

October 18, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Do Not Love the World

1 John 2:15-17

1. Worldly Love is not from God (verses 15-16).

2. Worldly Love is not Forever (verse 17).

One of saddest stories in the Bible has to do with a man named Demas. He was a friend of Paul. He had ministered to him in prison. He witnessed Paul write several letters while in prison. He heard the gospel, and it is a good assumption that he was a professing Christian. Thus, he knew first hand of Paul's great love to God and to others. Demas knew many of Paul's friends, Mark and Luke and Epaphras and Aristarchus (Philemon 23-24).

Yet, sadly, Paul said of him (in 2 Timothy 4:10) that Demas deserted him and had gone to Thessalonica. Paul also tells us the reason why he deserted him there in his hour of need. He says that he was "in love with this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

Now, we don't know exactly what that means. We simply don't know enough about Demas to know what was going on in his heart. He's mentioned in only three times in all of the Bible. It may mean that he loved the comforts of the world, which he couldn't have if he was ministering to Paul in prison. It may mean that he loved the possessions of the world, which Paul didn't have in prison. It may mean that he loved the pleasures of the world, and so he went to Thessalonica to pursue those pleasures. It may mean that he loved the reputation of the world, which, of course, you don't get when you are helping a "Christian" in prison. It may have been a combination of these things.

Regardless of his exact circumstances, we do know that it wasn't good. The lure of the world was too much for him. He abandoned Paul in his hour of need. He turned away from God.

And the danger of Demas is the danger that all of us face. We all face the lure of the world. I trust that you know what I mean. I trust that you have felt its pull, pulling you away from God.

In our text this morning, the apostle John has a clear call for us. He says, "Do not love the world." In fact, this is the title of my message this morning: "Do not love the world." This is my title because this is the message of our text -- 1 John 2:15-17. Never has a message been so timely. The world is at our fingertips. Temptation is in the palm of our hand, quite literally, with our phones being so "smart." Let me read these verses for you now.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

We see the clear command of this paragraph in verse 15.

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world or the things in the world.

This idea covers the entire three verses. Our affections are not to be on the world. Rather, our affections ought to be toward God! One of the first questions here is this, "What is John talking about here?" In other words, "What is the world?"

In some regards, this is a tricky question. Because, we are told not to love the world. But, God loves the world. John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." And obviously, in John 3:16, the love that Jesus is talking about is the love for people, people in the world.

Furthermore, in John's letter, he commands us to love one another. "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). And, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

So, the command is here in verse 15 to not love the world. Yet it's not so easy to know what John is saying. It takes a bit more thinking than merely saying, "everything that exists on the globe."

So, "What is the world?" Is it the creation? The physical, tangible world? I say, "No," because creation exists for the glory of God. Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, And the sky above proclaims his handiwork." And listen to 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

1 Timothy 4:4-5

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by

the word of God and prayer.

The creation that God has made is good. And there's nothing in it that is to be rejected. So, "What is the world?" Is it the things in creation? Again, I say, "No," because John distinguishes the things in the world with the world, itself. Look again at verse 15.

1 John 2:15
Do not love the world or the things in the world.

We have two different things in this verse. The world. And the things in the world. So, the meaning of the "world" here is different than the "things in the world." Though, of course, we aren't to love either of them. So, it's not so easy (at first blush) to understand exactly what Paul is talking about here.

A generation ago, many came up with a list -- Rock and Roll music, and going to the movies, and alcohol, and cigarettes. For boys, it meant long hair. For girls, it meant short dresses. This was the essence of worldliness a generation ago.

But today, the climate has changed. Many professing Christians look upon those standards of last generation as a bit silly. Drums and guitars have overtaken the organ in churches. Netflix is in nearly 40% of American homes, so we no longer need to go to the movies. They come to us. Alcohol consumption is the norm in many churches, with pastors flaunting their love for beer and scotch. Hair styles are all over the map. And girls wear jeans today, every bit as much as boys do.

C.J. Mahaney says that the danger of the evangelical church today is not persecution by the world; it is seduction by the world. And so, the list of the earlier generation must be questioned. Is this really what John is talking about here when he says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world?" Well, fortunately for us, in verse 16, John tells us what the world is. Look there, ...

1 John 2:16
For all that is in the world—

Notice the "dash." Many of the modern-day translations (ESV, NIV, NKJV) will have a dash at this point, indicating a definition of what John is talking about.

1 John 2:16
For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

When you say, "John, what do you mean by 'the world'?" He means this: "the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life." In other words, "the world" has to do with our earthly passions. It has to do with the desires of the flesh -- physical desires, sensual desires. It has to do with the desires of the eyes -- coveting, longing. It has to do with pride -- the arrogance of what we have, the accumulation of stuff, the wisdom of the world.

This is what we are talking about this morning. And this isn't too easy to simplify down to some sort of external list. It's more complicated than that. David Powlison says, "The evil in our desires often lies not in what we want, but in the fact that we want it too much."

For instance, let's think about money. There is nothing intrinsically evil about money. Jesus spoke of how we need to use money. And we need to use it correctly. We need to render to Caesar what is Caesar's and We need to render to God what is God's. And yet, there is danger with money, "... the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Timothy 6:10).

See, it's when your fleshly passions rise up to a love for the things in the world that it is bad. And many of those who have loved money have turned away from the faith. It is that seductive. And such is the love of the world that John would tell us to avoid.

Or, how about another example: food. There is nothing wrong with food. In fact, the Lord has done good to us in "giving [us] rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying [our] hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). And we are to enjoy our food.

But, the love of food is where we come into trouble. Proverbs 23 warns us, ...

Proverbs 23:19-21
Hear, my son, and be wise, And direct your heart in the way.
Be not among drunkards
or among gluttonous eaters of meat,
for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
and slumber will clothe them with rags.

In other words, don't eat too much. Don't drink too much. Don't love these things.

We could look at sex. God has given us sex to enjoy. Yet, the love of sex has led many into ruin.

We could go through other examples. Rest: God has commanded us to rest. But, love of rest is sinful. It's called laziness. It's called being a sluggard. And nowhere does the Bible speak well of these things. In fact, they only lead to poverty. God calls us to work for six days. He calls for us to rest on the seventh. But, don't love the rest that it hinders your work.

I would put entertainment in this category. Entertainment is a form of rest. I'm talking about television, movies, internet, video games, hobbies, sports, fishing, you name it. Activities where we divert our time to something that we enjoy. But, when we divert our minds too much and come to love and crave the entertainment, we are loving the world.

Listen, we live in the flesh, and have desires of the flesh. And many of these desires are not wrong. Hunger urges the man on to work, that he might have enough to eat. But, when we come to love these desires, that's when it becomes wrong.

And that's what John is talking about. And my guess is that almost any desire that we take to the excess (i.e. the love of the world), will be sinful. And John's exhortation to us is that we wouldn't be carried away by any such loves.

But, there's a slippery slope. Right? Like, when does it cross the line?

When does the use of money transition into the love of money? The business man was asked, "How much more money do you need to be successful in your business." "Just one more dollar" was the answer he gave.

When is too much food too much? 10% body fat? 20% body fat? 50% body fat?

When does entertainment transition into too much entertainment? 15 minutes each day? 30 minutes each day? 2 hours each day?

When does the internet transition into too much internet? When do sports transition into too much sports?

When does appropriate alcohol consumption cross into drunkenness? I know Christians who are in a church culture where alcohol is celebrated, from the pastor to the pew. As a result, there are many who enjoy their alcohol. And as a result, there are some who love their alcohol. And they talk about being buzzed. But, when exactly is the line crossed?

And from what I know, those on the line are rarely confronted, all in the name of "freedom."

And I just say this, church family: it's a slippery slope and it's often hard to determine. And you will often be blind to your loves. Because, you will justify your loves. Because, you love your loves.

I have two ways for you to help discern when your desires are sinful. First, "Drop it for a while" (if possible). Do you think that you have a love for coffee? Try going a month without it. Do you think that you have a love for football? Don't watch this season. Do you think that you have a love for food? Try losing a few pounds. Do you think that you have a love for money? Try cutting back and give away what you have saved. And if you are successful in backing off, you can be sure that it's not a sinful love. But, if you can't back off a simple desire of the world, that desire may be a love for the world that God prohibits.

The second way to discern? Pray. I think that the best way to deal with these things is to pray. Pray for the Lord to open your eyes to ways in which you are loving the world. Pray for the Lord to convict you in those areas in which you are loving the world. Pray for the Lord to give you strength to overcome them.

This is what Jesus did. He prayed. He prayed for his disciples. In his high priestly prayer of John 17, he was praying for his disciples.

John 17:15-17

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

What a great moment for us right now in my message to take a few moments and reflect upon our own life. Because, your loves for the world are different than my loves for the world. And your thresholds of love are different than my thresholds of love.

John tells us not to love the world. And he gives us two reasons. Let's look at the first. "Do not love the world," because ...

1. Worldly Love is not from God (verses 15-16).

We see this in verses 15 and 16.

1 John 2:15-16

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

John makes this point twice: "Worldly love is not from God." Verse 15, "the love of the Father is not in him." Verse 16, "is not from the Father but is from the world." In other words, love of the world is a sign that you are not from God.

This is the main point of what John has been saying throughout his little letter. There are two types of people in the world. Those who are from God. and those who are not from God.

In 3:10, we see these people identified. They are "the children of God." They are "the children of the devil." And you can discern the difference by looking at the way that they act.

1 John 3:10

By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

In other words, you can see how people act and how they behave. The "children of God" will practice righteousness. The "children of God" will love the brothers. The "children of the devil" will not practice righteousness. The "children of the devil" will not love the brothers.

And in 3:9 we see why exactly John can make such a statement:

1 John 3:9

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

In other words, there is something fundamentally different about a child of God than a child of the devil. "God's seed abides in him." "He has been born of God." And these things have an effect upon his life. When God's seed abides in you, you cannot continue in sin. And so, continuing in sin is an evidence that you are not of God. God transforms us away from this worldly love. This is John's point: "Worldly love is not from God." "Worldly love is an evidence that you are not from God." James 4:4 tells us that, "...friendship with the world is enmity with God."

John has made this point over and over and over again.

1 John 1:6-7

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Our walk (the way we live) is what demonstrates our fellowship with God and with others.

1 John 2:3-4

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

Our obedience to God is what demonstrates whether or not we have really come to know him.

1 John 2:9-10

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

Our love for our brothers shows whether we are in the light or in the darkness. And likewise in our text this morning.

1 John 2:15-16

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

We can easily sum it up with these words: Our love for the world shows whether or not we are from the Father.

So, you say, where does such a love come from? It comes from ourselves. It comes from our own desires. It comes from our own passions.

James 1:13-15

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Let's face it, we are sinful creatures with sinful desires (1:8, 10). And the only way to overcome them is through God's grace. This is the gospel hope of verse 1:9.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And what John is saying in this book is that cleansing from our sin will have its affect upon our life. The desires for the world will be less and less. And so, if you are here this morning and trusting in Christ, be encouraged. If you are here this morning and have experienced his cleansing work in your life, be encouraged. That's why John wrote. He wrote for your encouragement.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

If you have eternal life, know it. And you know it when you see the desires of the world fading from your life. But if you are here this morning and know more of the world than you know of God, I would encourage you to repent. Cry out to God for mercy. Cry out to God for his changing grace in your life. Perhaps you are here this morning and the world has been getting the best of you in recent days. Again, all I can do is urge you to go to God. He alone can change your desires.

Let's move on to my second point. "Do Not Love the World" because ...

2. Worldly Love is not Forever (verse 17).

Look there in verse 17.

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

When John defined what the "love of the world" was, he called it "desires" -- "desires of the flesh," "desires of the eyes," "pride of life." And here in verse 17, he says that these "desires" are "passing away." You can easily say it this way, "Worldly love is passing away." Or, as I have said it, "Worldly Love is not Forever."

How long do desires last? Most of us would agree that they do not last long. The desires we had 10 years ago are likely forgotten. Wordly love is not forever.

But, there is something that is forever. It is the one who "does the will of God." He will "abide forever" (verse 17).

Sin leads to death, but following God is the way to life. And there are some great Biblical illustrations of this. I want to show you a few. A great place to look at this comes in Genesis, chapter 3. So, if you will, I will have you turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 3.

Here is the account of sin entering into the world. And it comes through the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the pride of life.

Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Now, look carefully at verse 6, because here we see the love of the world that John is talking about. Moses writes, ...

Genesis 3:6-7

So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

When Satan put in Eve's mind to doubt God's word about this tree and this fruit, Eve began to think about it. She looked at the tree. She saw the fruit. She saw that the fruit would be good to eat. The fruit became desirable to her. The thought of how she would be so wise in taking of the fruit captivated her.

And to use John's words, "—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—" overcame her and she fell into sin. And she brought her husband with her. And the rest is history.

The reason why we deal with sin in the flesh is because Adam and Eve failed in their attempts and overcoming sin and temptation. Indeed, it was the love of the world that drew them in. And what Adam and Eve faced at that moment in time has been the experience that every human being has encountered ever since.

You know what is right. And you know what is wrong. You know this from God's word. Or, you know this in your conscience. But, your flesh is pulling you into the wrong. But, you know that such things are bad, but they feel so good. And they give you such pleasure. And you fall into

sin.

And John is telling us this morning, not to fall into such sin. In fact, he's getting to the root of what causes us to fall into sin -- love for the world. He says, ...

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world or the things in the world.

Let's look at another example. Turn in your Bibles to Joshua, chapter 7. Here we see the story of the sin of Achan. Chapter 6 tells the story of how the Israelites defeated Jericho. For six days they marched around the city in silence. On the seventh day, they walked around the city seven times. After the seventh time, "the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown ... and the wall fell down" and the city was there for the conquering (Joshua 6:20).

Now, before they conquered the city, Joshua had made it clear to everyone that the city was to be totally destroyed. But, the "silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron ... [should] go into the treasury of the LORD" (Joshua 6:19). Sure enough, all went according to plan. They conquered the city.

So, they went to conquer the next city, the city of Ai. Though the city was small, they were unable to overtake the city. Instead, thirty-six of the Israelite men were killed in battle (Joshua 7:5).

At the news, "Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD" (Joshua 7:6). He pleaded with the LORD to know why they were not victorious. Look at verse 10, ...

Joshua 7:10-13

The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you."'

And so, the next day, Joshua assembled the nation and explained these words to the people. And they cast lots for the tribes of Israel and the lot fell to the tribe Judah. And they cast lots for the clans of Judah and the lot fell on the clan of the Zerahites. And they cast lots for the families of the Zerahites and the lot fell on the family of Zabdi. Then, they cast lots for the sons of Zabdi and the lot fell on Achan.

And Joshua said to Achan ...

Joshua 7:19-21

Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

And it didn't end well. Achan and his family were stoned that very day. And with the evil purged from Israel, with the help of the LORD, the Israelites went on to conquer the land of Canaan.

But, did you notice the process of sin that Achan went through? He saw the goods. He coveted them in his heart. He took them. He hid them in his tent.

He knew that it was wrong for him to take these things. That's why he hid them. But, to use John's words, "—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—" overcame him and he fell into sin. And it didn't go well with him or with his family.

Listen, church family, the same result will take place with your sin as well. It will be bad. Sin never ends well. It didn't end well with Achan. It didn't end well with Eve. And it won't end well with you.

When the passions and desires for the world appear to be more appealing to you than obedience to God, it won't end well. And that's why John is calling us to not to love the world. Because loving the world will lead us to sin. And sin never ends well.

Oh, church family, be convinced of this. If you want things to go well for you, then stay away from the love of the world. It's passing away. Do not love the world.

There is good news! Jesus overcame the world. In John 16, He tells us, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 18, 2015 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

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