

*Love Not the World*  
*1 John 2:15-17*

**1 John 2:15-17** declares, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

As the children of spiritual light and the servants of our Lord, we believers are not of this present evil world. Yet our Lord has left us in this world in order that we might be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, witnesses of His glorious gospel. Even so, although we are not of this world, it is necessary that we engage with the people of this world and with the things of this world. However, we must take heed unto the counsel of **1 Corinthians 7:31** – “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.” So then, what does it mean to abuse this world and the things of this world? It is to set the love and affection of our hearts upon this world and its things.

Thus in **1 John 2:15-17** God’s Word declares, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” In like manner, **Colossians 3:1-2** gives the instruction, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

I. The Prohibition against Loving This World

The opening line of **1 John 2:15** clearly forbids us to set our love upon this world or upon the things of this world. In like manner, the closing line of **Colossians 3:2** clearly forbids us to set our affection upon the things of this world. This is a direct command from the Lord our God, a command that concerns both the focus of our hearts as well as the behavior of our lives. Love is first and foremost a matter of our souls. It is a matter of committed devotion, a matter of passionate affection, a matter of focused interest, a matter of driving pursuit. As such, we must never allow the motivation of our hearts to develop a committed devotion toward that which this world has to offer us. We must never allow the desire of our emotions to develop a passionate affection toward that which this world has to offer us. We must never allow the determination of our mindset to develop a focused interest toward that which this world has to offer us. We must never allow the direction of our lives to develop a driving pursuit after that which this world has to offer us. Rather, we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength. (See Mark 12:30) As **Colossians 3:1-2** reveals, we are to “seek those things which are above” and to set our affection “on things above, not on things on the earth.” We are to be spiritually and godly minded, not carnally and earthly minded. We are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, not on the earth; for where our treasure is, there will the love and affections of our hearts be also. (See **Matthew 6:19-21**)

## II. The Problem with Loving This World

Indeed, this prohibition against loving this world and the things of this world is not a minor principle of the Christian life. Rather, it is principle of great spiritual significance; for the closing portion of **1 John 2:15** delivers the warning, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” This is the spiritual problem with loving this world and the things of this world. At any given moment wherein a believer sets the love and affection of his heart and mind upon the things that which world offers, that believer is not at that very moment setting his or her love and focus upon the Lord. This is a Biblical and spiritual truth without any exceptions whatsoever. The love of the world and the love of the Lord cannot mix spiritually. Even so, these two loves cannot possess a believer’s heart and life at the same moment. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed in **Matthew 6:24**, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” These two masters are spiritual opposites – the Lord our God and the things of this world. Therefore, we cannot love and serve both at the same time. Either we will love the Lord our God and hate the things of this world, or else we will love the things of this world and hate the Lord our God. Either we will hold with devotion unto the Lord our God and despise with rejection the things of this world, or else we will hold with devotion unto the things of this world and despise with rejection the Lord our God. Whichever direction we choose, upon whichever master we set our love and affection, we will spiritually hate and despise the other. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself declared it to be so.

Even so, **James 4:4** confronts those believers who would set love and affection upon this world and the things of this world, rebuking them and saying, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Setting our love and affection upon what this world has to offer us is spiritually to cheat against the Lord our God in our relationship with Him, thus making us spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. Such will kindle our Lord God’s righteous jealousy and fiery indignation against us. Indeed, choosing to be a friend of this world will put us in the place of spiritual enmity with God. A direction must be chosen. Either we will make ourselves the friends of this world, and thus be the enemy of God; or we will separate ourselves from this world in order pursue a fellowship with the Lord our God. In fact, this was the cause of unfaithfulness in the life of Demas. According to **Philemon 1:24**, Demas had served the Lord as a fellow laborer with the apostle Paul. Yet in the opening portion of **2 Timothy 4:10**, the apostle delivered the sad report, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.” Demas became unfaithful to the ministry of the Lord and the servant of the Lord specifically for this reason – because he set his love and affection upon what this world had to offer him. He set his love upon the world, and it brought him to spiritual ruin.

## III. The Pattern in Loving This World

Yet how might we discern what is of this world, in order that we might not set our love and affection upon it? In **1 John 2:16** the answer is revealed; for therein the pattern of this world is

presented – “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Herein we do not find a long list of objects, activities, and relationships of this world. Rather, herein we find the three foundational motivations for all of the philosophies, priorities, and pursuits of this world. Everything that is of this present evil world’s system is founded upon one of these foundational motivations or upon some mixture of these foundational motivations. Indeed, all three of these motivations is characterized by self and selfishness.

The first of these three foundational motivations is “the lust of the flesh.” This concerns a selfish desire for the pleasures of this world. It does not simply encompass a selfish desire for the pleasures of sexual enjoyment or of a drug high. It also encompasses a selfish desire for the pleasures of recreation, of fun and games, of entertainment, of socializing, of partying, of food consumption, etc. Indeed, it encompasses a selfish desire for any physical or emotional pleasure. Concerning this, **Hebrews 11:25** indicates that Moses had to choose between suffering of affliction for the cause of the Lord or enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season (wherein Moses chose “rather to suffering affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”). Concerning this, **2 Timothy 3:4** speaks of those who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” Concerning this, **Philippians 3:19** speaks of those who are “the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly [that is – their selfish appetites], and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” Indeed, a selfish desire to fulfill one’s own physical or emotional appetites is not godly, but worldly. It is not of the Father, but is of the world; and as such, it is to worship and serve our own appetites as our god, rather than the Lord our God and Savior.

The second of these three foundational motivations is “the lust of the eyes.” This concerns a selfish desire for the possessions of this world. It is the Biblically defined sin of covetousness. It is to covet after that which another possesses, whether it be his or her relationships, his or her wealth, his or her abilities, or anything else that he or she may own, in direct disobedience to the tenth commandment. (See **Exodus 20:17**; **Deuteronomy 5:21**) It is the selfish and driving desire to acquire physical wealth or material possessions. Even so, **1 Timothy 6:9-10** gives the warning, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” It is the opposite of contentment with such things as we have. Even so, **Hebrews 13:5** gives the instruction, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” It is to set our trust in material things, rather than in the Lord our God. Even so, **1 Timothy 6:17** reveals the warning, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” Indeed, according to Ephesians 5:5 a covetous person is “an idolater.” Even so, a selfish desire for the possessions of this world is not godly, but worldly. It is not of the Father, but of the world. It is to worship and serve the things of this world, rather than the Lord our God and Savior.

The third of these three foundational motivations is “the pride of life.” This concerns a self-centered perspective of one’s place in this world. It is to think more highly of ourselves than

we ought to think from God's perspective of our place in life. It would encompass a self-centered, self-exalted, and self-advancing perspective concerning our position, our priorities, our popularity, our prestige, our purpose, our plans, our power, our proficiency, our opinion, our importance, etc. Concerning this, **Proverbs 11:2** gives the warning, "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." Again **Proverbs 16:18** gives the warning, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Yet again **Proverbs 25:27** gives the warning, "It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory." Concerning this, **Galatians 6:3** gives the warning, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Concerning this, **1 Peter 5:5** gives the instruction, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Again **Philippians 2:3-8** gives the instruction, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Even so, a self-centered, self-exalted, and self-advancing perspective of our place in this world is not godly, but worldly. It is not of the Father, but of the world.

#### IV. The Position in Loving This World

Indeed, these truths place us in an extremely dangerous spiritual position when we set our love and affection upon this world to walk after the foundational motivations of this world. **1 John 2:16** gives the warning, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." When we set our love and affection upon this world to walk after its foundational motivations, we are not walking in the way of God our heavenly Father, but are walking in the way of this world. Even so, we may glean two elements of truth from this warning.

First, the motivations and way of this world is contrary to a daily walk with the Lord our God. Pursuing the motivations and way of this world will keep us from serving and pleasing the Lord. Pursuing the motivations and way of this world will choke the wisdom of God's Word out of our hearts. Pursuing the motivations and way of this world will destroy the effectiveness of our prayer lives. Pursuing the motivations and way of this will prevent us from walking in the Holy Spirit and from bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit. Pursuing the motivations and way of this world will hinder the work of the Holy Spirit to transform us after the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pursuing the motivations and way of this world will cause us to be spiritually useless for our Lord and thereby to waste our Christian lives. Indeed, pursuing the motivations and way of this world will stand contrary to everything that is of the Lord our God and heavenly Father in our lives. Indeed, developing an affection and friendship with the system of this world will cause us to live as the enemies of God our heavenly Father and of the cross and cause of Christ our Savior.

Second, the motivations and way of this world will cause us to walk in wickedness and evil. Even so, **1 John 5:19** reveals that “the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Thus to pursue the motivations and way of this world is to pursue a life of wickedness. Indeed, in **Galatians 1:4** God’s Word refers unto this world as “this present evil world.” Again in **Philippians 2:15** God’s Word refers unto this world as being spiritually “crooked and perverse.” Again in **Titus 2:12** God’s Word instructs us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” thereby connecting worldly lusts with ungodliness. Again in **2 Peter 1:4** God’s Word refers to “the corruption [that is – the spiritual corruption] that is in the world through lust.” Again in **2 Peter 2:20** God’s Word refers to “the pollutions [that is – the spiritual pollutions] of the world.” Finally, in **2 Corinthians 4:4** God’s Word reveals that the devil is the god of this world’s system. Thus when we pursue the motivations and way of this world, we are following after the devil’s agenda. Indeed, **Ephesians 2:2** indicates that those who walk “according to the course of this world” also walk “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,” that is – the devil himself. In fact, the closing portion of this verse reveals that the devil’s agenda in the world is all about disobedience against God. Even so, **Ephesians 2:3** indicates that the course of this world as governed by the devil’s agenda is all about “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind.” It is all about disobedience against God through selfish lust. This is the spiritual position that we take when we set our love and affection upon this world and when we pursue the motivations and way of this world.

#### V. The Prospect in Loving This World

Yet pursuing the motivations and way of this world will not only place us in a dangerous spiritual condition, but will also lead us unto a conclusion of emptiness. Even so, the opening portion of **1 John 2:17** declares, “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.” Nothing of this world possesses eternal value. All that is of this world shall eventually pass away.

The wealth of this world flies away faster than it can be obtained. In **Proverbs 23:4-5** God’s Word declares, “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” Again in **Psalms 39:6** God’s Word declares, “Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.” Yet again in **Ecclesiastes 5:13-15** the preacher proclaimed, “There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.”

The benefits of this world, including its pleasures, popularity, prestige, position, power, etc., fades away. In **Ecclesiastes 2:1-11** the preacher proclaimed, “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of

water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” Again in the closing portion of **1 Corinthians 7:31** God’s Word declares, “For the fashion of this world passeth away.” Yet again in **James 1:8-11** God’s Word declares, “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.”

Our life in this world appears for only a little time, and then vanishes away. In **Psalms 90:9-10** God’s Word declares, “For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Again in **James 4:14** God’s Word declares, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Yet again **1 Peter 1:24** declares, “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.”

Indeed, this very earth itself shall melt away with a fervent heat and fire. In **2 Peter 3:10-12** God’s Word declares, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

Finally, all that we pursue of this world will burn away at the Judgement Seat of Christ. According to **2 Corinthians 5:10** we as believers “must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Even so, **1 Corinthians 3:11-14** teaches, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” At that time all that we have done in this life shall be valued as gold, silver, and precious stone, or as wood, hay, and stubble. Then the fire of our Lord

God's judgment shall try this substance to see whether it will abide the fire as truly worthy or whether it will be burned away by the fire as spiritually worthless. All that we have done after the direction of the Holy Spirit for the Lord our God shall be valued as gold, silver, precious stone and shall abide the fire. However, all that we have done after the desires of our selfish flesh for this present world shall be valued as wood, hay, stubble and shall be burned away.

## VI. The Promise in Contrast to Loving This World

Indeed, setting our love and affection upon this world and pursuing the motivations and ways of this world will place us in an extremely dangerous spiritual position and will lead unto complete spiritual emptiness. Yet there is another way. In **1 John 1:17** the spiritual warning is given and the contrasting way is revealed – “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” The choice is before us. We can either pursue the way of this present evil world, or we can perform the will of the Lord our God. Certainly, as the children of God we should follow the will of the Lord our God and heavenly Father. Even so, **Colossians 3:1-3** declares, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

So then, what is required of us in order that we might follow the will of the Lord our God? In **Romans 12:2** the instruction is given, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” First, we most certainly must not be conformed to this world and its motivations for life. We must not pursue the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Rather, we must deny ourselves, take up the cross of submission unto our Lord daily, and follow Him. (See **Luke 9:23**) Second, we must be transformed in our character unto the character of our Lord. This we must do through the renewing of our inner heart motivation and mindset. Then we will find understanding in knowing our Lord's will for our moment by moment walk. Then we will find direction in doing our Lord's will for our moment by moment walk. Then we will find value in enjoying our Lord's will for our moment by moment walk. Yes, then we will find that our Lord's will for our moment by moment walk truly is “good, and acceptable, and perfect.”

Furthermore, in **Ephesians 5:17-18** the instruction is given, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” In order to follow the will of the Lord our God, we must submit ourselves to be filled with the influence, direction, and empowerment of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is through the filling influence of the Holy Spirit that we be transformed after the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the filling direction of the Holy Spirit that we may understand the will of the Lord our God. It is through the filling empowerment of the Holy Spirit that we may resist temptation and obey our Lord. Indeed, through this means we shall be able to walk moment by moment in a manner that is pleasing unto our Lord. Even so, in **Colossians 1:9-11** the apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Colosse, saying, “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled [through the filling of the Holy Spirit] with the knowledge of his will in all

wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

Indeed, pursuing the ways of this world leads to complete spiritual emptiness; but doing the will of our Lord is an eternal investment of eternal value with eternal reward. The closing portion of **1 John 2:17** proclaims the promised assurance, “But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” When we walk in the will of the Lord our God, we lay up for our treasures in heaven, “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (See **Matthew 6:20**) Thereby and therein we lay up for ourselves “a better and an enduring substance.” (See **Hebrews 10:23**) At the Judgment Seat of Christ, all that we have done in this life according to our Lord’s will shall be valued as gold, silver, and precious stone, and shall abide the fire of our Lord’s judgment. Even so, **1 Corinthians 3:14** declares, “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.” When we walk in the will of the Lord our God, we lay up for ourselves “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (See **2 Corinthians 4:17-18**)

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20-21)