

**“LOVE NOT THE WORLD”**

1 John 2:15-17

**Intro:** We are currently studying the First Epistle of John in our Sunday morning services. This morning will be the eighth message that I have brought from this letter which the Apostle Peter wrote toward the end of the first century. We do not know who the original recipients of this letter because he didn't mention any individuals in these five chapters. What we do know is that he was writing to Christians, people who were trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation, but believers who evidently were lacking the assurance of their salvation. We learned this much from 1 John 5:13.

Now in order to help them on this very important point, he gave them a series of tests which he wanted them to apply to themselves. These tests, providing they passed them, would give them the assurance that they were true children of God.

The first was, or is, the test of sin. After pointing out that “God is light” in 1:5, meaning that He was righteous, that He was holy, and that there was not the slightest evidence of sin, or darkness, as he expressed it, in God. So, if a person claims to be a Christian, but continues to live in sin, doing things that are displeasing to God, he is not telling the truth. He was not saying that Christians don't sin, but he was saying that Christians do not live in sin. It bothers them if they sin, and they go to God confessing their sin, seeking forgiveness and cleansing which only God can give. And the Apostle John's plain statement about believers is given in the first verse of chapter 2: “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not”!

This first test begins in verse 6 of chapter 1 and goes down through verse 2 of chapter 2. But we are going to see that this is not the only time that the Apostle John mentioned this test.

The second test is the test of obedience. The Word of God contains many commandments. We have already seen one in chapter 2, verse 1, about sin. When a person becomes a Christian, his way of living undergoes a great change. He becomes concerned about what God wants him to do, or not do, to be, or not be, and God has expressed these in the Bible in hundreds of instances. We don't obey God in order to be saved, but we obey God because we are saved. All of us have failed here and there in our

lives, but we learn to take the commandments of the Bible as God's will for us. The commandments help us to understand sin because to disobey God's commandments, is to sin. The commandments are to be found in the Bible. That is one reason we read and study and memorize the Word of God. Salvation brings into our hearts a desire to please God.

This test begins in verse 3 of chapter 2, and goes down through verse 6. But the Apostle John will mention this test again.

A third test is given in verses 7 through 11 in chapter 2. This is a test of love for other Christians. Later on in the epistle when the Apostle John comes to this test again, in chapter 3, verse 14, he said,

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Before we are saved, we have no desire to be with other Christians. But after we are saved, Christians, true Christians, are the people that we enjoy being with the most.

Last Sunday we got started on the fourth test,

It begins in verse 12 of chapter 2, and continues down to the 17th verse of chapter 2. It is the test as to whether or not we still love the world. Before we were saved, the world was what we wanted. It didn't always make us happy to do what we did, and if it did give us some pleasure, it was not a pleasure that lasted. But a real change in our relationship with the world always is one thing that takes place in the lives of those who really know Christ as their Savior.

However, we learned last Sunday that the Apostle John approached this subject in a very unusual way. In verses 12, 13, and 14 he addressed us as the people of God as being in three different stages of spiritual growth. Some are children. Others are young men. And then there are those who are fathers. And I expressed my own belief that the Apostle John was using these terms generically. By I mean that he was using these terms of women as well as of men, of young women as well as young men, and of girls as well as boys. "Children" really emphasizes this interpretation, or application.

Like much of the language that the Apostle John used in writing this epistle, *he wanted to get their attention*. And here he was emphasizing the fact that regardless of how long we have known the Lord, or how

short the time has been since we were saved, how much we have grown, or how immature we may be as Christians, the Apostle John wanted to make sure that the whole company of believers were paying attention to what he was about to say.

What did he say? What he was saying was, and still is, a commandment which every Christian needed to hear and apply continually to his or her life because this was one place where we can all fail, and unfortunately, where we all do fail. The problem is the world. Or to state it another way, the problem is worldliness.

Let me remind you that the expression the word “world” is used over one hundred times in the writings of the Apostle John, so it is a very important part of his teaching, or, as Trench says, of his theology. It is used in three different ways by John, and also in the rest of Scripture. It is used of the material universe in which we live. It is used of the people who live on planet earth. And it is used of the Satanic forces which are continually active in this world, characterized by wicked works, opposed to God and His people. Satan is called “the god of this world.” The stories of Job and Peter teach us that while Satan exercises tremendous power over ungodly and wicked people, yet he only is allowed to operated within the sovereign rule of God. His chief influence and objective has to do with the Gospel, as we learn in 2 Corinthians 4:3-7:

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world [age] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

This is the world that we live in, but since we have been saved, we are no longer a part of it. We see the evidence of it all around us. It has invaded our homes through television. The wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God, seems to rule in our educational system. Nations legalize that which is contrary to God and His Word. Moral standards have dropped to an all-time low in our day although sin has prevailed in this

world ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The church provides an oasis from all of this evil, and our homes should be the same way. But it is all around us. Our Bibles teach us that sin and evil will get worse and worse until our Lord comes to rule and reign on the earth. This is the world that the Apostle John had in mind when he wrote, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” And then in three phrases he defined the world that he was writing about:

- 1) “The lust of the flesh.”
- 2) “The lust of the eyes.”
- 3) “And the pride of life.”

All that is in this wicked, ungodly, fallen world falls into one of these categories, and sometimes the sin and wickedness in this world fall into all three.

These definitely are “not of the Father, but are of the world.” And we are not going to change the basic character of the world. But the Lord saves us “out of the world.” This is what Paul was referring to when in his letter to the churches of Galatia he wrote, speaking of Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world [age], according to the will of God and our Father:

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Gal. 1:4-6).

Age is translated world because it considers the world from the standpoint of time.

Notice Paul’s description of our salvation in Colossians 1:12-14:

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Paul also told us in Romans 12:1-2:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world [age]: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

To be conformed to the world is to live according to the style and pattern

of the world. It is to live like the world does. This is expressed in the passive voice which means that the world is going to be putting us under constant pressure to conform to its way of life. It is the way that leads to death. And the present tense means that we are going to be put under constant pressure to fit into the world's mold.

We are not to "love" the world's way of living (with all that that includes). This means to prefer it before God and His way. The first commandment is that we are to love the Lord first, and to the exclusion of every other person or way. We are to live by the Word. We are to obey the commandments of Scripture. August Van Ryn said in his commentary on 1 John, "To fall into love with the world is equivalent to falling out of love with God" (p. 68).

What is "the lust of the flesh"? The Apostle John was not speaking here about our physical bodies (although our physical bodies usually are involved when we lust. But the Apostle John was speaking of our old, original, sinful nature. We have learned that we are still capable of sinning even though we are saved and have a new nature, a new life, the life of God Himself. Paul wrote about the lust of the flesh. He told the churches of Galatia how to deal with the lusts of the flesh:

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. 5:16-26).

What about “the lust of the eyes”? Did you ever notice in the account of Eve’s sin when she ate of the forbidden fruit, that it began with the words, “**And when the woman saw**”? She saw that it “was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desired to make one wise.” And what followed? “She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also under her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen. 3:6).

And do you remember what is recorded of Achan when Joshua led the children of Israel against Jericho. The Lord had told the people not to take anything for themselves from what God had cursed. But Achan took what God had told them not to take. When the people were defeated at Ai, and felt that the Lord had caused them to be defeated, an investigation was made, and it was discovered what he had done, Joshua asked Achan to explain what he had done. This what Achan said:

20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

21 **When I saw** among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it (Joshua 7:20-21).

These are examples of “the lust of the eyes.” Do you remember what the Lord said about the lust of the eyes? You will find His words in Matthew 5:27-28:

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, **That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her** hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Pornography has reached an epidemic stage because of the lust of the eyes. But television advertisers know how people succumb to what they see. People have gotten themselves into heavy debt because “they had to buy” what they had seen.

But what about “the pride of life”? The Apostle John was speaking here about the things of this life that we are inclined to boast about. “The life” means *this life* – things that we have, but which we cannot take with us,

and which are inclined to stifle our interest in the things of the Lord. We are inclined to boast about money, homes, cars, achievements, people we know. It is not that these things are wrong in themselves, but they replace in our affections the things that are really important. Many passages could be cited along this line, but probably Paul's words in Colossians 3:1-4 will be good for us to remember:

- 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
- 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Everything in the world can be summed up with these three phrases – “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” But remember three things about them:

- 1) They are “not of the Father, but” are “of the world.” The Apostle John mentions them as though the three are one. It is impossible to be involved with one without being involved with the other two.
- 2) “The world is passing away, and the lust thereof.” There is absolutely no security in the world. It is already under the judgment of God.
- 3) “But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

**Concl:** How do we rate according to love for the world? Speaking generally of the church today, the church is worldly and doesn't know it. Could it be that in forsaking the ways of the Lord, and employing the ways of the world, churches are being filled with people who have never experienced the transforming power of the Gospel. Music has become more important than the Word, and entertainment is more appealing than the teaching of the Word. If we are off the main track in any way, may the Lord bring us back into harmony with His Word.