

End Your Love Affair with the World

1 John 2:15-17

INTRODUCTION

Illustration – The greatest, most noble virtue in human life is fidelity in marriage. A wife who knows her husband is a one woman man. My sweet Rebekah told me my beloved Margie used to go around and get my children stirred up with excitement when I was coming home for the day so I would always have a warm and wonderful greeting to come home to.

Application – We know that the church is the bride in Scripture. And we know that Christ is the bridegroom.

→ Why would the church not be faithful??

→ Why would a child of God engage in spiritual infidelity?

One preacher put it well this way → “Churches deliberately immerse themselves in ‘whatever the world loves at the moment.’ There is a new breed of trendy churches whose preachers can rattle off references to every popular icon, every trifling theme, tasteless fashion, and vapid trend that captures the fickle fancy of the postmodern secular mind.

Virtually all the literature, style, and philosophy associated with the emerging subculture (within the church) are filled with conspicuous elements of worldliness, man-centered worship, the narcissism of youth, liberal and neo-orthodox theology, and the ridiculous, ages-old campaign to be ‘contemporary’ at all costs.

These arguments have been stressed to the point that many evangelicals don’t really care if they are *worldly*. They just don’t want to be considered *uncool*.”

I was having fellowship yesterday with a brother who asked me to confirm the right response he had in his mind to the accusation of being “too heavenly-minded to be any earthly

good.” I affirmed this was pure nonsense.

→ The reality is that far too many Christians are too earthly-minded to be any heavenly good. And the more heavenly-minded a Christian is, the more earthly good he or she will be.

Our mission is NOT to get the world to start liking Christianity. Our mission is to get Christianity to stop liking the world.

→ **READ 1 John 2:15-17**

This really picks up the theme we had seen back in verses **7-11** after the word of encouragement pause in verses **12-14**.

Proposition: See four elements in these three verses:

I. Command

II. Condition

III. Clarification

IV. Contrast

Illustration – Marital infidelity does not begin with the act of adultery. Marital infidelity begins with the attraction of affection. In the same way, spiritual infidelity begins with the attraction of affection...specifically of the world.

So That: We will end our love affair with the world.

I. The Command

1 John 2:15a

Point – There is only one command in our text.

Everything else is incentive and argument for this one command.

Proof –

“^{15a}**Do not love the world, nor the things in the world.**”

“**world**” – this is another favorite word of John. Of the 186 times that this word appears in the New Testament, John uses it 105 times (56%). He uses it 5 times alone in 1 John 2:15-16

→ 5:4-5, 19

Someone might wonder, what about **John 3:16??**

Is John telling us not to love something God loves?? No.

John 3:16 → “**the world**” of people

Here in 1 John → “**the world**” of evil

The way John uses “**the world**” here in this context refers to the ego-centric world-system that is hostile to God.

- “**the world**” is organized sinful mankind, under the god of this world, given to unrighteousness, hostile to the truth and to the people of God.
- evil people organized in an evil system
- the aim of “**the world**” is self-enjoyment and self-gratification
- its motives are pleasure, profit, power and promotion

Simply put → We are commanded to love “**the world**” of people and hate “**the world**” of evil

Contrast with **2:5** and **2:10**

→ Love God → Love your Brother → Do not love the world

Grammar – mh + present imperative → stop loving the world
→ end your love affair with the world!!

Illustration – Would you caress the whip that shredded the back of Jesus? Would you love the nails that were hammered into His hands? Would you bless the hammer that forced them in? Would you kiss the spear that pierced His side?

Application – So then ...

Why would you caress “**the world**” with your entertainment choices?

Why would you love “**the world**” with your Outlook calendar?

Why would you bless “**the world**” with your checkbook?

Why would you kiss “**the world**” with your Smart Phone?

II. The Condition

1 John 2:15b

Point – ‘Black and white’ John is very clear and very direct.

John probably heard the same misapplication of Scripture we hear today: “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” I can imagine John’s response: “Twist not Scripture, lest ye be like Satan.”

Proof – “^{15b}**If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**”

John is saying, if you love “**the world**,” you are unsaved.

Same teaching as **Jesus** ...

Matt 6:24 – “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Same teaching as **James** ...

James 4:4 – “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

James is NOT referring to believers who are temporarily attracted to the things of **the world** and fall into sin for a while. He is NOT referring to occasional spiritual weakness in Christians. → A believer is never called “an enemy of God.”

James is referring to the continual and ungodly drive of an unbeliever.

Illustration – Trying to be friends with God and the world is like driving on a one lane highway by straddling the dividing line.

Application → Stay on your own side of the road!

III. The Clarification

1 John 2:16

Point – Because we are a simple people, in need of reinforcement and clarity, God provides the reason → “**For**”

- recall that when we see the word “for” in Scripture, it refers to what is coming next which is the reason for what He is giving us - in this case the command in v. 15

Point – An **Unholy Desire** for what we don’t have and an **Unholy Pride** in what we do have.

Proof – “¹⁶**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**”

“**lust**” (repeated twice) – the original Greek word can be positive or negative; it is used in both ways in New Testament, but it is primarily used in the negative → unrestrained desire, “over-desire,” a controlling, ruling desire.

“**lust**” is the mother of sin

“**lust**” is like a creature with a reproductive life of its own

James 1:14-15 – “each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

Illustration – This “**lust**” is like sores that come from a deadly plague. It is like filthy garments on a drunkard.

- “**lust**” stains the soul
- “**lust**” degrades our nobility
- “**lust**” darkens our minds

Puritan Thomas Goodwin – “*Sin is called poison. Sinners are the serpents. Sin is called vomit. Sinners are the licking dogs. Sin is called the stench of graves. Sinners are the rotted sepulchers. Sin is called mire. Sinners are pigs.*”

Illustration – When handing your **business card** to someone internationally, you hand it with two hands, not one - especially if you are in Asia. The point is → sin does not come up to you and hand you its **business card**. → Sin is **deceptive**.

“**all that is in the world**” – All-encompassing → there is the “**lust**” of the gutter and the “**lust**” of the gourmet.

“**all that is in the world**” is the anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Scripture, anti-righteous, Kingdom of Darkness controlled by Satan.

It is dangerous.

It is deadly.

And it is designed by Satan to appeal to **three avenues** into a fallen heart.

Three gateways through which “**the world**” finds its way into the fallen heart and engenders sin:

A. Heart Cravings

B. Eye Longings

C. Mouth Boastings

Heart cravings and **eye longings** are unholy desires for what we don't have. **Mouth boastings** are unholy pride in what we do have.

1st Gateway ...

A. Heart Cravings

Point – Normal human needs and desires that are perverted by sin. → The problem comes from the inside.

Proof – “**the lust of the flesh**” – Not just sexual sin. Very often this is what we think of but this is not limited to that.

Gal 5:19-21 – “the deeds of the flesh ... are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife,

jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
²¹envying, ^adrunkenness, carousing, and things like these”

The normal human need and desire for **sleep** becomes
→ the sluggard in his laziness

The normal human need and desire for **food** becomes
→ the glutton in his gluttony

The normal human need and desire for **intimacy** becomes
→ the fornicator in his perversion

I like the way one man put it: “*Sexual lust is the love of beauty divorced from the love of good*”

2nd Gateway ...

B. Eye Longings

Point – The problem from the inside is compounded by the outside. The eye is the gateway into the heart.

Proof – “**the lust of the eyes**” –

Gen 3:6 – “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 desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate;”

Illustration – **Lot’s wife** misused her eyes and was killed by God. **Achan** saw with his eyes, coveted, took from the forbidden, and was stoned by Israel.

Samson coveted with his eyes ... and it cost him his eyes.

David saw another man’s wife, committed adultery, tried to cover his sin with murder and suffered the rest of his life.

Application → **Job 31:1** – “I have made a covenant with my eyes”

3rd Gateway ...

C. Mouth Boastings

Point – The problem from the inside is compounded by the outside ... and then we have to tell everyone about it.

Proof – “**the boastful pride of life**” – **James 4:16** is the only other appearance of this Greek word and it is translated there in the NASB as “**arrogance**”

Point – What the polluted heart produces!

It is the evil that comes from the **heart** through the **mouth** that makes a person unclean.

The true nature, the true source of defilement.

It is not the external going in, it is the internal coming out!

Mark 7:20 – “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.”

→ The heart is the source. The mouth is the faucet!

7:21-23 – “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²²deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. ²³All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

→ This is true whether you are crude or whether you are cultured.

Illustration – The consuming, self-destructive nature of lust is like the technique used by Eskimos to kill wolves. The Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed in a block of frozen blood.

The hunter then fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it and tastes the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks

the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he realize that his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own blood. He just craves more and more until he drops dead in the snow.

Application – In the same way, a normal, healthy desire that becomes ruling becomes lust, which when conceived gives birth to sin, which when completed leads to death.

Now ... how do you know if what is in your heart is **desire** or **lust**???

→ We can apply **2 Practical Tests**:

Practical Test #1

1) How do you respond when you don't get what you want?

When your **desire for “something” is greater than your desire for God**:

- † You are not content
- † You are willing to disobey God to get your desire

When your **desire for God is greater than your desire for “something”**

- † You are content
- † You say, “God knows the best for me”

2) How do you respond when you do get what you want?

Practical Test #2

When your **desire for “something” is greater than your desire for God**

- † You serve it rather than God
- † Your desire controls you, rules you → **LUST!**

When your **desire for God is greater than your desire for “something”**

- † You acknowledge God as giver
- † You could give it up and still honor/glorify God
- † You are thankful in your heart

Application – These are **three points of vulnerability** Satan aims at Christians. These are where Satan aims his **fiery darts of temptation** at the believer.

Application → We should dread the least sin more than the greatest suffering.

IV. The Contrast

1 John 2:17

Point – **Findlay** – *“There is no way of conquering the world’s affections and casting out its lusts but by the power of a stronger passion ... God must fill the man’s being and occupy it for Himself; nothing else will expel the world, with its vain desires and its sordid and slavish cares, from the temple of the soul.”*

In this verse, God gives us a contrast between what is disintegrating, decaying and dying and what is abiding, invigorating and living.

Proof – ^{“17a} **And the world is passing away, and also its lusts;**”

“**the world**” is in the process of disintegrating.

The world, the earth, the universe, the system of man, is in a death spiral.

Illustration – Beloved, nobody buys stock in a company that is filing bankruptcy. Nobody sets up house in a ship that is sinking.

1 Cor 7:31 – “the form of this world is passing away”

Illustration – *How Much Land Does a Man Require?* is an 1886 short story by Leo Tolstoy about a former peasant who became rich, and in his lust for more and more land, forfeits everything.

The protagonist of the story is a peasant named Pahom, who overhears his wife and sister-in-law argue over the merits of town and peasant farm life. He thinks to himself “if I had plenty of land, I wouldn’t fear the Devil himself!”

Unbeknownst to him, Satan is listening. Satan accepts his challenge and tells Pahom he will give him land. A short time later, a landlady in the village decides to sell her estate. The peasants of the village buy as much of the land as they can. Pahom purchases land, and by working off his land, is able to pay his debts and live a more comfortable life.

However, Pahom becomes very greedy. So he moves to a larger area of land where he can grow even more crops and amass a small fortune.

Finally, after buying and selling a lot of fertile and good land, he is introduced to the Bashkirs. He is told they are simple-minded people who own a huge amount of land.

Pahom goes to them. Their offer is very unusual: for a sum of one thousand rubles, Pahom can walk around as large an area as he wants, starting at daybreak, marking his route with a spade along the way. If he reaches his starting point by sunset, the entire area of land his route encloses will be his, but if he does not reach his starting point he will lose his money and receive no land.

Pahom is delighted as he believes he can cover a great distance and has chanced upon the bargain of a lifetime. He stays out as late as possible, marking out land until just before the sun sets.

Toward the end, he realizes he is far from the starting point and runs back as fast as he can. He finally arrives at the starting point just as the sun sets.

The story closes with these words – *Again Pahom remembered his dream, and he uttered a cry: his legs gave way beneath him, he fell forward and reached the cap with his hands.*

“Ah, what a fine fellow!” exclaimed the Chief. “He has gained much land!” Pahom’s servant came running up and tried to raise him, but he saw that blood was flowing from his mouth. Pahom was dead! ...

His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in, and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.

The last sentence answered the question at the beginning: “How much land does a man need?”

Proof – “^{17b}but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

Mark 3:35 – “whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

2:3 – “by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.”

He doesn’t say that we come to know Him by keeping His commandments. He says we know that we have already come to know him because we keep His commandments.

Illustration/Application – What was said to the child -- “If you want sweets and hamsters in heaven, they’ll be there” -- was a witness to the truth that in heaven no felt needs or longings go unsatisfied.

What will we do in heaven? Worship, work, think, and communicate, enjoying activity, beauty, people, and God. First and foremost, we will see and love Jesus, our Savior,

Master, and Friend.

CONCLUSION

Illustration – Henry Martyn was born February 18, 1781 in England. His father was well-to-do and sent his son to a fine grammar school and then to Cambridge in 1797 when he was 16. Four years later he took highest honors in mathematics, and the year after that first prize in Latin composition.

He had turned his back on God as a youth, but during these days of academic achievement he became disillusioned with his dream.

I obtained my highest wishes, but was surprised to find that I had grasped only a shadow.

The death of his father, the prayers of his sister, the counsel of a godly minister, and the *Life and Diary of David Brainerd* brought him to his knees in submission to God. And in 1802, at the age of 21, he resolved to forsake a life of academic prestige and become a missionary.

He became the assistant of Charles Simeon, evangelical preacher at Trinity Church in Cambridge, until his departure to India on July 17, 1805. He arrived in Calcutta May 16, 1806.

Ten days after arriving in India he wrote,

Why can I not be like Fletcher and Brainerd and those great men of modern times? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Cannot my stupid stony heart be made to flame with love and zeal?

Martyn fought the fight for holiness.

Henry Martyn looked at his conversion and said, “The work is real. I can no more doubt it than I can my own existence. The whole current of my desires is altered, I am walking quite another way, though I am incessantly stumbling in that way.”

Beloved, do you love God?

Do you love your brother and sister in Christ?
Do you not love the world?

If your answer is affirmative to all these, praise God...that is the assurance that the Holy Spirit gives you.

Application – The same Spirit that begets life also nourishes life. The same Word that ignites the fire of love also rekindles love. The same Christ who once brought you out of darkness into light can take away the long dark night of your soul.

And the same Spirit, Word and Christ can and will rekindle your love for God and extinguish your affection for the world.