

Two Loves – 1 John 2:15-17

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Impatience

1. In his hard-hitting book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, former Supreme Court nominee Robert H. Bork gives this piercing analysis of our age.

A culture *obsessed with technology* will come to value personal *convenience* above almost all else, and ours does. Among the consequences is *impatience* with anything that interferes with personal convenience. Religion, morality, and law do that, which accounts for the tendency [in] modern religion to *avoid commandments* and turn [instead] to *counseling* and *therapeutic* sermons; while morality [is] relativized.

2. It's become fashionable in many churches today to give sermons that are more *inspirational* than *instructive*.

a. the fashion in preaching is to try to come across more as a *friend* than a *prophet*.

b. messages are aimed at sending people away with a warm feeling of kindness than a hunger and passion for holiness.

B. Today

1. The passage before us this morning can't be turned into a warm fuzzy.

2. John lays it out in a challenge we have to come face to face with.

3. If what we find here makes us uncomfortable – so be it.

4. When you go to the doctor, if he or she finds something troubling, you'd be a fool not to want to know!

5. The prerequisite to healing is to *diagnose* the problem.

6. And I would venture to say that all of us here this morning will find these verses pointing out some things that we'd probably like to avoid.

II. Text

A. Vs. 15-17

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶For 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.

¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1. John contrasts two loves in these verses – a love of the world and the love of God.

2. He says they are *mutually exclusive*; if a person loves the world, then a love for God is squelched.

3. The converse is also true; if a person loves God, then they will not be in love with the world.

4. But just what does John mean by “the world?”

a. in the NT, the word “world” is used in three ways.

b. there's the *physical world*, which we could refer to as the Earth, the planet.

1) Paul refers to this in Acts 17:24 when he says –

2) “God made the world and everything in it.”

c. then there's *human world*, which Jesus spoke of in John 3:16 – “God so loved the

world, that He gave His only begotten Son.”

- d. these two meanings of the word “world” are given no connotation as being either morally good or bad; they are just things.
- e. but the third use of the word “world” is always negative
 - 1) it refers to the *spiritual world* of mankind that lies under the influence of Satan.
 - 2) in Greek, it’s the word “kosmos” which means an ‘ordered system.’
- 5. This is what John is referring to here – the world-system which is in opposition to God.
 - a. it began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve fell under the inspiration and at the prompting of the devil.
 - b. up to that point, they had loved, served, and obeyed God.
 - c. but Satan suggested there was another way to live – one that was better.
 - d. of course it was a lie, but they bought it and went for it.
 - e. from that day to this, the human race has been ordered by the lie that we can live independently of God.
 - f. and the devil is still active promoting that deception through the world system.
- 6. Just as God works through believers by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, Satan works through the lost to accomplish *his* purposes.
 - a. Paul puts it this way in Ephesians 2
 - ¹And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
 - b. in 1 John 5:19 John says
 - We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one.
- 7. The “world” John refers to in these verses is the whole system by which fallen man, under the inspiration of Satan and his spiritual minions, seeks to live apart from God.
 - a. people talk of the world of sports; the world of finance, the world of fashion.
 - b. they refer to the world of politics, the world of business, even the world of religion.
 - c. put all of these worlds together and you have THE world – the corporate and united expression of man’s rejection of God.
 - d. it has it’s own rules and values – and in order to succeed in it, you have to go along with it.
- 8. But note what John says about it. He says that we are not to love it.
 - a. we who have been born again are to make a clean break with the world.
 - b. it is in *opposition* to God, but we have been *reconciled* to God through the Cross of Christ.
 - c. if we have been reconciled to God, how could we possibly be *loyal* to the world any longer?
- 9. The love of God is exclusive – it tolerates no competitors.
- 10. Jesus said it this way in Matthew 6:24
 - “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.”
 - a. today, the word ‘mammon’ has become synonymous with *money*

- b. but it meant far more than that in Jesus day
- c. it referred to the whole spirit of materialism and worldliness
- d. God and the world are two masters which place competing demands on us
- e. to obey one is to defy the other.
- f. Jesus is telling us that we have to chose *who* we will obey, because we can't obey both
- g. it's God or the world – one or the other!

11. John is echoing that here.

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

- a. he is not saying we cannot enjoy the *physical creation*;
- b. on the contrary, in 1 Tim 6:17, Paul says that God has given us an abundance of all these things to enjoy.
- c. and John certainly wouldn't be banning a love of humanity here because we ought to love what God loves, and God loves men and women.
- d. what John is banning is a love and devotion to the world-*system* that hates God and stands opposed to Him.

12. Note carefully what he says in v. 15 – If someone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him.

- a. here's a good way to diagnose if we've fallen in love with the world;
- b. do you love God?

13. Because we're created in the image of God, every human being has the capacity to love.

- a. and in fact, everyone loves something or someone
- b. but it's the nature of love that it can only be given to one at a time.
- c. when you were conceived, God placed in you a spirit
- d. and with that spirit God gave you a singular and unique gift – the ability to love
- e. it's your great potential to give that gift to something or someone.

14. When God originally created man, His intention was that man would give that Gift to Him.

- a. the result would be that man would find as He gave his love to God, that God returned it and enlarged it so that it could be poured out in abundance on others in a never ending stream.
- b. but man took that gift of love and instead of giving it back to God, sought to consume it on *himself*.
- c. history is the long, sad tale of man's attempt to fashion something worthy of his love, something that will return his love, but without success.

15. Let me use an illustration.

- a. there once was a wealthy man who for his son's graduation from high school, gave him a key, just a key wrapped in a box.
- b. the son tore open the box and found the key, but instead of going to his father and asking what it was for, he put it in his pocket.
- c. every lock he came to he tried the key, but nothing opened.
- d. the father was deeply troubled that the son hadn't come to him and asked him what the key was for.
- e. if he had asked, he would have taken him to the bank where there was a special safety

deposit box containing a whole stack of blank checks the father had already signed.

f. but the son never came to the father – he just kept trying to use the key on other locks.

16. God has given us a gift – the ability to love.

a. when we give it to of love poured back to us which we pour out on others.

b. but if we squander that love on anything less than God, we'll find it consumed and lost.

17. I've seen how this works in my life.

a. when I'm loving God, then my heart is tender and loving toward my wife and children.

b. I'm more caring towards others here at Calvary

c. I'm even more concerned about strangers I meet in the marketplace.

d. but when I start to invest my love in the world, then I shrink and become selfish

e. instead of thinking about how I can bless my wife and kids, I start getting angry that they don't take better care of me!

f. and strangers just become a colossal pain!

18. As we sit here this morning – let what John writes here in v. 15 be a diagnostic tool to expose our hearts.

a. what's there – a love for the world or a love for God?

b. if there's no passion, no heat, no fervor or devotion toward the Lord, guess what?

c. more than likely you've given your love to the world.

B. Lust

¹⁶For 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 tells us how the world-system seeks to seduce us away from the love of God.

2. It seeks to seduce us through lust, through desire for mere carnal pleasure.

3. John identifies three forms of desire here:

a. the lust of the flesh

b. the lust of the eyes

c. and the pride of life

4. The lust of the flesh means longing for sensual pleasure and refers to the corruption of our God given desires.

a. God has built certain drives into us that ensure our survival

b. there's the drive of breath, thirst, hunger, rest, and sex

c. for each of these drives, there's a God-ordained way to fulfill them.

d. but sin has sullied us to the core of our being and each of these drives has been corrupted.

e. so, instead of breathing clean, fresh air, people inhale chemicals that lead to addictions

f. instead of drinking clean fresh water, they imbibe alcohol which leads to all kinds of social problems

g. instead of eating a healthy diet in moderation, they indulge in gluttony

h. and instead of enjoying a healthy marital relationship, they get involved in all kinds of harmful perversions.

5. The world-system is constantly coming up with new ways to *first entice* and then addict

people to unholy ways of satisfying the desires of the flesh, which ought to be enough proof that the ways of the world DON'T truly satisfy.

6. The lust of the eyes speaks of the insatiable desire to see something new and remarkable.
 - a. just like our bodies, the eyes can have an appetite too!
 - b. so we have the saying, "Feast your eyes on this"?
 - c. while the lust of the flesh appeals to the lower appetites of the body, the lust of the eyes is more refined.
 - d. in John's day, the Greeks and Romans lived for entertainments and activities that excited the eyes.
 - 1) this is why the sporting games & festivals were so popular
 - 2) the Coliseum in Rome was built for this very reason
 - e. times haven't changed very much!
 - f. television & movies are largely driven by the lust of the eyes.
 - g. and this explains why it seems as time goes by the spectacle shown out the big and small screen is increasingly sensuous and provocative.

7. The eyes are a gateway into the soul.

- a. just before Jesus spoke of loving God and loving mammon, He said this
 - b. Matthew 6:23

If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

- c. the lust of the eyes includes any intellectual pursuit that's contrary to God's Word.
 - d. there's tremendous pressure today for Christians to *think* the way the world thinks.
 - e. God warns us against "the counsel of the ungodly."
 - f. this doesn't mean that Christians should ignore education and secular learning;
 - g. but it *does* mean they we ought to be careful not to let this learning crowd God into the background.
8. The third desire John mentions is the "pride of life."
 - a. this would be better translated as, "the boastful pride of life."
 - b. the word John uses here referred to a braggart who tried to impress people with his importance.
 - c. it speaks of that deadly game of *one-upmanship* that drives so much the world-system.
 - 1) how many houses are bought, cars purchased, and appliances acquired, out of a desire to impress others?
 - 2) how many vacations are taken, or clothes worn just to make someone envious?
 - d. the desire to feel, and be thought of as important has driven and ruined many.
9. And it's through these three desires that the world-system in opposition to God works at trying to seduce us to itself.
10. Everyone of us in this room this morning have struggled with one, if not all three, of these temptations this week.
11. Our media saturated culture confronts us with advertising at every turn – and what is advertising but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?
 - a. buy this and you'll know real pleasure
 - b. here – look at this! Nice isn't it?

- c. acquire this, and you'll be the talk of the town - a trend-setter.
- 12. But John says all these desires are not of the Father, they are part and parcel of the world.
- 13. So to give in to them is to heed the siren's song of the world and make shipwreck of our lives on the shoals of worldliness.
- 14. As we look at the three things John lists here we realize that these are the very temptations Satan used on Eve.
 - a. in Genesis 3:6 we read this
 - ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food,
 - b. that the lust of the flesh
 - that it *was* pleasant to the eyes,
 - c. there's the lust of the eyes
 - and a tree desirable to make *one* wise,
 - d. that's the pride of life.
- she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.
- 15. I want to ask you to note something critical here;
 - a. Satan came to Eve and singled her out for the temptation
 - b. after she ate, she gave to Adam and he fell as well.
 - c. Satan did not seek to tempt them both at the same time – he never does!
 - d. Adam and Eve would have *supported each other* in their dependence on God.
 - e. Satan knows that temptation is *much more effective* when it comes in isolation
 - f. so he will try to cut you out and separate you from fellowship with the Lord and other believers.
- 16. While Eve gave in to all three avenues of desire, Jesus faced the very same ones in His temptation in the wilderness, and this time, he resisted
 - a. the temptation to turn the stones into bread was a what? An appeal to the flesh.
 - b. when Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, what was that? An appeal to the eyes.
 - c. and when he tempted Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple in the sight of all the people of Jerusalem – that was an appeal to the pride of life.
- 17. The reason why the devil used these three temptations with Jesus is because they are the same three he's used again and again throughout history with such great success.
- 18. Why change when it works so well?
- 19. If it ain't broke, don't fix it – and these three desires still work on the vast majority of the human race.
- 20. This is the world – the lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride!
- 21. But all that these desires accomplish does not last –
- C. Passing Away
 - ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
 - 1. As we saw just a couple weeks ago in 2 Peter, this world is not eternal. It's coming to an end.
 - 2. So those who live for this world, those who love this world will find all they have lived for disintegrating into nothingness.
 - 3. The only thing that lasts is what's based on the Lord.

4. As the old saying goes – “Only one life that will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”

5. Missionary martyr Jim Elliot penned these words, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

III. CONCLUSION

A. A Warning

1. John wrote this letter to believers, to people that he affectionately referred to as his beloved children.

2. To them, to men and women John saw as *saved*, he issued this warning –

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

3. If He penned these words in about 90 AD as most scholars think, then he wrote them to Christians who knew what it meant to be *hated* by the world.

- a. these were people who had suffered cruelly at the hands of official persecution.
- b. they were despised and rejected
- c. the world-system was alien and hostile.

4. And yet, John knew they still struggled with the seductive influence of the world.

5. If *they* needed this warning, how much more do *we* who live in an age of accommodation and compromise?

6. The world doesn’t hate us; we aren’t persecuted – at least here in the US; in many other places today being a Christian is risky business – but not here.

7. Let me read to you just a couple comments Jesus made –

a. in praying to the Father He said

John 17:14 • I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

b. Luke 6:22 • Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile *you*, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake.

c. Matthew 10:22 • You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

d. John 15:18 • “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.

e. Matthew 5:11 • “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

f. John 15:20 • Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

8. I fear that the modern evangelical church is attempting to make Christianity *acceptable* to the world.

a. many teachers, preachers and musical artists are trying to cross-over into popular culture

b. but as they attempt this cross-over, they are leaving behind the Cross.

c. they have to if they want to be successful because the Cross is an offense, a stumbling block to the lost.

B. Reclaiming Our Purpose

1. Throughout history, the Church has been most alive and successful in it’s mission when it

has reclaimed it's purpose and lived faithfully and purely before the Lord as His people.

2. John's words here are wake up call for us this morning.

3. Who do you love?