary conveniences in lieu of God’s inalterable Word.

Eve also saw that the tree was a “delight to the eyes,” for it was a beautiful creation of God. Sin does not necessarily appear as ugly, dirty, and destructive, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

The fruit that God told Eve not to eat was extremely enticing and attractive in its appearance. The lust of the eyes propelled Eve down the road of deception until she disobeyed God and incurred the penalties of sin.

Both Adam and Eve learned the hard way that the knowledge of evil corrupted their natures resulting in distrust, fear, alienation, pain, and many other hideous things for the rest of their lives. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life all work in sinister collaboration to lead us astray, to keep us from trusting God's Word, and to fall for the schemes of the devil.

Sadly, we are still falling to the lust of the world. Even more sadly, many churches are propagating it in the preaching of the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel built on the idol of self-esteem. But we will never find happiness focusing on ourselves. Our hearts and minds must be centered on Christ.

The title of my message is *The Lust Of The World*. The lust of the world is the catalyst that ignites all sorts of sin and leaves in its path many innocent victims. Too many who call themselves Christians are tied to this world. They treat Christ carelessly because they are earthbound and not heaven bound.

I would like to consider two points tonight. The Attraction of the World, and the Answer to the World.

1. The Attraction of the world.

1 John 2:16, “*For all that is in the world*, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

For all that is in the world. That is, all that really constitutes the world, or that enters into the aims and purposes of those who live for this life. All that that community lives for may be comprised under the following things.

- **The lust of the flesh**

This is the craving of our sinful hearts, *epithumia*, desire, the craving of the sinful heart. It's a common word used in the New Testament, sometimes means good desires. The context is what you have to look at to see whether its meaning is positive or negative. This means the negative cravings of our sinful heart, our world impulses.

The impulses that draw us toward the evil that is around us so that the evil in us is attracted to the evil around us. Or rather the evil outside of us solicits the evil that is in us. It doesn't mean...when you talk about the lust of the flesh, you immediately think of sexual sin.

Well that's certainly included, but that's not any limit on this. It's any desire for anything outside of God's Law...any attitude, any thought, any word, any action that God forbids. It's the corruption of desires. It's selfish desires of any kind, sinful desires of any kind, the gamut. And God is not saying we can't have desires.

There are normal, healthy desires. Nothing wrong with desiring a partner in marriage. Nothing wrong with desiring to eat. But it's sinful to desire a partner outside your marriage. It's sinful to become a glutton. Obviously. Nothing wrong with enjoying a good time and having fun, it's wicked to be consumed with pleasure and irresponsible regarding duty. Nothing wrong with being comfortable, it's sinful to become a slave to luxury.

Everything can be perverted. The lust of the flesh is a slavish kind of relentless gratification of all desires outside of God's limits, or exceeding God's limits, oblivious to what is good and reasonable and righteous. That's the lust of the flesh. It's wanting what you want and you could care less what God has to say.

And what are these lusts? Well, as I said they're not just acts of immorality. Galatians 5:19, "The deeds of the flesh are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these."

Just fill in your own lists. Anything done to satisfy your yearning that violates the Law of God.

The world is made up of these things, that's essentially what the world system is and the world on the outside, the world system on the outside that Satan rules is simply an external projection of the heart of man. The world really appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life because the world is made up of sinners who run on that basis.

We read in Ephesians 2:3, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

In this verse lusts clearly indicates it is an evil craving that originates from the godless flesh.

Flesh refers to the totally depraved nature as dominating the unsaved individual and represents the entirety of one's being orientated away from God and towards selfish interests.

John Piper writes that **flesh**...is the old ego that is self-reliant and does not delight to yield to any authority or depend on any mercy. Flesh craves the sensation of self-generated power and loves the praise of men....in its conservative form it produces legalism -- keeping rules by its own power for its own glory.... The Flesh is the proud and unsubmitive root of depravity in every human heart which exalts itself subtly through proud, self-reliant morality, or flaunts itself blatantly through self-assertive, authority-despising immorality.

- **The lust of the eyes**

That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. The object is to refer to the vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life.

It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty--for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life,--when it is sought without any connection with Jesus Christ.

It's not just what you feel, it's not just those impulses that you feel down inside toward self-fulfillment against the will of God. It's also what you see.
"Eyes...Proverbs 20:12 says...are a gift from God."

And what a blessing, what a wonderful, grace to be able to see the beauty of God's creation, to see all the people that you know and love and all the wonders of life.

But the evil of the heart twists and perverts the eyes and Jesus says, "If you look on a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery in your heart."

And what God gave you to appreciate His beauty can come a point of terrible sinful pursuit. Lot's wife misused her eyes and perished, killed by God.

Achan saw with his eyes and coveted and took.

Samson saw something he wanted with his eyes, and it cost him his eyes.

David was walking on his balcony and with his eyes he saw a woman who was another man's wife and he paid profoundly for that iniquity the rest of his life.

That's why the psalmist said, "Please, Lord, keep my eyes from beholding vanity." That's why Job said, Job 31, "I made a covenant with my eyes."

The lust of the flesh is the allurements that comes from the bodily impulses, the impulses of the mind and the body. The lust of the eyes is what is the lure of the outward appearance. It's a form of covetousness.

- **The pride of life**

The third component in the lust of the world is the boastful pride of life. Boastful pride, *alazoneia*, it's not just pride, it's the braggart, it's the loudmouth boaster. This form of worldliness, this component of

our fallenness, this piece of the matrix in which fallenness functions that gets projected into the world and then appealed to by the world, this is at the base of all sin.

The boastful pride of life is the desire to be better than everybody else, to desire to tell everybody how much better you are. It is the desire to exceed everybody else. Boastful pride of life, to make your life more important than everybody else's life. This form of worldliness is at the base of everything.

The longings of pride that seek to exceed everybody else, even in iniquity, although sometimes in the iniquity of self-righteousness.

We read in Luke 18:9-14, "And Christ spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Verse 14. *I tell you.* The Pharisees would have said that the first man here was approved. Jesus assures them that they judged erroneously. God judges of this differently from men.

Justified. Accepted or approved of God. The word justify means to declare or treat as righteous. In this case it means that in their prayers the one was approved and the other not; the one went down with the favor of God in answer to his petitions, the other not.

2. The Answer to the Lust of the world

We read in Matthew 4:1-11

The first two temptations of Jesus were about proving Jesus being the ‘Son of God’.

“If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread”.

“If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down...”

Son of God does not need bread to live on or need to worry about injury!

Satan insisted on proofs about Jesus’ divinity, but Jesus reminded him of his humanity.

All of Jesus’ answers started with “It is Written”! He was saying, that “God’s word is final, and I do not need to test it or prove it.”

We are often confronted with similar situations.. The Devil comes and whispers in our ears, he creates doubts about God's promises – “Does he really care about you? Is he really listening to your prayers?”

We need to remember that ‘It is written’, God has promised us and his Words are final and sufficient.

First Temptation:

Verse 3, “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

Christ response was, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Jesus referred to Deut 8:2-3. Jesus pointed out that life is not just about the physical needs, there is more to it. The word of God is life-giving. And we can build and live our life on His Words.

What is the source of your life? What is the place of God's Word in your life? Is it just one of the things that you do or read or is it the source of your life?

Satan tempted Christ with the lust of the flesh and failed.

Second Temptation:

We read in verses 5 and 6, “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

Satan took Jesus to the Holy city, Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. Satan asked Jesus to throw himself down. If the Angels protected him from being struck against stones, now not only him (Devil), but all people in the temple will also be convinced that He is the Son of God.

The Devil, this time, used the word of God to prove his point. He quoted from Psalm 91.

The Devil knows the Word of God, he can use it, twist it, misinterpret it and present it in such a way which is contrary to the will of God.

Today, we see many people being fallen away by misinterpretation of the Word of God.

The key aspect of Satan's argument was and is the use of the word of God out of context.

The second temptation at its core, is about testing God and His Words.

Rightly so, Jesus reminded Satan, that "It is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Third Temptation:

Verses 8 and 9, "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

The final temptation brought the innermost desire of Satan, "to become God". He wants to be worshiped as God. He burns with the desire of being like God. And He offers the biggest lie to all who follows him, that they can be also God. (Gen 3:4)

How often have we seen Rulers, Kings or Emperors of the mighty kingdoms at their peak, want to be worshiped as God!

Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the World and their splendor.

The Devil's proposal was a direct breaking of the first commandment. "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.." (Exodus 20:3-4)

Jesus in his reply, quoted the first commandment. (By this time, Jesus would have said, "enough, you are crossing the line!")

He commanded Satan to go away. and Satan immediately left him!

In all three answers, Jesus insisted on the 'written' word of God. Today, we have so much resources available related to the 'Word of God', that sometimes we are distracted from 'the Word'. There is no alternative to the study and meditation of the Word of God daily.

If Jesus learned and used God's word, how much more should we!

Satan tempted Jesus with the lust of the eyes and the pride of life and failed miserably.

In closing, the lust of the world is an idol that many find attractive, and are bowing down to today. The world is made up of the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But there is an answer to the lust of the world. Jesus Christ overcame the temptations of the Devil in the wilderness, and secured salvation for sinners on the Cross. May the Lord help us by His grace to put to death the lusts of the world. Let us pray!