

The World That God Hates (1 John 2:15-17)

(Assurance of Salvation in 1 John, Part 3)

Summary:

1. *He walks in the light as God is in the light, and is the light (1:5-7)*
2. *He sees his sin, confesses it, and repents of it (1:8-10)*
3. *He abides in Jesus and walks as He walked (2:1-6)*
4. *He loves the brethren (2:7-11)*

5. **He does not love the world (2:15-17)**

- The apostle John provides another marker of assurance of salvation that is now in the negative: “if anyone loves the world or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

What is “the world”? Scripture provides three categories:

- A. The physical world that God created (Jn. 1:10).
- B. The “scope” of sinners who will be effectually regenerated (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 2:2).
- C. The dwellers on earth who are without God, dead in their sins, and under the tutelage of Satan, the flesh, and sin. The world is under the control of the evil one (Jn. 14:30; 1 Jn. 4:3-5; 5:19), which the strong have overcome (1 Jn. 2:13, 14). In John’s gospel, the world is under God’s judgment (Jn. 9:39; 12:31), and it lies in darkness and sin (1:5; 12:46).

While John tells us that God so loved the world (Jn. 3:16) and Jesus commands us to love our enemies and one another in the world (Matt. 5:43-48; 1 Jn. 3:11), God hates the world system (1 Jn. 2:15) which is the moral and spiritual impulse that is propagated by the ruler of this age (1 Jn. 5:19), dominated by the flesh (Rom. 8:1-9), and without any adherence to the revealed will of God (1 Jn. 2:17).

John lists the principles of the “unholy trinity”:

A. Desire (lust) of the flesh (v.16a):

Lust:

- The Greek word for “lust” is mentioned thirty-eight times in the NT. It has a negative connotation in all but three places (Lk. 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17).
- Lust is the excess of the proper limits of what God deems good, reasonable, and righteous. In 1 John, it is immoral and birthed from the flesh in sin.

Flesh:

- While the flesh can refer to the human body (Phil. 1:22-26), it is almost always used negatively in Scripture.
- It is referred to as the “old man” and is residual in the redeemed saint (after conversion). For John, the flesh is not the body but what animates and drives a man to sinful interests apart from God, making fellowship with Him impossible.
- It is opposed to the Spirit (Jn. 3:6; 6:63; 8:15; Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:19-21): the Spirit gives birth to spirit (Jn. 3:6), and the flesh counts for nothing (6:63).
- The flesh cannot be changed, reformed, trained, improved, nor reconciled to God (Rom. 6:6; 8:3, 8; Gal. 2:20; 5:19-21). It remains in the redeemed saint and will always be hostile to God’s rule and authority. While flesh has been crucified for those in Christ (Gal. 5:24), it has yet to be mortified.
- The spiritual power released through the resurrection of new life in the believer through the enabling of the Holy Spirit is the only power that will subdue and conquer the flesh (Rom. 8:1-11).
- The new nature of the redeemed saint is at continual war with his “old self” until Christ is fully formed in him (Gal. 4:19). Complete victory over sinful and fleshly inclinations will not subside entirely until he enters glory with the inability to sin.

B. The desires (lusts) of the eyes (v.16b):

- This is the only place in Scripture where this terminology is used. It suggests man’s sinful covetousness and acquisitiveness.
- Solomon informs us that the eyes are never satisfied (Eccl. 1:8).
- Like the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes is initiated internally. This passionate desire of the eyes for satisfaction has its source in the residual lingering lusts of the “old man.”
- It is the desire to see something as unlawful and to have it for sinful pleasure. It is an idle and prurient curiosity.
- It is the desire to have something apart from the revealed word of God and is captivated by the lusting of a thing without inquiring about the actual value of the thing itself.

C. The pride (boasting) of life (v.16c):

- The outward manifestation of vain glory that hunts after honors, titles, pedigrees, family connections, honorable acquaintances, etc., is temporal and of no eternal value.
- It is an outward “flaunting” and “touting” that longs to be identified with godlessness. It is an external godless boasting of an identity that “connects” with the world system which misrepresents what God has deemed worthy and truthful.
- It is a security in worldly things that makes them so prideful and arrogant as to overlook their dependence on God (Prov. 18:11; 30:8-9). The eternal has no impact on their temporal decisions.

Warning:

- Many have subjective preferences on what they perceive worldliness to look like through implicit biblical principles. They project their “caution” onto others and wrongfully confuse sin with the thing they are avoiding themselves.
 - Beware of looking at brothers and sisters with “nice things” and coming to certain conclusions about them. They may be more generous than you.
 - Beware of looking at brothers and sisters who appear to be frugal. They may be cheap towards God and man.

Summary: the fallen flesh energizes the lustful eyes. Each one is tempted and dragged away by his own lusts (Jam. 1:14). The sinful heart is capably willing to corrupt anything that God designs to be good and profitable into an evil enterprise. The issue is not the thing itself but the heart that is captivated either by the love of the Father or the lust of the flesh.

How do I know if I love the world and the love of the Father is not in me?

1. God-ordained priorities are supplanted with worldly lusts and desires.
2. You have a shallow relationship with others in Christ.
3. You experience the same worry, anxiety, and fears as those without Christ.
4. You shrink back in infidelity when your faith costs you favor in the eyes of the world.
5. Your heart corrupts that which could be used to advance God’s kingdom.
6. You sacrifice your sanctification on the altar of worldly recognition.
7. You confuse rest with laziness.
8. You are a poor steward of your body (as it depends on you).
9. You exchange the health of your marriage for status in the world.
10. You have no contrition over sin because you walk in habitual darkness.
11. You deny your Savior by claiming “professionalism” as though your identity is not in Christ.
12. You would instead please men than honor God.
13. You have no Spirit-enabled discipline over your imagination which, if left unchecked, will sin.
14. You willingly succumb to every sinful lust with no victory over the flesh.
15. You confuse enjoyment of the creation with worldliness.
16. People who know you have no clue Christ is your Lord and Scripture is your authority.
17. You have no desire to win people to Christ and encourage the saints.
18. You rely on your good works instead of the works of Jesus Christ.