



"Love Not This World" by Pastor Tim Dodson of Jesus Fellowship of Believers, Menomonie, WI presented February 8th, 2015

1 John 2:15-17 (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. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

"There is nothing better, there is nothing higher, there is nothing more precious than what this earth can give you: its money, its pleasures, its fame. You had best eat, drink, and be merry, for there is no nobler life than that." (Ray Stedman - **The Enemy Around**) This is the mantra of the world we live in.

John continues with this clarification concerning the "test of our faith." While verses 15-17 are a culturally familiar passage to most Christians, little can be said as to any real significant effect it has had upon us as individuals or Christendom in general. Sadly, as the last passage instruction not to *hate* is often answered with "well, I don't LIKE that person but I don't HATE them...", this instruction is often answered in kind with "well, I LIKE the world but I don't LOVE it...".

This is certainly one of the most dangerous practices in our lives, where we rationalize and justify and excuse ourselves from the standard we are called upon to produce. We generally don't know ourselves and our hearts because we truthfully do not *want* to! The heart of man is wicked and is like a deep dark well that nobody wants to look down for fear of what they might find! So we adopt a predominately moderate view of who we think we are. We aren't "saints" in the classic sense, but hey...we aren't wicked heathens either! We are just...well, somewhere in the middle! We're "pretty good people!"

The fact remains...if you love what is passing away, **you** will pass away. In other words if your life is composed of loving the desires of the world which are passing away, so too will you!

If you love God you cannot set your heart on what is not of God! Jesus taught the same principle in Mt 6:24 explaining that one cannot love God and money. Love of the world will displace love of God. And conversely, love of God, will displace love of the world. So many in this world desire eternal life and absolution of sin's guilt upon them, but yet still fail to love Christ or trust in Him. This naturally causes unease and absence of personal peace. Their response to such a dilemma is to then move into the realm of charades...where they pretend and masquerade their faith...not merely in attempt to persuade *others* concerning who they are, but also to try to persuade *themselves*!

In John 5:42-44, Jesus challenged the Jewish leaders saying "I know that you have not the **love of God** within you. I have come in my Father's name and **you do not receive Me** ... How can you **believe**, (you) who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?"

The reason they merely believe *of* and fail to believe *on* Jesus is that they simply **do not love God**. They rather **love the world**—the praise, the glory of men—instead of the glory of God. They love the *things* of this world, more than they love the *things* of God. So Jesus...and John these years later, were effectively stating that where there is no love for God, there can be no saving faith.

As Billy Graham has said "No man can be said to be truly converted to Christ who has not bent his will to Christ. He may give **intellectual assent** to the claims of Christ and may have had emotional religious experiences; however, **he is not truly converted until he has surrendered his will to Christ as Lord, Savior, and Master.**"

It seems that many of us have attempted to breach the walls of redemption by "some other way" (John 10:1). Jesus said these are "thieves and robbers" because they seek salvation and eternal life while withholding their love, their loyalty, their commitment, and their passions. It's as if we get on that train and then spend the rest of our lives attempting to repeatedly and constantly trying to 'renegotiate the fare.' We are mandated to "come in through the gate," which is Christ and the gospel. We are generally quite willing to *share* our lives with Christ, but can't seem to make the leap to "all in" ...to "*love the LORD your God with **all** your heart, with **all** your soul, with **all** your mind, and with **all** your strength.*"

Romans 6:22 tells us "*But now having been set free from sin, and having become **slaves** of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*" Does that describe your relationship? How do you know if you are indeed a "slave?" If you are, you will produce the "fruit of holiness." Thank God He is gracious and patient with us in our human shortcomings, but where truly is our hearts? Luke 13:24 call us to "**Strive** to enter through the narrow gate..."

The fact is, love for the world precludes and even "pushes out" love for God. We can try our best through discipline and self control to not love the world, however the best "antidote" in our fight against this pervasive powerful pull to love the world is to be zealous to love the Father! This is a critical aspect of the very gospel of Christ! It is our love of Christ...the positioning of our lives and passions to look to Him and spend time with Him that shall overcome our desires for the world and the flesh. Please note the emphatic nature of just what John is saying here. He is not telling us to 'not love the world much,' but he takes a far more radical approach by telling us not to love the world at all!

Again, in our 'middle road' moderate approach, we would tend to claim "well, it's not that I *LOVE* the world...I just *LIKE* it." But James takes care of that one by saying in his letter (James 4:4 NLT) that "*Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.*" In light of that clarification, there is not a one of us that stands innocent today. Not one of us is "there." This fact shines a profound bright light on even our activities as believers in the political realm, where whole segments of Christendom today is intensely involved in claiming or at least *reclaiming* government and earthly organization back to our own, to make "this world" a more palatable place for us to live. How can we rectify these two roads? We cannot.

This "world," as John puts it, is what we might call "the world system." It involves the world's values, pleasures, pastimes, and aspirations. John tells us herein as well as in his gospel that the world lies in the grip of the evil one (1Jn 5:19), that it rejected Jesus when He came (Jn 1:10), that it does not know Him (1Jn 3:1), and consequently that it does not know and therefore also hates His followers (John 15:18,19, 20, 21; 17:14).

We need to understand this, as it is evident that such truth is critical to not only our walk in Him but in our very **standing** with Him. It is not 'worldly' to seek a career, to get married, to have children, to be involved in earning a living. None of these are what John has in mind by 'the world'. He is not inferring that we "drop out" of society. How can we do such and remain missional and reach out to a lost world around us? But do we in all things "seek first the kingdom of God" or is such merely a secondary consideration at best? Is our goal in all aspects of life to live for Christ and to seek to further His agenda? Are we in fact becoming like **them**? Allowing them to set the tone, the priorities and the agenda for our lives? When we try to walk in two worlds at once we are, as James puts it, "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8). John Blanchard said "Jesus did not pray that his Father would take Christians out of the world, but that he would take the world out of Christians."

That which John is warning us concerning is the "*lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*" These paint the broad picture of what is NOT of God, and that which we need to evaluate. Boice observes that in this verse John... "*is not thinking then so much of materialism ("things") as he is of the attitudes that lie behind materialism. For he knows, as we should all know, that a person without worldly goods can be just as materialistic as a person who has many of them; and, conversely, a rich person can be quite free from this and any other form of worldliness. John is actually thinking of selfish ambition, pride, the love of success or flattery, and other such characteristics.*" The writer Robert Law recognizes this in his excellent rephrasing of the apostle's appeal. He writes, "*Do not court the intimacy and the favour of the unchristian world around you; do not take its customs for your laws, nor adopt its ideals, nor covet its prizes, nor seek fellowship with its life.*"

It is Paul that reminds us this battle is one that we will wage every day -- it is a battle we cannot win on our own but only as we begin each morning surrendering our will to Holy Spirit, and actively and intentionally pursuing a relationship with Christ. "*For the flesh sets its desire (present tense = continually!) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*" (Galatians 5:17) and "*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*" (Galatians 5:24)

The "lust of the flesh" is more than merely the obvious sexual appetite. The lust of the flesh is the desire to *do* something, *anything* apart from the will of God. Thus to avoid such one must by necessity know what the will of God *is!* Not only for the corporate body of Christ, but for each of us individually! But that is not how most of us operate. We tend rather to stumble through this life and let the world and life itself dictate our directions and our decisions. Rarely do we truly seek God on HIS desire for us and to prayerfully move according to God's specific ordained plan for us as His redeemed slave. Rather we want what we want and seek God to bless **our** decisions! By doing so we effectively take what would otherwise be a normal and perhaps worldly benign decision and plan and make it merely a "lust of the flesh." Even the most worldly normative move on our part can skew our futures off track and eventually far from what God was wanting for us, what God was calling us to as His child. God wants us to live with purpose. To live intentionally in all we do.

"There are five things that will never happen to the flesh. The flesh cannot be changed, it cannot be reformed, it can never be trained, it cannot be improved, and it cannot be reconciled to God. It is always and ever opposed to God (Gal 5:17). It will never be at peace with God; instead there is constant war. God can never be brought into harmony with that which is out of harmony with His holy and righteous character." (*Middletown Bible Church*)

Then there is the "lust of the eyes." Achan answering Joshua said "*when I **saw** among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I **coveted** them and **took** them; and behold, they are **concealed** in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it.*" (Joshua 7:21) Note the principle of sin's progression from passion to possession - "I saw...I desired...I took." We have apparently been plagued by such from the beginning. It was Eve who "*saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight (Heb = desirable) to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*" (Genesis 3:6)

Again, should we fight ourselves as to the want of these worldly things, or should we rather seek to change **what** we want? Would not this tendency never be such an issue if, in love with Jesus, we actually *want* the things, the ways, the plan, the will of Him who we love? Where therefore should be our battleground? What I want in life has changed dramatically since I got married. I now so much want what my wife wants. Why? Through determination and discipline? No. ***I just fell in love.***

"the pride of life..." This is living without the critical character of humility. When it's all about me, it is certainly then not about Christ. When I believe I am the center of the world, then Christ ceases to be. And yet once again, we say we are aren't *proud*, just self-confident...just practicing a little self-esteem! But the problem is one can't even say that without giving themselves away with the use of the word "self!" Are we not rather to be *God*-confident and practicing *God*-esteem? The bottom line is, is it about you or *Him*? We need to acknowledge that pride in a believers life is a killer! It ends everything 'God-in-our-life' before we even start. I have witnessed this insidious weapon destroy countless individuals who looked into this Jesus thing. Behind every sin we commit is the gremlin of "pride!"

"The world is passing away..." When we love anything more than the true and living God revealed in the Bible, we are worshiping it. Whatever it is, it won't last. And it won't be able to help us when our plans shatter, our health fails, or death comes for us. In 1989, Tom Sine wrote some insightful words that apply just as much now, as then (Christianity Today [3/17/89], p. 52): "*Whatever commands our time, energy, and resources commands us. And if we are honest, we will admit that our lives really aren't that different from those of our secular counterparts. I suspect that one of the reasons we are so ineffective in evangelism is that we are so much like the people around us that we have very little to which we can call them. We hang around church buildings a little more. We abstain from a few things. But we simply aren't that different. We don't even do hedonism as well as the folks around us ... but we keep on trying. As a result of this unfortunate accommodation, Christianity is reduced to little more than a spiritual crutch to help us through the minefields of the upwardly mobile life. God is there to help us get our promotions, our house in the suburbs, and our bills paid. Somehow God has become a co-conspirator in our agendas instead of our becoming a co-conspirator in His. Something is seriously amiss.*"

Spurgeon said the following, referring to the dayfly which lives only one day - "*He is so short lived that he scarcely attains to years, but exists by the day... whose birth and death are both seen by the self same sun. His life is only like to a shadow, which is in itself a vague resemblance, an absence of something rather than in itself an existence. Observe that human life is not only as a shade, but as a shade which is about to depart. It is a mere mirage, the image of a thing which is not, a phantasm which melts back into nothing. How is it that the Eternal should make so much of mortal man, who begins to die as soon as he begins to live?*"

So I leave you with this crucial question, for which your answer will determine your very state of salvation: ***Who, or what do you love today?*** Because everything is fading away, and most of all, ***we are...***