

Love Not the World

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Bible Text: 1 John 2:11-20

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If you will, look with me in your Bibles to 1 John chapter two and I am going to read from verse 15 down to verse 20 and talk to you about not loving this world.

1 John two beginning with 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.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.¹

Now the first thing when we consider this portion of Scripture we have to answer is: What is the world we are to hate? You know, when I weight his commandment, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,"² I have to say that there are an awful lot of things I love in this world. I love a beautiful sunrise. I love a beautiful sunset. I love loved ones. That is why we call them loved ones. I love friends in this world. And I love the blessing of fellowship. There is nothing I enjoy more than coming together with the Lord's people and rejoicing in Christ.

I love a good meal.

So am I to understand here from verse 15 that anything in this world I am to hate?

¹ 1 John 2:15-20.

² 1 John 2:15.

Well, I believe we know better than that. The Lord has given us, the Scriptures say, all things to enjoy. All things are yours in Christ. He is the Creator of this world. And certainly we are not to go about in a monastic type of sense of withdrawing from the world like some understand this. They take it literally in the sense of anything that is fleshly by nature that we are to avoid, we are to abstain from it.

But you know, as well as I do, that when you deprive yourself of something which is a current toward that thing, eventually it explodes. Eventually there is something that happens that draws you back into it. And so what we need is wisdom. We need the Lord's wisdom to understand exactly what this is referring to here.

I do know this, if you look over in Colossians chapter three and verse one it says, "If ye then be risen with Christ,"³ one for whom Christ has died and risen again, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection [singular, set your mind] on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead."⁴ The Lord has made a difference. "And your life is hid with Christ in God."⁵

So when I read here, "Love not the world,"⁶ I understand that I am to live in this world. I am to enjoy what the Lord has given me. If I don't enjoy getting up and going to work, something is wrong. We can get tired of it, weary of it, but it is the way that God has determined that we pay our bills and live a wholesome life.

But we are not to set our affection on these things. I believe that is the sense here. We are not to make idols of what we have. We are not to put any confidence in the flesh because we know that these things are temporal. We are not to take any pride for ourselves or honor and glory in things of the world because we know that the only reason we have them and enjoy them is because God has given them to us. We read that in Ecclesiastes chapter two.

And as we live out our lives in this world, not setting our affection on these things that we have or holding tightly to them. I heard a preacher say one time, "Go ahead and have this funeral right now because eventually you will."

But hang on to them loosely, always keeping in view where our true citizenship is. It is in heaven. It is with Christ. And our true family is the family of God. It is those that God by his grace and mercy has chosen out. And Christ has redeemed. The Spirit has called out. That is where our family is.

I have got physical family members that are more estranged to me now than ever even though you could take and trace my roots back to them and it would be my blood line, but we have nothing in common. I know some try to through family reunions keep everybody together and schmoozing and happy and caring about each other, but honestly

³ Colossians 3:1.

⁴ Colossians 3:2-3.

⁵ Colossians 3:3.

⁶ 1 John 2:15.

when you don't have something in common spiritually speaking, for me it is just a charade. My true family—even though I don't have any historic roots that I know of in Shreveport, Louisiana—but my true family is here. My spiritual family is here. And these are the ones that I rejoice in and care about and in that sense my affection is on things above because I know that I am going to be spending eternity with those that the Lord has bought.

But if a man or a woman's affection and interests are set upon the world and you know some that are that way right up to their dying breath that is all they can think about is what they have done and what they have yet to do. I have an associate that is over 90 years old in very ill health right now, just was discovered with colon cancer and been through all the surgeries and recovered in rehab, et cetera. But when you call him and talk to him all he can talk about is getting out of that rehab hospital or nursing home. And when he calls you it is always about business. He is not thinking about eternity. His affection is upon things of this world because that is all he knows. But for those that have been taught by the Spirit, it is different.

We, in essence, struggle, at least I do, weighing, because I know the Scriptures says no man can serve two masters. On the one hand you have got bosses. You have got people in authority in a hierarchy above you that expect you to do certain things because that is how you are getting paid, but you have to constantly weigh these things in light of what our true citizenship is. And that is in Christ.

So the world, I believe that we are to hate. It is not a geographical world, because the word "world" can be translated in many ways. Don't you enjoy traveling? Don't you enjoy looking at some of the beauty of this earth? Even under the curse, this is a very beautiful world in which to live. It is certainly not talking about hating ethnically the world. I know that some make distinctions between race and color, but we are not to be respecters of persons. And so we have no right in reality even of saying to a lost world out there, "I hate you." We are to show kindness. This may be the only kindness those of this world will ever know as we cross paths with them. We have to keep that in mind even when they irritate us and get us upset. We have got to remember that there is a difference that the Lord has made. And so as he gives grace we show kindness. We have no excuse to hate anybody in this world as far as God's creatures.

So what is the world that we are to hate? Well, it is the world of darkness. It is a spiritual world. And the reason I say that in verse 16 it defines the world.

"For all that is in the world..."⁷

And there is three ways that this world is defined in which John is talking here.

"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."⁸

⁷ 1 John 2:16.

⁸ Ibid.

So you can go back up to verse 15 with that definition and understand what John is saying when he says, “Love not the world.”⁹

In other words, don't love the lust of the flesh. Don't love the lust of the eyes. Don't love the pride of life. And when it says there, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,”¹⁰ if I set my affection on this flesh to nurture it and to build it up in any way by way of self esteem, that stands in contradiction to the love of the Father, because I have nothing for which to boast. I didn't have a thing to do with my height. I didn't have a thing to do with the color of my skin. You know, we keep working on this body trying to keep it in shape until we just finally plop into the grave, I think, but we are not to put any confidence in this flesh.

And so to do is to love the world, the pride of life or the lust of the eyes. I know that when you look at that you think of certain things after which the eyes might lust. And you might ask yourself: Well, what is the difference between the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes?

Well, the flesh is the things that pertain to this flesh in here. We know about what it is. It is self righteousness. It is things like getting your feelings hurt because you are not getting the kind of attention that you want to. It is selfishness. And the lust of the eyes has to do with things out there, the things that I don't have, but I covet. Well, if I truly believe that God has ordained all things—and he has—then for me to set my affection on things that God has not given me for whatever purpose or reason to covet, is idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry. So whether it is in here or it is out there, I am not to set my affection upon it in any way for self satisfaction.

You say, “Well, what is the pride of life?”

I believe the pride of life has to do with the ambition for honor. That has to do with our position in life, an ambition for honor, for perhaps worldly fame. It is all related, for wanting the high seat when the Scriptures say, “Don't seek the honor and praise of men.”

So you have got the things that pertain to things and then you have got the things that pertain also to men.

You say, “Why are these wrong?”

Well, in every one of them they stand in contradiction to Christ who is to have all the glory.

When you talk about the lust of the flesh, Scriptures say, “Put no confidence in the flesh. There is nothing good in this flesh.”

⁹ 1 John 2:16.

¹⁰ 1 John 2:15.

So to set your affection on it, to strive after those things which you know in this flesh have no strength with regard to Christ and his glory and honor, we don't seek after these things. The same with the lust of the eyes. It is Christ alone who is to be our honor and glory. And so to covet those things that we may not have that others have. You know, we have to be careful in this world because you sometimes look at people in the flesh and those around you and you see how they succeed and you are not necessarily succeeding like they are and it is easy to get that thought. Well, what am I doing wrong? Rather than seeing that as a mercy, that the Lord is not giving you those things that would serve to your own destruction were he to let you go the way you would go. And that having Christ we have all.

And the pride of life. Men in this world in the natural flesh are always seeking to go up in rank. It is always an upward mobility. When God's purpose for his children in reality is bringing them low, bringing them down to Christ's feet and to cause them to recognize that there is only one that is to be honored in this world and that is Christ.

So the pride of life. We don't look for those things which would in any way exalt ourselves. And the only way that is ever going to happen is if God gives you the grace, because in our flesh we are just like anybody else. We would pursue every one of these. So that is the world that I believe John is speaking of when he says, "Love not the world."

But, secondly, why is it that we are not to love this world? Continuing on in verse 17 through 19 we have some very specific reasons given.

Number one is the temporalness of the world. Would you invest much time and effort and energy in a house, for example, that you knew was marked for destruction, condemnation? Would you go out and pay a half million dollars for it because it happened to be on a good location in your view when it is already been marked to be torn down?

You would say, "No." You would be a fool to do so.

So we don't live our lives in that way either as if we are going to continue in this life. It says there in verse 17, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."¹¹

When it talks about the lust thereof, I believe it has to do with getting old. You know, whatever those youthful passions were that when you were younger it seemed like you couldn't do without, as you get older your mind changes as your body gets weaker. Your motivations change. There are many things about this world and this body that even though it is not the end of the world yet, our end in this world is approaching with every day as we get older. We try to stay as youthful as possible and suck it up and, you know, act energetic and everything, but reality is this world is passing away, our world is and the lust thereof.

¹¹ 1 John 2:17.

And so we are not to put our confidence in it. We are not to make of anything in this world that which is so precious to us that when it does pass away we have a hard time letting go.

Anything that is valuable and important has to do with God.

In Matthew chapter six and verse 33 it says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these [other] things shall be added unto you.”¹²

But what is to seek God and his righteousness? God’s righteousness is the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s righteousness is his Son. God’s righteousness is seated at his right hand in glory and even as we read in Colossians that is where we are to set our affection. How can we do that? The Spirit of God drawing us constantly, like reigning in a horse.

I was a cattle rustling thing. I guess it is a bull riding thing a couple of weeks ago. And there was a cowboy on one of these big horses that his purpose was to corral the bulls back into where they were supposed to go after they threw their rider off. And it amazed me. I was as fascinated watching that horse because you could see him in some sense just wanting to go. He was ready for action, but he was also trained by that rider to stand still. And his head would jolt every once in a while, but his body stood there until that cowboy spurred him into the direction he would go and turned him the direction he would go. There was a controlling of that horse even, perhaps, against his nature.

One of my friends that used to ride horses told me that, that if you don’t continually train the horse in what he is supposed to be doing every day... That is why some people that have horses and ride them, they have got to do it every day. They will forget. And the next thing you know, they are putting their head down when it should be up and you are having to retrain them.

But I think about that with regard even to our own nature. Don’t we constantly need reminders that this world is not our home? We are just passing through. And so we don’t put our affection on the things we have. We enjoy them, but we give God the glory for them because we know the day is coming when they will be taken away. Only the glory of Christ will never fade and in him we find our satisfaction.

So the temporalness of the world is the reason we don’t love it. We don’t set our affection upon it. But, secondly, in view of eternity when we come down here to verse 18—and I believe that is in verse 17 at the end when it says, “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever,”¹³ it is the will of God with regard to these things, to look to Christ. Isn’t that God’s will that we find our rest in him, find our satisfaction in him and not in anything temporal?

¹² Matthew 6:33.

¹³ 1 John 2:17.

But, secondly, we are not to love this world because of eternity. It says here, “Little children, it is the last time.”¹⁴

When people say, “Are we in the last days?” John says, “It is the last time,”¹⁵ the last tick of the clock. In perspective with regard to eternity this is just a little blip on the radar even if there is another 10,000 years to go before the end. We are in the last days.

Then he says, “As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.”¹⁶

So, again, what we are facing in this world is not a physical battle—although there is. We struggle every day with paying the bills, physical things, our health. But there is a far greater spiritual battle that is going on, spiritual darkness. We live in the last time and we live at a time when the Spirit of antichrist reigns.

Notice it says, “Even now there are many antichrists.”¹⁷

So what is John talking about? We have talked about the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, but John says don’t forget there is a greater battle and that is one that is spiritual in nature. And that is that we live in a world where men lie in darkness. They hate the light because their deeds are evil. And while many today are scouring books and listening to preachers and going to conferences and seminars trying to figure out who the antichrist is, looking for a man, what John is speaking of—and I believe the rest of Scripture—is talking about a spirit. There is a spirit that rules in natural men’s minds and hearts that is antichrist. It is contrary to every truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you can go back up to verse 16 and show how this plays out even with regard to how people worship. There is a lust of the flesh where fallen creatures in blindness and darkness lost cater to and look for those that will pamper their flesh or their will. And the lust of the eyes is not so much what these eyes see out there, but how I want men to perceive me. There is a lust of the eyes that is very prominent in religion, in works religion. That is why they have these productions. Who doesn’t like to be part of a, you know, a passion play? Get to play the part of Jesus.

I heard somebody talk about that the other day. They got one man that has never given up his role of playing the part of Jesus in the passion play because he is the respected one in the church. Don’t you know he likes that? He likes that glory. That is as much the lust of the eyes as looking outward. It is the desire to have men see me.

As Christ spoke of the Pharisees who desired the chief seats. They love to stand on the street corners and sound their trumpet to give alms. Or they love the making of long prayers. There is a lot of production that goes into religion that is just as evil in this world, John is saying, and is antichrist, because in reality... and we fight it. You know,

¹⁴ 1 John 2:18.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

we are not to be commending one another as we come together for worship for how we sing or how we sound or how I preach or you preach. Those are things that... our focus needs to be on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is like John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”¹⁸

And in reality our conversations ought to be about that, not about what someone is wearing or how they look. Although we, you know, we get into those types of things, but ultimately our affections should be set upon the Lord Jesus Christ or the pride of life position.

I heard one time... I heard many times, because I was taught in how to grow a church in some of my religious studies. But, you know, they said, “If you really want to get people motivated, give everybody a position. Give them a title.” And so you will get some churches where one person is the flower committee, because they like that. That is their title. You know, it is the way men work to try to exalt other people just to get them to attend. But such is not to be our direction.

When you consider these things in light of eternity and what it is to stand before a holy God and whether or not Christ is your representative and whether or not that blood was shed to put away your sin and whether or not you are clothed in his righteousness alone. These are vital issues. All these other things that people fight over, titles and positions and honor, all of that is part of this world that is passing away and the lusts thereof. It won't matter one bit in light of eternity.

But do you know what? You can say that all day long. The only person, the only one that can ever teach a sinner's heart is the Spirit of Christ. And if the Lord has so taught us, thank him and don't get upset when people don't see it or, you know, it is not by intelligence. It is not by education. It is not by reformation. It is by revelation.

But that is what John is speaking of here in verse 19 when he says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us.”¹⁹

That is not talking about necessarily leaving a particular congregation. Someone leaves you say, “Well, they went out from us. They were not of us.”

What this is talking about here is the fellowship of the body of Christ. It is talking about those who leave the gospel to identify or join themselves with that which is false, false practices, false worship. And in John's day when he was writing there weren't congregations like we have today. There were little pockets of people meeting as believers here and there, but he is talking about in general those that took a stand against Christ and against his Word and against his gospel and against the truth of redemption by his blood alone and that righteousness which Christ worked out.

¹⁸ John 3:30.

¹⁹ 1 John 2:19.

They went out from that fellowship and clearly identified themselves with false religion and for many reasons. Maybe they couldn't endure the isolation. When you think about the true Church about the Lord Jesus Christ down through the centuries, it hadn't been one of the masses. It has not been the majority. It has always been as Christ said of his disciples, a little flock, but a blood bought flock.

And there are those that are so taught of the Lord that they would rather meet with those that are of like mind that have that fellowship that compromise and go anywhere else. That is where their hearts are set because Christ has made it so. His Spirit has made it so.

But there are some that they make a profession for a while and there is given a certain... I don't care whether it is a trial. It could be a promotion. There are many reasons why people will at a certain moment in time just withdraw themselves from the fellowship of the Lord's people and go join themselves to a works religion and, in essence, walk away, walk away from that fellowship of the Lord's people.

I always pray that the Lord would so keep my heart and keep your heart that that would never be the case.

I had a preacher some time ago that told me that. He has passed on now, but he said after he had been preaching for some 40 years, he said, "You would be surprised what a lot of people really believe that you preach for."

And he even told me. He said, "I can't even tell you what my wife's true profession is. I don't know as what she is coming because of me and that when I am gone she will go join herself to some former religion, idolatrous worship. I don't know. Maybe the kids will be worshipping somewhere else and she will feel lonely or whatever. I am not here so she will go join wherever they are." He said, "These are things that are hard to discern." But he said, "The biggest thing I have got to be concerned for is myself, that if the Lord doesn't keep me, so go I."

And that is all part of living in this world, that the Lord... you know, you ask yourself: Has he truly done that work in me? Examine yourselves to see whether or not you be in the faith.

We can spend a lot of time in the pride or the lust of the eyes, wanting people to think good of us, of our profession, but all it takes is the Lord to move his hand for a little bit and the next thing you know you have fallen just like anybody else.

So my prayer is that, that the Lord would keep us.

You are going to see a lot of people come and go.

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."²⁰

²⁰ 1 John 2:19.

There would be that continued fellowship. You can't... what God has put together, let no man put asunder, but it says here, "That they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."²¹

Just like it says of Israel, they were not all of Israel that were of Israel. And the same could be said of us. It is just as easy to go to hell sitting in a chair in a congregation where the gospel is preached as it is for somebody in false worship to live and die without every knowing or hearing the gospel unless the Spirit of God is truly... has done that work of grace in the heart. They will all finally fall.

Christ said of those in his day, "Whatever the Father has not planted, shall be uprooted."

And that is why the Lord many times sends trials. There is these departures from the faith. But as we watch people depart, let us be impressed to cry, "I am what I am by the grace of God."

And that is it. That is it.

If one true sheep of Christ could fall away, then my weak soul would fall 1000 times a day. I know that there is only one person keeping Ken Wimer and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And how many times I would have wandered, but what his gracious hand has kept me. And his arm has taken me and put me upon his shoulders and brought me again and again back to himself.

Verse 20 shows us that to not love this world and to truly love Christ it takes the work of the Spirit.

It says there in verse 20, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."²²

I know if you are the Lord's, what I am telling you right now it is just a revision. These are things we know. But we need to be reminded of that. We need to be reminded that it is the Holy Spirit, that unction that he has given us by which we know the truth. It is his anointing that is not only a quickening one, but one that instructs us. It enlightens us. It gives us understanding. It gives us discernment. It causes us to see the danger from afar.

If a blind person... if a person is blind they don't know the danger. It could... you see it. They are right there. In fact, you might yell and tell them to stop and you see it, but they can't see it because they are blind.

And being fallen creatures, it should not surprise us that we have fallen. That is what fallen creatures do. They fall. But to be kept is by the power of the Spirit alone. And to

²¹ Ibid.

²² 1 John 2:10.

know wherein lies our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the unction of Christ, the holy one.

I pray the Lord will bless that to our hearts.

Let's take our hymn books and sing hymn number 272.