

## 1 John 2:15-17

### Do Not Love The World

The Bible is the Word of God. In its pages we discover who God is and who we are. We learn about the meaning and purpose of life. The Bible shows us how sin has distorted life and how God desires to redeem lives through His Son, Jesus Christ. Every word in the Bible is inspired by God.<sup>1</sup> But God did not take over the minds of those who wrote. Each author's heart and personality can be seen in his work.

The apostle John is no exception. He knows how to cut to the chase to get to the bottom line.<sup>2</sup> He knows how to say something very simple and deeply profound at the same time. In our present section of Scripture, John sees things as he always does, in terms of black and white. What he tells us is this: there is never a vacuum in our hearts. We either desire God or we desire the world.

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. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.  
(1 John 2:15-17)

These are perhaps the most solemn words addressed to Christians in the New Testament. And so we need to be careful how we understand the commandment. This is because it has been abused in many ways. There are people who make this a command to hide from the world. Therefore you have people living in a secluded monastery or separate from society, like the Amish. Others use these verses in a very legalistic manner to oppose buttons and beer, movies and music, certain foods, dancing, sports, even certain types of medicine.

But the verses do not say, “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.”<sup>3</sup> We are told “Do not love the world.” And so we need to understand what

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16, 17

<sup>2</sup> The phrase “cut to the chase” is an American idiom referring to the chase scene in a movie (the exciting part). And the bottom line is an accounting term referring to the final amount in a ledger.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 2:20-23

“love” is and what the “world” is. The word “love” is translated from the Greek word agape. This is a deep love based on a commitment, a decision and not just feelings. God loves us with a committed agape love<sup>4</sup> and it is how we are to love Him. But what does John mean by the “world”?

He certainly doesn't mean the physical world. God has given us a world full of trees and flowers and mountains and prairies and oceans. John also doesn't mean the world of people either. The Bible tells us that,

God so loved the world that He gave His only  
begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him  
should not perish but have everlasting life.  
(John 3:16)

God loves the world of people, even sinful people or I would never have been saved. But there is a world and the things of the world that we are not to love. There is a world to which we are not to commit our lives. Our Lord Jesus Christ said the same thing too. In Matthew 6:24 he said,

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate  
the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to  
the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God  
and mammon.

The world that we are not to love, the world that we must not commit to is the world system, the mind-set, the life style that is either ignorant of God or ignoring God. It is a world that is blind to God and rebellious against God; a world where people live and dream and plan and die without any thought of God. It is a world that says the only important thing in life is this life; what is here right now for me to have and enjoy and make my life happy, comfortable and proud.

We see this kind of philosophy and attitude underlying all of life. Our culture screams this to us all the time. There is nothing better, nothing higher, there is nothing more precious than money, pleasure, fame, prestige, my comfort and well-being and on and on. And we all once lived in that world. Ephesians 2 tells us that we “once walked according to the course of this world.”<sup>5</sup> A world, John will tell us later, that “lies *under* the sway of the wicked one.” Or as The Message translates it, the world is “in the grip of the Evil One.”

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 5:8

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:2

When we are caught up in this world, something other than God has first place in your heart. And you can tell where your heart is and who and what you serve by how you spend your time, money and efforts. Sadly, Christians are not immune to falling in love with this world. The apostle Paul wrote of an associate of his who was seduced by the world.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

<sup>9</sup> Be diligent to come to me quickly; <sup>10</sup> for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica  
(2 Timothy 4:6-10)

This was the apostle Paul's last letter before he was executed under Emperor Nero. The apostle had loved the truth concerning Jesus Christ's return. And because of that love he fought the good fight. He stood faithful and finished his race. But Demas lost his love for the Lord and was seduced to love this present world more.

Demas had been a close associate of Paul's, like Luke or Silas.<sup>6</sup> But his love for God and Christ had grown cool and weak. It is easy to say don't love the world. It is hard not to be seduced by it. But you can rekindle your love for God. The same Word of God that ignites the fire of love also rekindles it. The same Spirit of God that brings divine life to us also nourishes that life. The same Christ who saved us will work in us, if we desire it.

So read the Word of God, speak in tongues and cry out for a revival of your life. Don't be content to be lukewarm. Pursue a passion for the things of God just like you would pursue any passion.

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. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.  
(1 John 2:15, 16)

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<sup>6</sup> Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24

The lust of the flesh is not just sexual lust. It is an inordinate affection or desire for something. It is a greed for more. The lust of the eyes means to be captivated by what you see. It is to desperately want what you see, believing it will improve your life. The pride of life is the self-glorifying ambition to have what you want even if it belongs to another. You must have it—it's a matter of pride.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was seduced by Satan and lusted after the forbidden fruit seeing it was good for food, the lust of the flesh. She succumbed to the lust of the eyes seeing the fruit was pleasant to look at. And she fell for the pride of life, thinking it could make her wise—make her like God.<sup>7</sup> Eve was seduced, Adam rebelled: the love of the world robbed them of life.

In the temptation in the wilderness, after 40 days of fasting, the devil urged Jesus to turn stones into bread; the lust of the flesh. He showed Christ all the kingdoms of the earth, offering to give them to him; the lust of the eyes. And he challenged Christ to jump off the pinnacle of the temple which would have produced pride in the great accomplishment. Christ overcame it all by the Word of God.<sup>8</sup>

Our natural desires are legitimate if they are kept under control. The desire for food is good, having a healthy body and mind is good. Companionship, love, sex and security are all good in the right place for the right reasons. Doing our best at school, in athletics, in music or science or at work are all good things. But when they pull you from loving God, from honoring God, then you have been duped.

For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.  
(1 John 2:16, 17)

The person who devotes his or her life to worldly goals and worldly aims is spending his or her life for that which has no future. All that the world offers will one day be gone in an instant and means nothing in the light of eternity. Everything of this world that is not of God is passing away. None of it has any permanence. Whatever commands our time, energy and resources commands us.

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 3:1-6

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 4:1-11

In Psalm 73 Asaph sang that he was once envious of those who seemed to have it all. He lamented that their “eyes bulged with abundance; they have more than heart could wish.”<sup>9</sup> But then he realized what a slippery place they were in and how they would be “brought to desolation in <sup>10</sup>a moment.” Finally Asaph sang,

Whom have I in heaven *but You?*  
And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.  
<sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart fail;  
*But God is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
(vss 25, 26)

John cuts to the chase. He gets to the bottom line.

the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who  
does the will of God abides forever.  
(1 John 2:17)

“Only one life, ‘twill soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

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<sup>9</sup> V. 7

<sup>10</sup> Vss 18, a9