

## A TIMELY WARNING ABOUT THE WORLD

1 John 2:15-17

**Intro:** I have entitled my message for this morning, “A Timely Warning about the World,” because this is one place where many parts of the Church today have fallen into a trap. The Apostle John, in the verse we considered last week, spoke about the three classes of believers that are found in the Church, the Body of Christ, regardless of what period of time in her history you look at. The same was true of Israel in the OT. It was Israel’s attempt to be like the world that led to the judgments which the Lord brought upon her as a nation. Rather than worship the way the Lord wanted them to worship, they began by appropriating many facets of Egyptian worship, and then in their subsequent history they followed what other nations were doing. I read to the men in yesterday’s prayer meeting that in the days of Manasseh they even built altars in the temple so that they could worship heathen God’s there in the house of the Lord.

Today the popular thing to do in many churches is to adapt their services so that unsaved people will feel comfortable if they come to church. So many things go on that are designed to please people, but you can’t please unsaved people and please the Lord at the same time. So the Apostle John, writing to the Lord’s people, and stressing with them how they can know that they are saved and live in fellowship with the Lord, said in 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.

The Apostle John says that if you love the world and the things that are in the world, whether you bring them into the Church or not, you are not saved. And in verse 16 where he defined what he meant by the world, he said, putting the first part of that verse with the last part, that “all that is in the world . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Everything about the Christian life as we have already seen in this epistle is distinctly different from the life that people live in the world. Take sin, for example, the world makes no attempt to live in avoidance of what the Bible speaks as sin. The world pays little or no attention to the Bible as

far as their lifestyle is concerned. In our country most people take freedom as meaning that we are free to do anything that we want to do. That is *not* what the Bible teaches. When a person becomes a Christian, he, or she, has to learn all over again, how to live. The life of a child of God is to be characterized by holiness, and the world is definitely not interested in holiness. The Apostle John here in our text that if a person loves the world, “the love of the Father is not in him.” So this is one of the tests we need to apply to our lives to be sure that we really know the Lord.

But we need to make sure that we know that he was not saying several things that some well-meaning people claim that he was saying. Was he saying that if we are Christians we cannot love people who aren't Christians? He would say that people who are not Christians should not be our best friends, but all of us have family members, and possibly neighbors, or people we work with, who are not Christians. We love them, and we want to be kind to them, and help them when we can, but we are to be careful not be drawn into their way of living.

The Apostle John was not saying that we should shut ourselves off from society all together, and live like some people live in a monastery. The Lord Jesus Himself in His prayer in John 17 said to His Father that those for whom He was praying, the people of God, were “in the world,” but that they were not “of the world.” They did not belong to the world, its way of life, or its destiny. So He did not pray that His people would be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil One, who is the Devil.

The Bible even calls Satan, “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), and that he has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them.” If we are going to help people in the world to see their need of a Savior, it will not be by doing what they do, and trying to be like them, but by living to please God. And we are to do this not by trying to make them think that we are better than they are, but we do it, as the Apostle Paul told the Ephesians in his epistle to them, “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” That is the way we who know the Lord, are to live toward our fellow-believers, and this is how we are to behave toward the people of the world. Humility is always to be characteristic of us as the Lord's people, regardless of who we are dealing with. As the Apostle Peter wrote in the first epistle which bears his name, in

1 Peter 3:15-16:

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

So the Church, you and I who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, are going to be a blessing in the world, not by trying to be like them, but by living to please God. People are not going to be asking us why we live the way we do if we live like they do. They will ask us why we live the way we do if our conduct is different from theirs, different because of how the Lord has changed us.

This warning not to love the world and the world's way of living, was a warning that children in God's family always need. It is a warning that young men and young women in God's family need. And it is a warning that fathers in the family need. It follows what we considered last week in verses 12, 13, and 14, so it was in thinking of everyone in the family of God that the Apostle John sounded this warning. Remember that it was when Solomon, with all of the wisdom God had given him, when he was old who made such a fool of himself by marrying hundreds of women, and building for many of them temples to worship their gods. Remember, too, that it is said of Uzziah, one of the great kings of Judah,

. . . that he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense (2 Chron 26:15b, 16).

So none of us can depend upon how obedience to the Lord we have been in the past. We must be careful to live by His grace in ways that are pleasing to Him today.

When I think of 1 John 2:15-17, there are two other passages that always come to my mind. The first is Romans 12:1-2. After the Apostle Paul had completed what has to be the greatest doctrinal section in the Bible in Romans 1 through 11, he made this appeal to the believers of Rome as he began the practical section of his letter to them. Most of you can probably quote it from memory. He spoke there about the world. Let me remind you of what he said in Romans 12:1-2:

11 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: 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.

Have you done this? Or are these verses that you need to obey in a new way because the world has become more and more influential in your life?

The other passage is in 2 Corinthians 6, beginning with verse 14 and running over into the first verse of chapter 7. Let me read it to you:

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

For most of us the problem may not be worshiping idols. However, there is a growing tendency, particularly among young people, to be interested in ritual and images which is one form of idolatry. They need this warning. Even though we have been saved from the penalty of our sins, and even from the power and dominion of our sins, *yet it is still possible for us to sin*. 1 John 1:7 through 2:2 makes that fact clear. And so there is that within us which is responsive to temptations of various kinds. But a temptation that we all face, or temptations, is laid out in what the Apostle John meant by “the world.” You will find his threefold description of the world in verse 16 of 1 John 2. (Read.) The word “world” in the Bible sometimes refers to the earth. Sometimes it refers to the people who live

on the earth. But here it refers to the evil character of the world which we live in, a world in which we continually encounter the forces of evil, from the opposition of the Devil, and from our own sinful nature, and from the way sin dominates human life all over the earth. We live in a sinful, wicked, fallen world.

What is “the lust of the flesh”?

A lust is a strong desire either to do, or to have. It can never rise to the level of anything spiritual, that is, of God, or of the Holy Spirit. “The works of the flesh are given to us in Galatians 5:19-21. Those who live on this level can never inherit the kingdom of God. It basically has to do with the satisfying of the old, sinful nature.

The provocation of sins of the flesh comes from within, although it may be a fire kindled by the second characteristic of the world – “the lust of the eyes.” Solomon wrote in Proverbs 27:20, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” It is said of Eve in Genesis 3:6-7,

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

When the Israelites were defeated at Ai, and it was discovered that Achan had sinned in taking from Jericho what God had told them not to take, this was Achan’s explanation of his sin, recorded in Joshua 7:20-21:

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.

It happened that when David went up upon the roof of his home in the evening that “he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon” (2 Sam. 11:2). And even though she was married to one of his most faithful men, he sent for her and committed adultery with her – which is another example of “the lust of the eyes.” This is sin

provoked from without. As children we used to sing a little chorus with these words, "Be careful little eyes what you see." Television profits greatly by appealing to the lust of the eyes in all of the commercials. And pornography appeals to the lust of the eyes.

These are illustrations of "the lust of the eyes."

What about "the pride of life"? This is anything that contributes to our person pride, which can also be called, vain glory. It has to do with the way men feel exalted about themselves, either the position that they hold, or the money they possess, or the achievements that they have made. It was sinful pride that caused Judas to betray the Lord Jesus because of the money he got for doing what he did. The Lord's parable about the rich man who was so increased with goods that he didn't know what to do with his great possessions, and what he did is an illustration of "the pride of life.' Do you remember what he did? His decision is recorded in Luke 12:18-21:

- 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.  
19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.  
20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?  
21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

This illustration could be repeated countless numbers of times when men take pride in themselves, and ignore their greater need for the Lord.

All human experience which takes men farther and farther from God is summed up in the words of the Apostle John: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is doubly tragic when the child of God gets caught in any one of these three. And so the Apostle John issued this warning not to the world of sinners, but to the Church. And the final part of John's warning is in verse 17.

Anyone who puts their hopes in this world, is putting their hopes in that which even now is passing away, "but he that doeth," habitually, day after day, "abideth forever."

**Concl:** We are all faced continually with choices. How good the Lord

has been not only to tell us about the dangers, but also how to avoid the problems which the Lord knows will only hurt us and affect our fellowship with the Lord. So let us follow the path of obedience to the will of God as it is expressed in the Word of God. Hiding God's Word in our hearts is the only way to stay away from sinning against Him. The path of obedience to the revealed will of God is the only way to true joy, and to increased fellowship with the Lord, *and with each other*. The world is just the same today that it was when the Apostle John wrote these words. And so our greatest safeguard against showing any love for the world, is to love the Lord with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.