

T.V. or not T.V., That is the Question

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Bible Text: 1 John 2:15-17

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We are turning this morning, if you have your Bibles, to 1 John chapter two. We want to begin reading at verse 15.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.¹

Let's bow together as we ask the Lord's blessing on his Word.

Our Father, we are thankful this morning that we can come to these pages knowing that thy Word is truth. We are thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, the one who is revealed within these pages. And we are grateful that we can have our feet upon solid rock. We can know that our citizenship is in heaven if we have trusted him as our Savior.

Father, as we look around us in the world today we can see that there is a great deal of blindness. There is a great deal of lack of understanding of those things that are true and honest and important. And we know that we need so desperately to come to the pages of this Word to study it, to hide them in our hearts that we might not sin against thee. To that end we pray that you will take the Word spoken today and that you will use it in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls to bring honor and glory to our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in his name. Amen.

We have read a few verses this morning that are tremendously important in the life of a believer. They are tremendously important in understanding the message of the Word of God in general. These are words that are said to have composed the favorite text of evangelist D.L. Moody and written on his tombstone are the words of that 17th verse. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."²

¹ 1 John 2:15-17.

² 1 John 2:17.

I believe that there is a principle contained in this passage that is of the utmost importance for every one of us to understand. We are living in a world that is completely opposed to God, to the Bible, to the things that are true and the things that are going to stand forever.

When Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden he set in motion a curse of God that came not only upon the man himself, but upon all of creation. And down through the centuries we have seen the tremendous effect upon human kind that this degenerative force has had until we come to a time when there is no explanation for the condition that the world is in apart from the fact that sin has come into the world.

We have had 6000 years of man's history. There have been incredible advances in technology and economics and the study of sociology and psychology. People have dedicated whole lifetimes to these things. They have put them together and yet in the midst of all this so called progress we see that society is beginning, now, to demonstrate the death rattle in their throats, the mark of the close of the age as we await the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But I think that appropriate for every age—and especially the one in which we are living—is this warning that comes from the apostle John in these verses, a warning against the great danger of being caught up in this world's system.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”³ And then he says something to think about very seriously. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”⁴

That doesn't mean there is something wrong with appreciating the beauties of nature. But it means that there is something wrong if your heart and mind are in tune with what this world has to offer. If this is your kind of place, if these are your kind of people that you see around you in the world generally, you are in serious trouble, because what it means to have eternal life is to be delivered from the powers of darkness, to be translated into the kingdom of God's Son as something that is going to happen, of course, one day literally and physically. But right now it happens in the minds and hearts of those who come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The Bible says:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.⁵

The Bible says:

³ 1 John 2:15.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Matthew 6:19-20.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.⁶

When we are talking about salvation, we are talking about something that should have a great impact upon the minds and hearts of those who receive it. They should come to see that there is, indeed, a clear cut difference between right and wrong and the standard for that. It is here in the Word of God.

But we have to come back continually to this point of testing, testing our minds and hearts, testing our understanding, to see if perhaps the devil hasn't deceived us in some way when it comes to understanding that which is profitable here in the world.

I want to bring you a message here this morning which is not exactly the type of message that I preach very often. But I believe it is the message the Lord wants me to preach. It came about through some rather strange circumstances.

Some time ago there was a lady in her 90s who was living in a retirement home and she died and left her possessions to this church. It took us a little over a year to get the estate settled, but when everything was cleared up, one of the things that the church inherited was a little portable television set. And I couldn't figure out why the Lord would have sent us a television until finally it dawned on me that maybe he wanted me to watch it. That is what televisions are supposed to be for.

It has been 10 years since I have owned a television. And although I try to say a few nasty things about them periodically in messages I really couldn't lay much claim to knowing anything about it in a contemporary sense.

So I had what I thought at the time was a brilliant idea. I would take this television home for a couple of weeks and I would put it on the counter there in kitchen where we sit down to eat our meals and I would take a random sample of the most popular shows on television.

The children were very excited because all three of them have grown up without any television unless they saw it at somebody else's house. They couldn't wait to see what it was like.

To make a long story short, the experiment was a complete success. In just a few days they children were fighting like cats and dogs over which program to watch. They weren't doing their homework because they had to see certain television programs. Everybody was telling everybody to be quiet so that the conversation could be controlled by the television and my wife was trying to figure out reasons to keep it around just to watch the news, you know.

⁶ Colossians 3:2-4.

Well, it only took a few days to get that beast out of my kitchen. But it did set in motion a few things that I believe the Lord would have me to say about it because over the last couple of months I have been looking into the subject of television in general and I want you to know something about it.

For one thing, 95 to 98% of the homes in America have at least one television set according to government figures. That means that more people have a television than have a telephone. More people have a television than have indoor plumbing in the house. And certainly more people have a television than have Bibles in the home.

Now it is true that there can be no doubt about the fact that television is entertaining. And that is one of the problems. If you have a television, it is pretty likely you are going to watch it. And that's because there are billions of dollars spent every year to make it entertaining, to figure out what appeals to people, what they will watch and to get those kinds of things on the screen no matter what it costs, to get some of those revenues coming in.

The star of *Dallas* which is the hottest show on television right now just renegotiated his contract and in the coming year he is going to be receiving \$100,000 for each of the weekly episodes that he does, which is not bad money for a week's work.

I believe that the passage that we have read this morning has something to say about television even though television was not invented at the time that the Lord inspired this to be written.

Let's read again at 1 John chapter two and verse 15.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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.⁷

Now we are reading there about the essence of worldliness, a description of those kinds of things that the world appreciates. And we read there of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. That is a perfect description of television in a nutshell. That is how you make a tremendous amount of money by getting people to sit around a look at a little box which really doesn't make too much common sense at all when you stop and think about it. There has to be something there to appeal to people. And there are things there to appeal to people. They are called the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

So before we get into that there is one other verse that I think tells the story in a few words. Let's look at the last verse of 1 John over just a couple of pages, 1 John chapter five and verse 21. This is the last thing that the apostle John had to say here in this book.

⁷ 1 John 2:15-16.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”⁸

Now that is a verse that also relates to what we are talking about this morning. He is speaking to the children of God and he says, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”⁹

I hope that you young people will listen to what I am saying this morning. If you are lost you won't be very interested, that's for sure. If you happen to be blessed with parents who won't let you watch television and you are saved, there is a good possibility you don't understand why really. So I am going to tell you. If you happen to have parents who do let you watch television, if you believe the Word of God and you hear what I say this morning, you are going to have a good opportunity to be an example to your parents since they aren't too interested apparently in being one to you.

When we had one of the Sunday night films recently on the various religions of the world we saw a pagan temple in a foreign land. And hanging up there from the ceiling in front of the face of this great big stone statue was a television set. They had a television up there for the idol to watch in case he got bored, I guess, with just being an idol.

But in America it is a little bit different. In America television is the idol because in countless homes across this country you see families gathering together not around the word of God, but around the television. And they do it night after night, week after week. They go through this ritual of putting their minds and hearts to seek to understand the things that are contained in the tube.

I am sure you can see that that is a satanic counterfeit of what families are supposed to do with the Word of God. We are supposed to sit down with the Word of God every day and put our minds and hearts to the things that are written there, to try to know the Lord's will and know what is right and know what to think of the world around us. That is not the kind of information that you are supposed to get from the television.

And, you know, it all begins with the premise that only the good shows are going to be permitted. That is the way it always is in the Christian home. So think about this very carefully. Idolatry is giving anything in your life a place superior to that which you give the Lord. Now that may not be true of your television. I am just telling you what idolatry is; giving anything in your life a place superior in your mind and heart to that which you give the Lord.

And, as I say, television is entertaining. After all, there is all that religious programming and we wouldn't want to miss the religious programming since we claim to be religious. And there is the educational programming and there are the sports events and there is the news. There are all these things totally apart from the typical evening of television that people see across the entire nation.

⁸ 1 John 5:21.

⁹ Ibid.

But I believe that in the midst of these things there are some things you ought to think about. Take educational programming, for example. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a part of the public broadcasting system which is kind of a bevy of federal money really, federal ideas and philosophy at least. And through this public broadcasting system which originates out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill it is possible in every county in this state to watch educational television.

Now let's suppose that you take a hammer and you beat your television dial into submission so that the only thing you can possibly watch has to be public television, educational television. The question is: What is going to come into your home?

Well, you will see National Geographic specials, for example, *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*. You will see all about the animals in India and Africa and around the world. But there is something that you will notice about all of this. And that is that underlying every single one of these programs is evolutionary philosophy because all those people are evolutionists. They believe in the gospel of evolution with far more zeal than Christians believe in the gospel of the Bible.

And you have children sitting there in front of that television set watching this to get educated, they will get educated. They will learn a great many things from the powers of darkness when it comes to the evolution, so called, of the human race and of animals.

Another thing to think about this. I know personally from over five months working every day in the legislature, I know the people, the staff people for the University of North Carolina who produce the news, people who when the legislature is in session have long detailed analyses of what is taking place in the legislature. I know those people pretty well. And every single one of them is a dedicated liberal, a socialist who is against everything the Bible stands for. They don't believe what we believe and when you get their views of the news that is the kind of philosophical slant that you are going to get on the reporting.

Sometimes you read about programming on public television, something like analysis of the candidates or a program that talks about the economics of the country and all these experts come in and they gather round and they are going to tell you something about economic philosophy or about the way government should be.

Well, one of the stars of public broadcasting in North Carolina is a man named Tom Wicker. He is a native North Carolinian. He is one of our boys who went to the big town and made good. He is the city editor of the *New York Times*. So they bring him back because everybody knows that you couldn't possibly be an expert. That came out wrong, but it really came out right. Everybody knows that you must be an expert if you are the city editor of the *New York Times*. So here comes good old Uncle Tom to tell us how things ought to be in economics and in defense and just in the realms of government in general.

But, here again, the problem is he is—for want of a better term—a wide eyed liberal. He is in total opposition to the kind of principles that the Word of God represents and if you get his views that is what you get.

We could go on and on, but it ought to be enough for people of understanding to sit there and watch public broadcasting and see that program after program—when the credits come up—you see that those thing are paid for by the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation and the major oil companies and the federal government and the Mellon Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Those people don't sponsor anything unless there is something that goes along with their philosophy. And their philosophy is not the philosophy of the Word of God.

I will tell you what the Bible says about watching that kind of television. It says, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”¹⁰

Now the words of knowledge are the Bible. And God says, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”¹¹ And that, in itself, is reason enough to keep the public broadcasting system out of your home.

All right, well what about religious programming? There are a few specials every now and then. But just to tell you exactly the way it is, most of the things that you see on television in the way of religious programming are just plain trash. That's all there is to it.

The media does not love the gospel.

I turned on the radio this morning driving from my house to the church and on one of the most powerful stations in this part of the country, the most influential station by far—WPTS in Raleigh—they were having a good old church service and the choir was about to sing. And the guy announced the name of the song they were going to sing and the name of it was, “One Small Step For Man, One Giant Leap For Mankind.” Now that, of course, was what Armstrong said when he stepped on to the moon, a great historic occasion. But what on earth does that have to do with the gospel? The fact that every astronaut and every politician and every human being on the face of the earth is going to burn in hell forever if they don't get saved. What has that got to do with anything that is important when it comes to the teaching of the Word of God?

And it is true that the apostate denominations, the Charismatics, the false prophets have most of the time on television. There are a few sound preachers like Jerry Falwell, for example. Jerry Falwell is a good man. He preaches the gospel. But in the program that I monitored, Jerry Falwell program, there was 47 minutes of singing and asking people for money and 13 minutes of preaching the gospel.

¹⁰ Proverbs 19:27.

¹¹ Ibid.

Now unless you happen to be lost, that program for you would have been a total waste of the Lord's time. He doesn't need your money because his income is already a million dollars a week. So you wouldn't need to watch it for that purpose. But whatever there is on television in the way of religious programming generally is very short—if it ever gets there at all—and it is very simple gospel message, something you could get out of any tract that has ever been printed.

And when it comes to sports that is where most men run into a bad case of idolatry. I happen to be one of them. That is one of the reasons I don't need a television. As I have told you before, I like everything in the way of sports whether it is professional football or a frog jumping contest. It doesn't make a bit of difference to me.

And television in America today is headed toward complete cable vision coverage by leaps and bounds. That is the wave of the future. In metropolitan areas of this country you can get over 30 channels at one time on a television set. You can get just about anything you want out of 30 channels.

With the advent of satellite communication they can broadcast these programs and beam them around the country, have them go up to the satellite in outer space, come back and be picked up by tracking stations in local areas and there are no such thing as local television if people want to spend just a little bit of money to get on the cable.

The hottest station in the nation is channel 17 in Atlanta. They call that the super station. It started out about three years ago with nothing. And today it reaches into over six million cable homes. They are on 24 hours a day seven days a week. You never have to stop watching television. And there are people who almost don't. Now this station is owned by millionaire playboy Ted Turner. He is not famous for many things except perhaps winning the America's Cup yacht race awhile back. But he does have a great interest in sports. He owns the Atlanta Falcons or at least owns part interest in the Atlanta Falcons football team. He owns the Atlanta Braves baseball team. He owns a major interest in the Atlanta Hawks basketball team and whatever the soccer team is, he owns a part of that, too.

So you have this tremendous sports thrust that is complemented by a great many other things. There is a cable station that comes out of New York. It used to be Madison Square Garden television where you can see all the sports events there.

So if people are really interested in this kind of thing, you get on the cable and the next thing you know you can watch 30 or 40 hours a week of nothing but sports.

I was reading recently that evangelist Darryl Dunn had an hour long special on the channel 17 in Atlanta, the super station, a couple of years ago. It cost him \$6000 dollars. And he went back just recently to try to get on there again. He was going to have another hour long program and the price had gone up from \$6000 to \$16,000.

And he went to see Ted Turner about it and he said, “I just don’t want anymore religious programming on my station. And that is the climate in general.

But the point is the idolatry of sports programming. And I say that right here in this part of the country on the cable it is possible to watch 30 hours of sports a week and a lot of people do a lot more than you might imagine.

In the regular system it is possible to watch 15 to 20 hours a week. Television covers professional football, baseball, basketball, college football, college basketball and it is not at all uncommon on the cable to have things like soccer or boxing or polo, hockey, wrestling, tennis, golf, anything you can name. And it is very easy to become a sports idolater.

Another problem with the cable—and I mention this because it is soon going to reach half the homes in America—another problem with the cable is that for a slight additional monthly charge you get something called Home Box Office. In some areas it is called Showtime. They have various names for it. It is pay television, really is what it amounts to. No advertising. But what you get for this slight additional monthly fee with some regularity is the latest shows from night clubs in New York or Las Vegas. You get the most vulgar language possible. You get mockery of God and the Bible. You get full frontal nudity all without being interrupted by any advertisements, of course.

All right, well, let’s get down to the average, normal, every day television. There are some parents who like to use the television as a Saturday morning baby sitter, so the kiddies are going to run in there and watch some harmless cartoons. There won’t be any problems. But I want to suggest to you that this is one of the most satanic time periods that you will find on television.

I say that for two reasons. Number one is the content of the programming and number two is the impact on the minds of children. When a child is that age they are just learning everything they can possibly take in by leaps and bounds. The older you get the more your learning process slows down until you finally get to be my age you can’t hardly learn anything anymore. But as a little child, the kind that like the cartoons on television, their mind is just going 90 miles an hour to take in everything they can see and believe most of it.

Now the cartoons I watched included hard rock music. They included a great deal of evolution, evolutionary philosophy, a tremendous amount of social indoctrination. And all these things are woven into some very strange themes, themes, for example, glorifying the occult, ghosts and witches and that type of thing. And the amount of violence in these programs is just incredible.

But the important thing that I saw that was outstanding to me—I didn’t... of course, like I say, I didn’t watch very much of it. But the impressive thing to me was the space business that you are hearing so much about. Everything is being geared to get people—and especially little children—to think about the one world government of earth. You

know, the earth federation when all the good guys finally get together to run the planet. And they are against the bad guys, the invaders from outer space.

Well, I hope you remember that according to the Bible the only invaders from outer space will be the Lord and his people. The only world government of earth will not be a space federation. It will be the world government of antichrist. And what is happening right now is that young people are being taught to think in terms of the invaders from outer space coming against the wonderful world government of earth.

And no child of a Christian has any business studying that kind of propaganda from week to week. There is nothing funny about it. I will tell you that.

As we see it here the Bible says, "Love not the world."¹² Worldliness is something that is instilled in children as they learn hour after hour. They sit there in front of the box and they learn what the world is doing, what the world is thinking. And they are learning about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Of course, there is an equally great danger to the parents. But you know how we are. We are so dumb that we just assume that those kinds of things can't affect us. We know too much about the Bible. We are too spiritual. And since we already know what is true on a certain subject it is not going to affect us to watch the other side of the picture.

But the Word of God says you are what you think. There is no escape from that. And if you think the kind of trash that comes out of the television set, that is what you will be. Prime time television is a total education in worldliness.

Now let me say this before I give you some examples. I did not set out to try to make television look bad. And if I had turned on the television set to watch *WKRP in Cincinnati* and everybody had been sitting there with their Sunday school book in their hands studying the Bible, I would have told you that. But what I did after 10 years of no television was to go to a television rating sheet to see what the most watched programs in the country were and to watch one episode of those programs.

I didn't watch several episodes and pick out a bad one to use for an example in the sermon. I picked out one that was so typical, that you drop in once every 10 years and you get to see. Now that is a pretty random sample. But it makes what I am about to say to you about these programs all that more amazing in terms of confirming what television is like these days.

So don't tell me that this is an unfair sampling, because if you think it is, your problem is that you have just become so caught up in the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life that you don't even recognize it when you see it.

The first program that I watched was called *The Dukes of Hazard*. Now this is a cottage prayer meeting night extravaganza and it starts two southern country boys and their

¹² 1 John 2:15.

female cousin who live in Hazard County, Mississippi or Alabama or some place like that. Anyway, they are very southern.

But the cousin is a braless young dolly in short shorts who parades around trying to look as indecent as possible. It is obvious that that is the only purpose for her being on the show. Now this is a girl who says in *People* magazine that she has lived with several men on her way to stardom. She attributes that to how she became successful. And who knows. Maybe your daughters will turn out to be like her, that is if they are allowed to think that she is the kind of example of womanhood that young people need to follow.

Her two cousins are a couple of good old boys. They don't have too many smarts, but at least they have got enough sense to spend all their time running around in a souped up car trying to evade the law. You know the typical stereotype of a dumb redneck young person.

And this is the kind of thing that is supposed to be funny. But it is very impressive when you see them stealing, when you see them lying, when you see them driving like some kind of maniac on the public highways because they always manage to get away. But that is not too hard because the police are portrayed as a bunch of dishonest fools. They haven't got sense enough to get in out of the rain. They are too busy trying to steal something to be able to catch these intelligent young road racers.

Now don't tell me that that is not impressive to the minds of young people. Don't tell me that they don't come away from that with an idea of what the police are really like and what the good old boys are really like who race up and down the highways like a bunch of idiots.

I want to tell you something. A Christian who would watch that or even worse let their children watch it is in bad shape because they somehow lost touch with the ungodly nature of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, because they are right in there.

Then I watched a sophisticated adult program called *MASH*. It is the story about a medical unit in Korea back during the Korean War. All the intellectuals love it. The critics acclaim it. They say that this is stimulating comedy in the midst of otherwise mindless programming. And there is no doubt about the fact that it is stimulating. The episode that I saw had a good sprinkling of profanity. All the soldiers were there rejoicing because they just dishonestly managed to get hold of 10 cases of liquor and everybody was going to get drunk. That is why they were all in such a good mood.

And then, of course, there was the Catholic priest who was sitting there playing poker. He is kind of a ninny anyway so it didn't really matter. But just by an insinuation that that is the way things are when it comes to religion.

And then there is the happily married officer who, because he happens to be overseas, is having an affair with one of his nurses appropriately named Hot Lips Houlihan. And he

likes to run around and peek into the tent where she is taking a shower and do all sorts of other Christian activities of that nature.

That, as I say, I am talking to you now about the most watched programs on television. And some of them have been—like *MASH*, for example—have been the most watched for years according to the trade magazines.

Then for the teenagers I watched a program that has been high rated for several years. It is fading a little bit now, but called *Happy Days*. And it is supposed to be about the time period in which I was a teenager, kind of a nostalgia thing about the 50s. And it is pretty much true to life when you stop to think about it.

My children used to come home from school all the time talking about the Fonz. And they had never seen the Fonz, never heard tell of him except from some of your children or somebody's children who have been watching that garbage at home.

The program is centered around the Fonz apparently. He is one of the greasers as we used to call them who dropped out of high school and put on his leather jacket and set out to conquer the world. Ended up as a mechanic working in a garage part time to finance his escapades of drinking and chasing women full time. And there were a lot of people like that. He is the one that all the other clean cut teenagers look up to and look to for advice. All the girls chase him and the ones who are clean cut and decent looking and acting, they are the dumb ones. Has to check everything out with the Fonz to be sure that they really understand what life is all about.

So the plot of this program was that everybody needs to know how to pick up girls. That was the theme of the show. And the star of the show, the clean cut one, he didn't know how to do that so the Fonz was going to teach him.

Well, you sit there through this 30 minutes supposedly designed for teenagers and it is interesting that they hit you with a car commercial. It is hard rock music and fast driving. And then you sit there a little while longer and they hit you with another commercial. A girl comes on in a bikini that really is not enough to be called by that title. I guess that is what it was, but it was an advertisement for a movie that all the little kiddies are supposed to put the heat on their parents to let them go see.

And in between this you get the story. Well, in the course of the story somebody shop lifts something and they all reach the conclusion that it would definitely be uncool to tell their parents or to tell the police. The Fonz gives them that advice.

And then they mock prayer. They make a little fun of prayer as though it is some kind of joke.

But finally the Fonz and this other boy, they give up on the general populace and they finally get a date with these two girls who work in a brewery. And they go over to the

house of this clean cut boy who is the star of the program and they go to the refrigerator and there is plenty of beer for everybody in the family refrigerator.

I think that is pretty interesting because I didn't make that up. I just sat down one time in 10 years to watch a television program that is supposed to be for teenagers.

There is another very highly rated program along those lines called *Family*. There is a little girl on there that I often hear young girls talking about named Christy McNichol. Well, Christie McNichol is about 14 or 15 years old and she has recently become famous for the fact that she just did nude scenes in a R rated movie.

Christie McNichol is the star of *Family* and everybody loves *Family* because we are all going to watch family to find out how to overcome the family problems that everybody has.

Well, the story has two lines. One is that here is Christy McNichol and she is a rebellious young punk who wants to buy a sports car and her father sees that the thing is leaking oil and about to fall apart and not worth anything and he tells her not to do it. He tells her that she can't do it.

She is going to do it anyway. And instead of burning her bottom with a belt as they should have done, the parents used this doctor Spock psychology and they are going to let her learn by her experience. They are going to just let her go on out there in rebellion against parental authority and buy an automobile whether they like it or not. And in the end she will come to the conclusion that it really wasn't the best thing to do after all.

But that wasn't really the thing they were most concerned about, because they had another son in his early 20s and he had a real problem. He had just broken his engagement with his girlfriend and he had moved in to shack up with an older and wiser woman.

Now the parents naturally were a little concerned about this. So the solution was very simple. It took a long time to get the point across, but finally the solution was very simple. You go into the family den which looks like the ABC store and father and son take down a drink and they sit down there together and over a drink they discuss their problems and they get it all worked out.

Now that is indoctrination in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. One program after another, one point after another. And anybody who knows anything about the Bible knows that it is the truth.

If I had time I could tell you about the other top shows in the country. *WKRP in Cincinnati*, a harmless little comedy about a rock station. It used to be kind of a dead place until they started playing rock music, got everybody all excited, got in some new people. But the star is a tall blonde lady named Jennifer. She is the secretary and she is kind of famous in some circles for the fact that she poses without too many clothes for

posters that have sold several million copies around the country. But the story line is that Jennifer is asked to be in a fashion show and the point of being in the fashion show is that so that while Jennifer is in the dressing room changing clothes somebody can photograph her nude through a one way mirror and then sell the photographs to a sex magazine.

Now this is family hour television, you know. It comes on about nine or 9:30 at night, something like that.

Or we could talk about *One Day at a Time*, a story about a divorcee and her children and they live together in this big apartment building and they are struggling and making it real well with a broken home situation. But their great desire in life is to help all their neighbors. And they have this young boy that they are all so concerned about. And they need to... he is thinking about getting married and they need to rescue him from this girl because she was known in high school by the nick name All the Way Faraday as though since she is that kind of girl, they have to figure out how to keep him from marrying her and so forth an so on.

Well, what about *Vegas*? Now there is a real spectacular for you. Just incredible what that program must have cost. But the idea is that you see Las Vegas and you say to yourself, "Now, that is a place that I would like to be."

But even beyond that, beyond the glamour of Las Vegas which is just unbelievable, you have the story. Well, the basic story line was about the fact that here are the good guys who own these casinos in Las Vegas. And the bad guys are trying to take over the gambling rights, the gambling license or whatever. So you have the good gamblers against the bad gamblers and in the end the good gambling interests win.

And that is not much of a victory for righteousness, is it?

But that wasn't the real story, that was just a little side line, a little subliminal projection. The important thing was that two young ladies got murdered. Now these two young ladies were just poor, innocent, hard working prostitutes. They have never done anybody any harm in their life and somebody comes along and starts killing off the prostitutes in Las Vegas.

Now we know that we can't let that happen. So the handsome hero, the private detective, he finds the killers so that these young ladies can go back to business as usual making an honest buck trying to support their children who don't have a father and all the other good things that prostitutes do.

Now that is what people learn from television.

But there is one other one. The hottest show on television called *Dallas*. Now I want you to listen to this newspaper article describing it.

“Larry Hagman, 48 year old actor, has become something of a national cult hero for playing the most wicked, miserable, vile, scheming, conniving, ruthless, amoral, despicable, selfish, vicious, unprincipled wheeler-dealer to come along in eons. His character is J.R. Ewing, oldest son of the millionaire Ewing oil and cattle clan in the highly rated CBS Friday night soap, *Dallas*.”

Now, let me say this. I didn't get a chance to watch any soap operas. You know how they are... But what you might not know is that some individual programs gross as much 35 million dollars a year. That's big money. So somebody, whatever it was, CBS, yeah, CBS, got the idea to move soap operas to nighttime. And that is what *Dallas* was and is. They figured if it was that big in the day it ought to be bigger in the night and that is exactly what happened.

And here is what it says about the lead character.

“J.R., a man everybody loves to hate, has inspired bumper stickers that say, ‘J.R. for president.’ Men's clothing manufacturers say he was the inspiration for the urban cowboy look among business men. College students all over the country get together on Friday nights for *Dallas* beer blasts and chic dinner parties have been interrupted on Fridays at 10 PM so guests can keep track of J.R.'s dastardly doings.”

So in the course of this thing they interview this actor and they ask him why in his opinion is the evil J.R. so popular they say? And here is what he says.

He says, “The time is right for a real bad guy and I'm it. I don't know why, but I think maybe people are sick of good guys.”

He sees J.R.'s appeal as different to men and to women. “In men it is money, position, the ability to play out your fantasies,” Hagman said. “If you get tired of a woman, you chuck her. J.R. has the means, the ability and the knowledge to get his associates where he wants them.

“To women, I think many women like to be emotionally abused. They like dominant men, a man with power. I guess each one thinks she is going to be the one to make him a nice dully patsy like everyone else in life.”

Now that is what the actor... that is the reasoning behind the explosive popularity of the program.

But listen to this. Among the viler things that J.R. has done is cause his sister in law to have a miscarriage by scuffling with her in a hayloft, forcibly commit his alcoholic wife to a sanitarium, have an affair with his sister in law, trying to marry his niece to a homosexual and cause the suicide of a fellow oil man who lost millions in one of J.R.'s schemes. Thus, the general drift of the program.

But you know how the newspapers are. They always fluff things up a little bit so everything will appear worse than it is. So I decided that I would watch an episode of Dallas, just one. I am sure that in many of them they just go to Sunday school and church and sit around and read the Bible together and pray a lot. But the one that I saw wasn't quite like that.

Here are the notes that I took on one episode of *Dallas*. Liquor is a way of life. Frequent profanity, son who cheats everybody in business. He is having an affair with his secretary who is also his wife's sister. His wife just had a baby and is visiting a psychiatrist because she is not sure who the father is. She is also contemplating an affair with her psychiatrist. The other brother has a wife who gets involved periodically with various men. The father of the family has a daughter from a previous marriage who lives with him. She continually creates problems by trying to have an affair with her two step brothers.

Now all of that came from one episode. And I want to suggest to you that it is a disgrace to claim to that you love the Lord Jesus Christ and love righteousness and put that kind of garbage into your mind.

It is not cute. It is not funny. It is completely contrary to what the Bible says is right. And you cannot expect your children to benefit from attending this church or attending a Christian school and allow them to watch that kind of programming on a regular basis and not just that kind, the kind that I have been describing right through here.

You see, I have a real advantage in preaching this message because I don't have the slightest idea how many of you have a television and in most cases if you even have one. And if you do have one it might just sit there in the living room and be a piece of support for a flower pot or something like that. I have no way of knowing that.

So you can't accuse me of knowing anything at all about your viewing habits. But the Lord knows something about it. And I will guarantee you that that is the reason you are hearing what you are hearing today. He just may be trying to tell you something.

For example, there is an excellent possibility that your television might indicate the fact that you can't control your children. They want a television and you don't have the nerve to tell them that they can't have it.

It could be that the indication is that you don't have very much discernment, because, you see, if the devil wanted to come into your living room and he wanted to sit down there five or six nights a week and give instructions to your family in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, you wouldn't let him come. But if you don't understand that that is what he is doing through the tube, you don't have much discernment.

Maybe the indication is that you are lost.

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”¹³ That is what we just read here this morning.

Or maybe, at best, in a poor spiritual condition because the God that you claim to know and love and believe in says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world... 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.”¹⁴

Now let’s just suppose that you have a little trouble figuring out the Lord’s will in this regard. And that is always the way it is, isn’t it? So often the things we have such a hard time figuring out the Lord’s will about are the things that we don’t want to do anything about in our Christian life. Now here you notice that.

But I want to say something to you here that I think is important. I can tell you how to solve the whole problem. Sit down with your family every night to watch television, every night. Don’t miss a single night. Get everybody together. Get them down there in front of the television set. For the first time that you hear a word of profanity, the first commercial, the first off color joke, the first activity you see that is obvious to any fool is displeasing to the Lord, turn it off for the night.

The next night you do the same thing. You get all the family together in front of the television and if it takes six seconds or six hours just keep watching until you see something that the Lord would disapprove of and then turn it off for the night.

But I will tell you the tragedy. Most Christians who have a television don’t have the guts to do that. You say you love the Lord. You say you want to do right, but you are an idol worshipper and you don’t want to admit it.

You see, we don’t have to watch TV. Your parents may watch it. Your wife or husband may watch it. If your husband says, “I am the head of the house, you will watch television with me,” as I have known some husbands to do, at the very first beer commercial, the first word of profanity, the first suggestive joke, that is when you get up and walk away. Because God never gave any man the authority to compel his wife to disobey the Word of God. It is not in the book. And without question the greatest enemy of any home, the most powerful satanic influence in America is the television set.

Certainly it is entertaining, but so is the night club. Certainly it is exciting, but so is a snort of cocaine. Why not just go ahead and get one of those? Certainly it is relaxing, but so is a fifth of vodka. The only difference is that it is socially acceptable for Christians to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. If television is the medium instead of all these other things that are not acceptable.

Now I will tell you something. My children may one day have a TV in every room in their house. I know you can’t keep things like this from them forever. It is true that you

¹³ 1 John 2:15.

¹⁴ 1 John 2:15-16.

can't isolate them from everything. But if that day comes when they have a television in every room, they will remember that their father was against it. They will remember that he taught them that television is against everything the Bible stands for.

Yes, there is some good in it like a birthday cake laced with rat poison. Just enough good to entice minds and corrupt morals and mock righteousness and damn the souls of millions forever. That is how much good is in it.

Now listen to me. Don't you say to yourself, "Now, there is that preacher up there. His mind is in conflict with my mind on the subject of television." Don't you tell me that. Most of the preachers that I know have television sets. I would like to have a television set. I would like to sit down there and lose myself in that kind of fantasy and get caught up in all those sports and so forth. But that kind of thing would ruin my family. It would ruin my messages. It would ruin my ministry for the Lord. That is why I don't have one. And that is why I am telling you the truth about one. And if you don't think they will do the same thing in your home, my friend, you just don't understand the powers of darkness, the god of this world. Satan has blinded the minds of them that believe not.¹⁵

If we don't want to believe something, that is when the devil jumps in and he blinds our mind to what the truth really is.

Now there are some of you here today who think this is just a weird message because you are lost. You don't understand that there is any need to demand righteousness in your life. But I want to tell you this. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary as your substitute. He gave his life, he shed his blood to make your salvation possible. He wants you to have the gift of eternal life. And wouldn't it be tremendous if I could just get up here week after week and tell people that and not have to worry about these other things. But I am telling you that one reason that more people don't come to know the Lord Jesus is because Christians are so worldly, so corrupted, so earthly minded because of what they see on television, they are not sensitive to the leading of the Spirit of God. They are not open to the opportunity to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

So I say to you that this message is conducive to winning souls because if you are here today the Lord Jesus Christ can save you. He will save you if you are willing to trust him.

But if you are here as a believer, the Lord has brought you to this message. He has brought you to this hour so that you cannot escape the reality of the fact that righteousness demands that the Lord's people stay away from the meaning of salvation.

Let's bow together as we pray.

¹⁵ See 2 Corinthians 4:4.