

### “Loving the Father, not the World”

Throughout my walk as a Christian, which has been the majority of my life, there has been one passage of Scripture that I have continually found to be unsettling, one passage of Scripture that has made me very anxious and very uneasy, one passage of Scripture that has frequently kept me up at night in contemplative self-examination.

Matthew 7:21-23. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.

On that day all men will stand before LORD God, without anything, or anyone to hide behind. On that day, our thoughts, our deeds, the secret intentions of the heart will be naked and fully exposed. On that day, there will be many who profess to know the LORD Jesus Christ; there will be many who have called upon his name, “Lord, Lord.” On that day, there will be many with long lists of religious accomplishments; prophesy, casting out demons, mighty works, having all been accomplished in the name of the Lord. Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness.”

Beloved, on that day, there will be many professing believers, elders, pastors, deacons, missionaries, church members, church attenders, who genuinely and sincerely believe that they do in fact belong to the LORD God. But in the presence of the LORD God, in the presence of the Omniscient Judge, their deception and their false assurance will be made obvious, and it will be declared to them, “I never knew you.”

John Bunyan gives us a very vivid picture of this truth in his book the *Pilgrim's Progress*. After Christian and Hopeful cross the River of Death, they are welcomed and are granted entrance into the Celestial City. And looking back they see their acquaintance Ignorance ascending the hill.

Ignorance reaches the gates of the Celestial City and he is questioned: “What is it that you desire?” Ignorance replied, “I have eaten and have drunk in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets.” So they asked him for his certificate, his passport to the Celestial City, but Ignorance had no certificate. So they tell the King, but he would not come down to see him. Instead, he commanded that Ignorance be seized and that he be bound hand and foot, and they carried him away.” In seeing this transpire, Christian responded, “Then I saw that there was a way to Hell even from the gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.”

Ignorance confidently ascended the hill to the Celestial City. And why was he so confident? His confidence rested in that he knew the name of the King; he had spent time eating and drinking in the presence of the King; he even knew the teachings of the King, but Ignorance did not have a certificate; he did not belong to the King; he did not truly know the King, nor was Ignorance known by the King.

Charles Spurgeon remarked, “If Christ does not know us, it matters not what we do. Even if we work miracles, if we astound the world with our abilities, it is all nothing if Christ does not know us.”

This is a grave and serious warning. On that day, **many** will be deceived. On that day, **many** will stand

in shock and horror as they are told to depart from the presence of the Lord because they are not known by the Lord. This warning should prompt each one of us to prayerfully examine our own lives; to scrutinize our relationship and our walk with God, to make absolutely certain that we are known by Him. The Lord God desires that each one of us draw near to him, not in ignorance, not in weak faith, not in half-hearted faith, but in full assurance of faith. The LORD God wants you to know that you know him. The LORD God wants you to know that absolutely, beyond a shadow of doubt, you belong to him.

Please turn with me to the book of 1 John. The book of 1 John is a very practical book, especially as it relates to the doctrine of assurance. In stating the purpose of his book, John writes in 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."

How do you make certain that you are known by God? One way, take the tests of 1 John. To name just a few:

1. Do you enjoy fellowship with God and Christ?
2. Are you sensitive to sin in your life?
3. Do you love Christ and eagerly await for his return?
4. Do you see the decreasing pattern of sin in your life?
5. Do you love other Christians?

Your answers to these questions will verify whether or not your salvation is genuine. For example, if you don't enjoy fellowship with God; if you are not sensitive to sin in your life; if you don't love Christ, if you don't love other Christians, then you've failed the tests, and your salvation is not genuine, because genuine salvation is marked by fellowship with God and Christ, by sensitivity to sin, by loving Christ, by the decreasing pattern of sin in your life, and by the love of other Christians.

This morning we're going to take a look at one of these tests.

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 in possessions – 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."

In this passage, what is the test that verifies the authenticity of your salvation? Your affections. Do you love the world? Do you love the things in the world? If you do, then you have failed the test. If you love the world, if you love the things in the world, then the love of the Father is not in you. The book of 1 John, as well as the rest of the Scriptures, makes a very clear delineation between the love of the world and the love of God. It is one or it is the other, but it cannot be both. Loving the world and loving God are mutually exclusive.

Jonathan Edwards: "True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections." If your heart is cold toward the Father and captivated by the glitz of the world, you need to ask yourself, "Do I belong to the Father or to the world?"

The heart of man is very, very narrow, and it simply cannot contain more than one love. The world draws the heart away from God, and so the more the love of the world prevails the more the love of God dwindles and decays, and visa versa.

1 John 4:5-6, They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to

them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not known by God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

You are either of the world, or you are of God, but you cannot be of both.

1 John 5:4-5. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world –our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Upon receiving the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, we have triumphed over the world; we have overcome the world; we have moved from the sphere of death and enslavement to sin, to the sphere of life and enslavement to God.

John 15:19. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

The world is no friend to Christians. God chose us out of the world. God redeemed and ransomed us from our bondage to sin and from the entrapment of the world. And now that we have been delivered, and now that we are free, the world hates us. Why does the world hate us? The world hates us because the world hates God; the world is opposed to God; the world wrestles and wars against God; the world is anti-God; the world is anti-Christ, which is why we are commanded not to love the world. For how could we possibly love that which hates and despises the LORD God?

What does John mean here by the term world? To what is he specifically referring? The Greek word translated *world* is *kosmos*, and it is defined as a harmonious arrangement, an order, or a system. In the Scriptures, *kosmos* carries with it three basic meanings. *The term* is often used to describe creation, the physical world, the heavens & the earth, and the arrangement of the stars in the heavens. It is used to describe the created order of everything in the heavens and everything on the earth. This term can also be used to refer to humanity, to mankind, to the inhabitants of the earth, the world of living and breathing people. The third meaning of *kosmos* refers to order or arrangement. For example, it refers to the evil world system, the invisible realm of wickedness that stands in opposition to the LORD God. In the English language we often use the word *world* in this sense. You commonly hear about the world of sports, the world of politics, or the world of medicine –world refers to an ideology or a system of ideas that relate to a specific topic or area of society.

In vv 15-17, John is using *kosmos* to describe the satanic world system that stands in opposition to God. It refers to the worldly mindset, the worldly philosophies, the worldly values, the pleasures, the aspirations, and the worldly spirit that is now working against the LORD God and against his church. Who is over this world system? Satan; the adversary.

Ephesians 2:1-2. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

Ephesians 6:11-12. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1 John 5:19. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

John uses the term *world* to describe the evil world system, the system that is filled with those who are enslaved to sin, who are following the course of this world, who are following the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air. All of this world, and everything in this world is dominated and ruled by Satan, the evil one. He is our Adversary.

In contrast, **we** are from God; **we** have overcome this world; because greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world. This is one of the reasons why we are not to love the world, because the entire world system is setup to oppose the LORD God. The entire world system is setup to oppose the children of LORD God. The entire world system is our enemy, it is our adversary, it stands in fierce opposition against us. And if you do “love the world, then the love of the Father is not in you.” Meaning, you don't belong to God, you belong to the world. If you belong to God, you are going to love God, if you belong to the world you are going to love the world (again its one or the other, but it cannot be both).

Most Christians will readily admit that they do not have a love the world; they do not have a love for the world system that Satan is ruling. They do not have a love for the spiritual forces of wickedness, or the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. In fact, I would suspect that most Christian would admit to having a great hatred for these things. The problem is that while we rightly hate the world, we often struggle to hate the things in the world. The world is wicked, it is perverse, it is hostile, and yet the things in the world, while still being wicked, perverse, and hostile, can be very alluring, and very attractive. And these things will often usurp our affections. And time and time again, Christians are subtly drawn into the world (the world that we so admittedly hate) by the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the three predominant avenues that are commonly used by our Adversary to entice, entrap, and corrupt the heart of man –the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life.

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.

All that is in the world, everything that this world system has to offer may be described as the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. And these three avenues will seek to usurp your affections for the LORD God. The Adversary and his forces use special diligence in utilizing each one of these temptations in their attacks against us.

This has been his strategy from the beginning, these three avenues of temptation are nothing new. In fact, the first temptation to sin, the very first sin in the fall of the human race consisted of the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life.

Genesis 3:6. “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.”

Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food, which was an appeal to the desires of the flesh. Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was a delight to the eyes, which appealed to the desires of the eyes. She also saw that the tree was desirable to make one wise, which appealed to the boastful pride of life.

The same pattern is repeated again Matthew 3 and Luke 4, at the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. After being led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God, and after fasting for 40 days, he was approached by the tempter. Seeing his hunger, Satan urged the Lord Jesus Christ to turn the stones into bread, he appealed to **the desires of the flesh**. He then showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth, offering to give them to Him, appealing to the **desires of the eyes**. He then encouraged Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, which could have been a source of **great pride** in this miraculous accomplishment; thus appealing to the boastful

pride of life.

Beginning in Genesis, and running throughout the whole of the Scriptures, right on through to the very end of days, the Adversary will continue to utilize his world system along with our own desires to incite us to sin and transgress our Father God. The Greek word translated desires means to crave, or to desperately long for something. In the context of 1 John it refers to lusting for that which is forbidden. The term describes the many cravings of our fallen human nature, the sinful cravings that we pursue in the interest of pleasing our flesh.

The first avenue that the Adversary uses for temptation to sin is the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh, refers to our sensual and bodily appetites, the cravings that comes from **within** our own flesh; from within our own fallen and sinful nature. The desires of the flesh seek self-gratification, no matter the cost. The desires of the flesh seek satisfaction, no matter the consequence. The desires of the flesh are enslaved to their own insatiable appetite that can never and will never be filled. One commentator described it like this: “The base desire of the human heart perverts and distorts all normal desires, sending them into a relentless, slavish pursuit of evil that exceeds the proper limits of what is good, reasonable, and righteous—any attitude, speech, or action that opposes God's law.”

What are some of these lusts? In the book of Galatians, Paul gives us a list of fleshly desires in which we should steer clear.

Galatians 5:19-21. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissension, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Not only does Paul tell us to steer clear of these sins, but if we do not steer clear of them, then what is the implication? According to Galatians, Paul is saying that if you continue to do these kind of things, you could not possibly be a Christian. It is impossible for a Christian to regularly practice these things, **because** he is a child of God and a child of God is indwelt by the Spirit of God, who gives us victory over the flesh. The world system in which we live attacks us at the very weakest point in our armor –our flesh. The Adversary seeks to influence us, by using his systems, along with our indulgent flesh, to incite us to sin.

The second avenue that the Adversary uses for temptation to sin is the desire of the eyes. The desire of the eyes is very simple to explain. There are three steps: I see it. I want it. I take it. The desire of the eyes has nothing do with what is being looked upon (the object itself may not be good or evil), but our hearts pervert and twist the things we see, and we desire them in an unhealthy manner. The desire of the eyes is really just a form of covetousness.

In the book of Joshua, Achan had his eye on some of the spoils of Jericho as the Israelite's were conquering it. Even though the Lord had set a ban, and expressly commanded Israel not to take any of the spoils, Achan took some of the things, under the ban, and buried them under his tent. Achan was caught, and in Joshua 7:20, “...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 weighting 50 shekels, then I **coveted** them, and **took** them.” The desire of the eyes: I see. I want. I take. For his disobedience, Achan, his family, and everything he owned was burned with fire and stoned.

In the book of 2 Samuel, at the time when kings go out to battle, King David remained in Israel.

2 Samuel 11:2-4. It happened late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on

the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Elaim, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.

Again, the desire of the eyes: I see. I want. I take. The consequence of King David's sin was severe and long lasting. Bathsheba became pregnant, then David sought to cover up the sin. The cover up fails, so David again tries to further conceal his sin by murdering Bathsheba's husband, one of his mighty men, Uriah the Hittite. David marries Bathsheba, Bathsheba has the baby, but the baby dies.

I want you to notice something here –sinful desires are deceitful. Sinful desires do not deliver what is promised. Achan saw the cloak, the silver, and the gold bar and he desired them (so he took them). King David saw Bathsheba and he desired her (so he took her). Do you think either one of these men could have imagined the devastation, the pain and the suffering that was to be brought about by a simple look? Achan and his family were stoned by the Israelites; his entire family was put to death for his transgression. The ripple effect of King David's sin was far greater –the sword never departed from his house, and the LORD God raised up evil against King David from within his own family. After David's sin of adultery, his kingdom never regained its former glory.

The desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, will never deliver to you what they have promised – these will always fall short. The desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, are empty. They will never bring to you lasting satisfaction. They will never bring to you lasting gratification. They will never bring to you joy, delight, or contentment. **They will**, however, bring about your destruction. They will bring about your ruin. They will leave you hollow and empty while craving for more.

Matthew Henry wisely wrote, "Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained but corrupt desires are insatiable. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing."

In contrast to Achan and David, we should strive to be like Job. Job understood the deceiving nature of our desires, and the destruction that unchecked desires will often reap. Job understood the temptation that is brought about by our eyes.

Job 31:1. "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin."

Job was a smart man. He knew that his eyes had the potential to get him into trouble, and he knew that you are not going to get in trouble if you keep your eyes looking at the right things.

In our culture today, there are a lot of alluring things to look at: beautiful people, stylish clothes, jewelry, extravagant homes, exotic cars, motorcycles, technological devices, riches, wealth, and all the material goods that we so desperately desire. Beloved beware, your eyes can lead you into sin; your eyes can lead you into lust. Remember the strategy of Satan, he seeks to influence us, by using his systems, along with our indulgent flesh to incite us to sin. He will use this world, and the things in this world, to corrupt your hearts with his worldly wares. So guard your eyes, and guard your heart.

The third avenue that the Adversary uses for temptation is the pride of life. The phrase *pride of life* could be translated as empty or vainglorious display. The phrase refers to the pretension of human life. A proud mind craves all the grandeur, all the glory, and all the pomp of a vain-glorious life. The pride of life thirsts after praise, honor, and applause.

Matthew Henry referred to this as, in part, as the disease of the ear; it must be flattered with admiration

and praise.

The pride of life puts on a big show for other people; it desires to elevate self above all others. It is the desire to exceed and rise above all others. The pride of life speaks of pretension and arrogance in both word and deed. A person might be able to get by with a certain item, but he may want to get a better item just to impress other people. People often live just beyond what they can afford, because they want others to think they have more than they have. This is just one example of the boastful pride of life.

Charles Spurgeon comments: "Pride is a sin with a thousand lives; it seems impossible to kill it, it flourishes on that which should be its poison, glorying in its shame. It is a sin with a thousand shapes; by perpetual change it escapes capture. It seems impossible to hold it; the vapory imp slips from you, only to appear in another form and mock your fruitless pursuit. To die to pride and self one would need to die himself."

These are the three avenues that the Adversary will use to entice you to sin. He is going to try to lure and trap you by using one, or more, or all three of these avenues. He will use the world system along with your sensuality (the desires of the flesh). He will use the world system along with your covetousness (the desires of the eyes). He will use the world system along with your inflated sense of self (the pride of life).

So knowing that this is the strategy of the adversary, how are we to arm ourselves against these types of attacks? How do we prepare to fight against him? Let me give you a couple of suggestions:

Firstly, do not love the world. How do we not love the world? You must recognize the world for what it is, it is a system put in place to compete for our love for God. It is a system that is geared to generate sin. It is a system that is geared to incite us to sin. It is a system that has been designed to work along side our own wicked desires and lead us astray, away from our Heavenly Father. Beloved, the world is not your friend, nor are the things in the world. And while these things may look attractive to you, while they may allure you with their wiles, and entice you by their deceit, most assuredly, their end is dissatisfaction. Their end is death. The world, the things in the world, cannot deliver on their promises –your life will not be better.

James 4:4. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Friendship with the world is hostility towards God. Friendship with the world is to be at odds with God. It is to oppose God. It is to war against him. Friendship with world and friendship with the LORD God are mutually exclusive. What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with false gods? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? Answer. There is no agreement. There is no accord. There is no fellowship. There is no partnership. Thus, do not love the world or the things in the world.

Secondly, do not let sin reign in your body.

Romans 6:12-14. Let not sin reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your member to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

The Puritan, Richard Baxter warns: Living in any known sin is a great impediment to a heavenly life. If this be your situation, I dare say that heaven and your soul are strangers. These beams in your eye will not let you look to heaven. They will be a cloud between you and God. When you attempt to study

eternity and gather refreshment from the life to come, your sin will look you in the face and say, "These things do not belong to you." How can you take comfort from heaven when you take so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh? Every intentional sin will be to your happiness as water to the fire. It will quench your joy. It will disable you, so that you can no more ascend in divine meditation than a bird can fly with clipped wings. We surely need to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Do not entertain any known sin, but rather crucify the deeds and desires of the flesh. Do not relent, but fight against them with all of your might, put them to death. Mortify them. Bury them.

Third, walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-17. "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."

What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? It means that you completely rely on the Holy Spirit for every aspect of your life. It means that you will live in the consciousness of His personal presence in us and with us. It means that you will believe, follow, meditate, and memorize the word of God because the word of God is the breathed out by God. It means that you will be willing to do what the Spirit tells you to do in the his word. It means that you will be willing to **go** where the Spirit leads. It means that you will walk thought by thought, decision by decision, and act by act under the Spirit's control –being wholly dependent upon him. And when you walk by the Spirit, you will not carry out the desires of the flesh, nor the desires of the eyes, nor the boastful pride of life. Walk in the Spirit, mortify the flesh, and do not love the world, nor the things in the world.

If this all seems like a tall order, you need to remember one last thing. Remember that the world, along with the things in the world are passing away. Our struggle against the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is only a temporary struggle.

The world, 1 John 2:17, is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Some of you need to make a choice today. Who will you love? What will you love? Will you love the world? Will you love the things in the world? Will you love that which is passing away? Or will you love the Father? Will you love that which will last for all of eternity? Most of us here have already made that choice, but we need to maintain it, by the power of the Spirit. Do not yield to the world, do not be drawn in to the temptations of the world, but do the will of God. For whoever does the will of God abides forever.

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