

When Love is Wrong

Puritan Devotional

By Dr. Steven J. Lawson

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: 1 John 2:15-17; Romans 12:1-2
Preached on: Sunday, January 9, 2022

Grace Gems!

15455 Glenoaks Blvd. #534
Sylmar, CA 91342

Website: www.gracegems.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gracegems

I'd like to speak to you tonight from 1 John 2 and verses 15 through 17 from an entirely different angle, yet it is all interwoven and meshed together. The title of this message is "When Love is Wrong," and in 1 John 2, I want to read the passage verses 15 through 17 and I think that you'll understand why my heart has been directed to this text just to come alongside and support what we've been hearing on Sundays. Just a footnote: I think I've listened to Dr. MacArthur preach more this year than any year of my life as so much has been going on in the world and just wanting to hear the exposition of the word, how grateful I am, how strange it is, in some ways, to be able to stand in this pulpit that I have looked at this pulpit through live stream so much this year.

1 John 2, I'm going to begin reading in verse 15. This will be our text that we will consider as we will be thinking about being separated from the world and being set apart from a love for the world which is an essential part of the pursuit of holiness. So the Apostle John writes beginning in verse 15,

15 Do not love the world [simple enough] nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

In these verses, we very clearly see that there is a love that God hates. As believers, we are to love what God loves, our heart needs to be in alignment with God, and we are to love what God loves and the reciprocal of that is we must hate what God hates. As Christians, we must love God, we must love Jesus Christ, we must love the Bible, we must love the truth, and we must love people, and at the same time, as believers, we must also hate what God hates and reject what God rejects. So therefore we must hate sin in all of its forms and reject unrighteousness and, according to this text, we must not love the world nor the things that are in the world. What we discover in this passage is that our hearts, holiness begins with our hearts, must be brought into unity with God's heart.

For many churches and places when they think of the pursuit of holiness, it is more the external behavior and the way they conduct themselves, and that is an essential part of holiness that we walk in obedience to the Lord, but all true godliness and all true holiness begins in the heart, it begins in the mind. The battle for the Christian life is the battle for the Christian mind. It begins with our affections. It begins with where our love is. And Christianity is first and foremost a religion of the heart. That's what Jesus came to establish and to preach, and that comes out in the Sermon on the Mount after the Pharisees had externalized religion, as they had separated themselves from the defilement of sinners and had come up with their own code of ethics, and Jesus came in the Sermon on the Mount and drilled deeply into the heart and said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." And Jesus went on to say, "Blessed are the pure in heart." And so the focus of true religion, it always begins with where our heart is and Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" And he said, "It is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind, and with all of your strength." 1 Samuel tells us that man looks on the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart. And Solomon tells us in Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."

That really is the focus here that John is making just in different words and with different metaphors and different perspective, but nevertheless he's prioritizing our heart; the real you on the inside. He is prioritizing your innermost being, your soul and we see here one of the distinguishing marks of a true believer who has an obsession for sanctification, to quote Dr. MacArthur. He is marked as one who does not love the world and he does not love the things in the world, and he understands the entanglement of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life is a hindrance and a hurdle to running the race to pursue godliness and holiness. So I think it would be a great help to our walk with the Lord tonight for us to review this very familiar passage. In many ways, there will be nothing that I can say that you do not already know but it is good for us to be reminded of the essentials and the basics and this obsession for sanctification.

So as we walk through this passage tonight, there are several headings that I want to set before you that will help be almost like footsteps through this text, and the first thing that I want you to note is the command. That's how verse 15 begins. It begins really with an emphatic command of prohibition. It's put in the negative and it has a certain shock value by the fact that it's put in the negative. He begins by saying, "Do not love the world." Such love is strictly forbidden. It's off-limits. This is put in the imperative which tells us this is not a suggestion that has come from the Apostle Paul on how to give us some helpful hints in living the Christian life; this is not an option that's being laid out for us that we can either choose to follow or not choose to follow. No, this is actually a command in which we either obey or disobey and he is saying, "Do not set your heart on this world."

Now the word "world," when John uses the word "world" in the gospel of John and his three epistles as well as the book of Revelation, he uses the word "world, cosmos" 10

different ways, and you can never go into a passage that John writes and automatically assume that it always just means all the people in the world, that that would be a very naive approach to the word of God. So we need to discern what is the meaning of "world" here if we're told not to love the world. Sometimes the word "world" is used for the entire universe. Sometimes the word "world" is used for this earth upon which we live. Now sometimes it's used for mankind in general. Sometimes it's used for only unbelievers, the realm of unbelievers. Here it is used to refer to the evil world system that is running this world in which we live. There is an invisible evil world system over which Satan presides with his perverted values, and his rampant sin and godless priorities that is anti-God, it is antichrist, it is anti-truth, it is anti-family, it is anti-virtue, and that is the reference here, "Do not love this evil world system that is adamantly opposed to God. Don't become ensnared in this."

This reference to the world here in verse 15 refers to all the godless ideologies and philosophies that influence and run this world in which we live. It refers to secular humanism and worldly thinking and demonic lies that are hostile to God and antithetical to the truth of God. It includes all the various components of the world system. It includes the world of the media. It includes the world of politics. It includes the world of medicine. It includes the world of education. It includes every dimension of this world. It includes the world of business. And there are standards, ungodly standards by which each of these component parts of the evil world system are being energized and are being run.

Now the Bible is very clear that Satan is the god of this age. John 16:11, Satan is the ruler of this world. The ultimate Sovereign is God in heaven and he is the first cause of all that comes to pass, yet he is not the author of sin and there is secondary causality that is directed and implemented by the world, the flesh and the devil, and Satan presides over this evil world system and he is driving it and he is infusing it with the darkness of his administration. John 12:31, he is the ruler of this world; John 14:30, he is the ruler of this world. And it would be naive of us as believers to think we're just living in no-man's land, that we're just sitting on the fence and that there is not this evil sway with an evil agenda that is in this world, but the fact of the matter is there is this invisible war that is going on.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the Apostle Paul writes, "the god of this world," that's a small "g," "has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel." What extraordinary power has been delegated to the god of this world from the higher throne of God to blind the minds of every single unbeliever in this world such that they cannot see the truth, they cannot see the light, and that they are always drawn to the darkness because of total depravity. In Ephesians 2:2 Paul writes, "you formerly walked according to the course of this world," and this was true even of the elect before they were regenerated and before they came to faith in Christ. We all entered this world a part of the system, under the heavy hand of the ruler of this world and we were ensnared in his trap. In Ephesians 6:12 we read, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the world forces of this darkness," that there are powers behind earthly powers, that there are powers behind government officials, there are powers behind the media, there are powers behind the medical community, there are powers behind every aspect in education, unions. There are evil demonic forces that are guiding them against God and

against the values of God so much so that 1 John 5:19 says, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." That is not an hyperbolic statement. That is a true statement that the entire world lies in the grip of the evil one.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great expositor from the 20th century writes, "The world must mean the organization and the mind and the outlook of mankind as it ignores God and does not recognize him as God, and as it lives in independence of God, a life that is based upon this world and this world only." In other words, no thought of the world to come, no thought of God who has created this entire world. It is simply atheistic at its core. Lloyd-Jones goes on to say, "The world means the outlook," and here he's referring to what's on the inside, the mindset, the worldview, it means the outlook that has rebelled against God and turned its back upon God. "The world means the typical kind of life that is being lived by the average person today who has no thought of God, no time for God, that thinks only of this world and this life only. It is the whole outlook upon which life is lived by the world, it is exclusive of God."

This is where we find ourselves. This is the accurate diagnosis of the world in which we live. He goes on to say, "Do not love the world," and he now becomes a little bit more specific and he says, "nor the things in the world." The things here can refer to any pursuit, any possession, any profession, any person, any pleasure that is more important to you than God, or is in opposition to God and his values. That is why the book of 1 John when you come to the very end, the last verse of the last chapter of 1 John, chapter 5, verse 21, the whole book is summarized, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." And that is a guard against worldliness, and a guard against those things that are in this world that would compete for our affection, our loyalty, our allegiance first and foremost to God. An idol is anything that you love more than God, fear more than God, or serve more than God, and John is addressing this to believers and he says guard your heart from idols.

Now let's be very clear, he is not saying that you cannot have things in this world. What he is saying is things cannot have you. He is not saying that you cannot work in the workplace, he is just saying that cannot be your god and that cannot consume you and be what is most important. As Christians, we may own things, enjoy things, use things, share things, buy things. 1 Timothy says God has created all things for us to richly enjoy. We just cannot love these things with an intense passion that must be reserved exclusively for God and for God alone. We must not become absorbed with the things of this world. We are just strangers, we're aliens, we're pilgrims, we're passing through. This is not our home, our home is in another place, it's in another world literally. That's why the 10 Commandments conclude with the 10th commandment. There is an order. There is an intentional sequence to the moral law of God and in Exodus 20:17 God says through Moses, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." You cannot let your heart become a hotbed of desire for that which you do not have but that you see that someone else has. You may not covet.

So though it is not directly stated here, what is clearly implied, if we are not to love this, then we must love this. If we are not to love the world nor the things in the world, if we are not to love the system, then we must love God and we must love Christ. And the greatest defense to guarding our hearts from loving the world and the things that are in the world and living for these things is that we love God, and a greater love for God displaces a love for the world. It's just like the more we fear God, the less we fear man. And the more we love God, the less we love this world.

So if we love God, there will be a decreasing love for this world but this is very important in our pursuit of sanctification. James 4:4 says, "do you not know," which means this is basic level Christianity. Whenever one of the biblical writers begins a verse by saying, "do you not know," that is a way of saying this is Christianity 101, everyone knows this. Do you not know? Where have you been? "Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." So this very clearly says that we become spiritual adulterers if we allow our heart to be lured to the world and to set our heart upon the world. We are to be in the world, just not of the world. And there's no remedy for just removing ourselves from the world and to withdraw to a cul-de-sac someplace. No, we are to go into the world. We are to carry the gospel into the world. We are to invade the world as light which shines into the darkness. We are to go into the highways and the byways and compel people to come to Christ and urge them to come to Christ. We are to shout it from the housetops. We're not to hide in a cave. We're not to be isolationists and to withdraw from this world. This world is our mission field. But as we are in the world, we cannot allow ourselves to be sucked up into the system. So therefore, in essence, we're to have our boat in the water but no water in the boat.

This is the command, and just to make this very clear, if you would, turn back to Luke 12. It will be worth turning back. We'll be there just for a couple minutes but in Luke 12 Jesus gives a very important parable that we need to hear at this point that I think vividly illustrates what John is saying, the emptiness and the bankruptcy of living for this world. So in Luke 12:15 Jesus says, "Beware," and the word "Beware" there means "keep your eyes open; don't be naive." "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed," and greed is covetousness and desiring for that which you do not have, a lack of contentment with where you are and with what you have. Greed is an inordinate desire for more of what you do not have. It is grasping after and it becomes the focus, it becomes the myopic vision of your life. And Jesus explains why, he says, "for not even when one has an abundance," meaning more of the things of this world, "does his life consist of his possessions." Even if you had more and more and more and more of this world, that's not your life, that's not who you are.

He says in verse 16, he told them a parable. You know what a parable is, that's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. "He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man was very productive.'" I mean, it generated an extraordinary cash flow. This man was fabulously wealthy and he owned much land and the land was very productive here and so this man's pockets are becoming fuller and fuller and deeper and deeper until his pockets are just busting or bursting.

Verse 17, "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'" Now what I want you to note there in those two verses, verse 17 and 18, is that six times we see the first personal singular pronoun "I." This man is suffering from an "I" disease. I. I. I. He worships the unholy trinity of me, myself and I. This man is obsessed with himself. This man could strut like a peacock sitting down and he is just in a self-absorbing mode. That's his whole life, is just to get ahead in the world, to just have more of the world, to just stack it up more and more, and the more he has, the more he's elevating himself above others, and the more he feels good about himself. So he builds larger barns so that he can have more of the world and, again, there's nothing wrong with having barns, and there's nothing wrong with having a productive harvest, what's wrong is this is what he lives for, this is what his chief agenda is, this is his reason for living.

Verse 19, "19 And I will say to my soul," he's talking to himself. He is the personification of arrogance probably because no one else will listen to him. Would you? "Soul," that's what he calls himself, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." Just indulge yourself. Just pamper yourself and just continue to consume the world.

Verse 20, "But God said to him," God said to him, "You fool!" You mindless one. "You fool because you have failed to live for Me, because you have failed to live for the world to come, because you have failed to live for the kingdom of God. You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" He never thought about that. All he thought about was himself. All he thought about was now. He never thought about after he's passed out of this world.

So Jesus now makes the summation in verse 21 and he says, "So is the man," so is the woman, so is the teenager, so is the senior adult, "who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." He is not rich in faith. He is not rich in grace. He is spiritually bankrupt before God. Let us be reminded that we are commanded by the Son of God not to love this world, not to live for this world, not to long for this world, and let us be reminded there are only two things going out of this world: the word of God in the souls of men and how we must invest our life in the word of God and reaching souls for Christ.

Well, if you would, come back to 1 John. I've been so influenced by Dr. MacArthur I've just done 1 John 2:15a. I want you to see the conflict, that's at the end of verse 15. The conflict. There's a condition and then there's a consequence. He says, "If anyone loves the world," again, such a person is very at home in the evil world system and craves for more of the evil world system. "If anyone loves the world," if this is his chief passion, if this is his greatest love, he says, "the love of the Father is not in him." Because the two cannot coexist in the same heart. One will displace the other. And when he says the love of the Father is not in him, it's true, first of all, categorically that the one who is genuinely regenerated by the Spirit of God, and by the way, 1 John has more to say about regeneration and the new birth than any other book in the Bible, that the one who has

been genuinely born of God has had his heart of stone taken out that was cold towards God and hardened towards God and God has implanted a heart of flesh that has a spiritual pulse and a heartbeat for God and has a love for God. And so everyone who is a genuine believer in Jesus Christ is someone who loves God. That's what Romans 8:28 says. We heard that this morning, the distinguishing mark of a true believer is you love God.

So this is true categorically but it's also true in a relative sense, meaning even we as believers can be ensnared by the world system because we live in it, we rub shoulders with it, and it is very alluring, and it can be very seductive, and it can be very tempting. And if we love the world, there will always be a decreasing love for the Father. No one can love the world and love God at the same time with an increase. One will displace the other. It's like James Montgomery Boice used to speak of, the teeter-totter effect, children on the playground on a seesaw: when one end is up, the other end is down, when the other end goes up, the other end goes down but you can never have both ends of the seesaw up at the same time. And applying that to this text, it would be whenever there is an increasing love for God in a believer, there is a decreasing love for this world. But during certain seasons of our life when we can be thrown off track temporarily and we have an increasing love for the world, it will always result in a decreasing love for God. That is why in Revelation 2:4 when Jesus addressed the church at Ephesus, he said, "But I have this against you, you have left your first love." He was talking to believers.

And it doesn't just happen overnight. It's like a slow leak in a tire. The air goes out over an extended period of time until one morning you wake up and the tire is just flat, and that's the way our hearts can be towards God as we become preoccupied with the things of the world, and as we live in the midst of this evil world system, there could be a slow leak in our heart and in our soul and one morning we wake up and find that we're just rather lukewarm and apathetic and sluggish. And that is why the rest of the verses in Revelation 2 gives the four steps to restore your passion and to restore your love for God.

So this is the conflict, this is the conflict within us as believers. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." They cannot coexist in the same heart at the same time. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." It's just totally, completely incompatible and impossible and we need to be reminded of that. So there is this conflict and for us tonight it should serve as a reminder to us that we must have enlarged hearts for God if we are going to survive in this polluted world system in which we live that is becoming exponentially corrupt by the minute. We must love God.

Now I want you to note, third, in verse 16, the corruption. The corruption because here is the challenge that we face, here's the problem: the world is aggressively after us. The world is not passive. The world is not neutral. The world is, as it were, an army of evangelists after our soul. So John writes in verse 16, "For all that is in the world," and again, he's referring to the world system with its godless agenda, with its godless values, with its godless standards. There are three big devices used by the devil and it beings

with, he says, "the lust of the flesh." Do you see that? "For all that is in the world," and the first of the big three is, "the lust of the flesh."

This word "lust" is a very strong word, *epithymia*. It is used in 1 Timothy 3:1 of the elder or the overseer who feels called into ministry. There is such an overwhelming force upon his heart that he is just compelled to step forward and to serve in a capacity in spiritual leadership as an elder. It's the very same word though here it is used in a negative way of strong desires for sin, cravings and longings for sin.

And "the flesh" refers to the carnal desires that are still in our bodily flesh, sinful appetites, wrong passions for sin, no longer dominant in our life as it once was before conversion but nevertheless still present in our life.

The lust of the flesh, and even as Christians we're told in Galatians 5:16 if we will walk by the Spirit, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh. So it is only in the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us are we enabled to mortify and put to death the desires of the flesh in order to pursue holiness. But then the second thing he says, "and the lust of the eyes." And the word "and" is very important because this connects these inseparably together and the lust of the eyes is working in partnership with the lust of the flesh. It's a team ministry thing.

And this word "lust, *epithymia*," it's translated "desires" in Mark 4 and "coveting" in Romans 7, and "impulses" in 2 Timothy 3:6. So the point of entry that inflames our flesh is our eyes. What you set your eyes on, what you look at is what is exciting your flesh. If you are looking at that which is sinful and wrong, if you're looking at the world and there is longing and coveting, it is the eyes that become the entry point. This is what happened with Eve. In Genesis 3:6 we read, "when the woman saw," it's the eyes, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from it and ate it." Her eyes were the entrance ramp for this to enter and stir up the heart.

In 2 Samuel 11:2, David, we read, "when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman." It was his eyes, the lust of the eyes.

And Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 2:10, "All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them." So he had uncontrolled eyes that led to an uncontrolled lifestyle. It was his eyes.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:7, "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell." Do whatever is necessary to control your eyes and when he says "pluck out your eyes," he's not saying that in a literal way, it's a figure of speech, hyperbolic, but what he is saying, "You need to do whatever is necessary to control your eyes, what you're looking at because what you're looking at is stirring up your flesh."

And Jesus said in Matthew 6:22, "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear," meaning pure and holy, "your whole body will be full of light. But," verse 23, "if your eye is bad," meaning your eye is entertaining that which you should not be entertaining. "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness." It will come into you through your eyes and infect your flesh and your whole body will be full of darkness. "If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

So we must be careful what we set before our eyes, the lust of the eyes, whether it be things that in and of themselves are amoral, they can become a preoccupation. Or it may be things that are immoral which only exasperates the spread of the sin. And then it leads to the third, it says at the end of verse 16, "and the boastful pride of life." What we see appeals to our flesh and ignites our pride. "I gotta have it because if I have it, I raise my own self-importance, my own self-significance, I'm able to raise myself above others." The boastful pride of life, longing for things that feed our ego.

John is very straightforward and he said, "This is not from the Father. These fleshly desires and rampant covetousness and swelling ego," he says, "this is not from the Father but from the world." The world that is ruled by Satan, the world that appeals to our flesh, the world that is exasperated by our eyes and inflates our pride, this is the battle within us.

So John concludes with the contrast in verse 17 and it's a stark contrast. John is very much a black-and-white creature and in verse 17 John just flatly says, "The world is passing away," the world is the Titanic that's going down. Why would you be so preoccupied with the world? He says, "The world is passing away," and passing away is translated elsewhere in the New Testament of a traveler who is just passing through an area, someone in transit, not a permanent resident but someone who is like a nomad, just on the move but is here today and gone tomorrow. He said that's the way the world is, it's so temporal, it's so fleeting. It seems so lasting and permanent but it's passing away, in fact, it is imploding from within. It is self-destructing. It's not evolving, it's devolving. It is perishing.

This world system and the things in the world are perishing and dying. It's all passing away, its hedonism, its paganism, its materialism, its idolatry, its godlessness. Then he adds, "and also its lusts." It's like spiraling down. It's in a death spiral. So why would you want to attach yourself to this which is on the slippery slope and is cascading down at Mach speed and will end up in total complete destruction?

But note the sharp contrast, "but the one who does the will of God," we know who that is, that's a believer. What is implied is does the will of God from the heart. He lives to obey God. He lives to follow God. He lives to pursue God's agenda. The total opposite of the one who is actually of the world in this perishing system, but the one who does the will of God, he says, "lives forever." Lives here is literally the word for abide; to be at home with. And though it's not stated what is clearly implied, this is the one that will live with God forever. This is the one who will be in the presence of God forever. This is the one

when he leaves this world and goes to the next world, he will graduate to glory and he will walk on streets of gold and he will drink from the river of life and eat from the tree of life. He will live forever with God and the greatest of all blessings, the beatific vision, he will actually see God in heaven. He says it is this one who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God, this is the only one who will live forever.

Now let us be clear: everyone is going to live forever somewhere, whether in heaven or in hell. Those in hell do not really live, they just merely exist. Here to live forever means to live with God forever in the immediate presence of God. And in a sense it even begins now in this life as we have God with us and God in us by his Spirit, and we know God and we walk with God.

So the warning is clear and we all need warning in our Christian life. We all need not only the positive assertion but the negative denial, and this text it's a wake-up call. The warning is clear that this world is perishing. It is a sinking ship and we must abandon ship before it's too late. This world is headed to the final judgment and all who are onboard the world will be submerged into the pit below and there is only one way to be saved, there is only one way to escape the ultimate destruction of the world and that is to repent of your sin and to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Savior who says, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." And in true saving faith, true saving faith, not just like, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,'" but true saving faith, there must be a decisive break from the world.

When I was in high school and a part of a youth ministry, we used to sing a chorus, "The world behind me, the cross before me. The world behind me, the cross before me. I will follow Jesus." And in order to follow Jesus, you must have the world behind you. We're in the world but not of the world, and it necessitates abandoning the world's values and utterly repudiating what the world lives for, and for us to live now for the higher standard that is set forth in the word of God.

So as we come to the conclusion, I just want to ask you tonight where is your heart? I know where your body is, where is your heart? Do you love God more than anyone in this world? Do you love God more than anything in this world? Does the world appear to you to be increasingly empty and void? Does the world to come seem to be more real and more valuable than the world in which we live? Do you guard what you place before your eyes? Do you put to death the desires of your flesh? Do you mortify the pride of life within you? Do you humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God? As we heard this morning in all humility dying to self, dying to the world, dying to the desires of the flesh that we might live for God. This is absolutely non-negotiable. It is absolutely essential in our pursuit of sanctification and holiness.

As I conclude, I want to say as we have so many here tonight, what a wonderful thing it is to see, it's very possible if not probable that among us would be several, perhaps more, who have never left the world, the world system. It may well be you're one of those that is still caught up in the rat race and living for this world and for whatever reason the Lord has drawn you here tonight and you're looking. I want you to know that this world is

perishing, that this world is on a collision course with judgment, that this world will be subjected to eternal condemnation and that there is an offer being extended to you this very moment from the High Courts of heaven that if you would turn from the world and turn from yourself and turn from your sinful desires and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ who has come to bear the sins of many upon the cross, that if you would turn to this Christ, this Jesus who left heaven, came into this world and who lived among us and kept all the law of God perfectly that we have broken again and again, that he might live in our place and then go to the cross and die in our place and bear our sins, that if you would turn to him and if you would entrust yourself to him, he would receive you. He would take you in. You would become one of his and you would no longer be living for the bankruptcy and the emptiness of this fleeting temporal world. You would live for a world that is an eternal world, a world where God dwells and where Jesus Christ is at his right hand, and where all the saints in all the ages are around the throne of God, and where myriads and myriads and ten thousands of ten thousands of angels are filling the courts of heaven, you could be a part of that scene if you would but by faith commit your life to Jesus Christ.

So tonight, I plead with you to make that decisive break from the world and from a life pursuit of sin, and to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus says, "Him who comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He is the friend of sinners. He's a physician who's come not for those who are well but for those who are sick. He's come not for the righteous but for the unrighteous. He's come for someone just like you. You would receive a glad reception from the Lord Jesus Christ if you would but humbly repent and to turn to Christ and throw yourself upon his mercy and you would find much mercy, much compassion, much forgiveness from him and one day he would take you to another world to live forever. May you do so tonight if you've never committed your life to Christ.

Let us pray.

Father, thank You for this really admonition from John that we need to hear. We understand it's couched in a negative "do not love the world," but we need to hear verses like this reintroduced to our hearts again. I pray that they would penetrate into the innermost part of our soul and that there would be a renewed commitment to live for the kingdom of God and to live for You. May we be unstained from this evil world that is becoming more polluted by the moment. May we be a chaste church, a pure virgin church. In Christ's name. Amen.