

1st John 2: 15-17; “Do not love the World”, Sermon # 9 in a series entitled “Behold What Manner of Love”, A Communion Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 13th, 2017, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

As we come to these verses let us remember the context which we studied in the last few verses. Having made mention of 3 categories of Christian experience; little children, fathers and young men, and having described the young men as those who have overcome the evil one, John now addresses every Christian old or young, experienced or inexperienced, with this exhortation. “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” The reason for this is that the world and the love of it, are something that can overtake any aged or experienced Christian just as much as it can overtake a young babe in Christ who has not been disciplined or told yet, that the world is a great temptation for the Christian who wants to be holy. It is a very subtle enemy in every Christian’s life. Now I think we need to ask ourselves 1st – What is the meaning of this word world? 2nd – We need to ask what it is that we do not have, if we love the world? 3rd – We need to ask what does worldliness look like in a Christian’s life? And then when we come to partake of the Supper, we will attempt to apply all that we are learning.

1st - What is the meaning of the word “world” in these verses?

The word “world” in the Greek is Cosmos. In the Hebrew it is Thebal. The meaning of each usage of this word in the Scripture is determined by the context in which it resides. It will be one of a number of possible meanings of the word. Let me show you this. In Psalm 24: 1 it says, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it.” Here the “world” is being spoken of as the planet that we live on, which God created, and every man whom he has made dwelling in it. This is not the meaning of our text because we know from other scriptures that we are to love one another and all men. Sometimes this word “world” is used of all men who are descended from Adam. We see this in Romans 5: 18 where it says, “By one man sin entered in to the world and death by sin.” Sometimes it is used to refer just to unregenerate and sinful men. John 15: 18 says, “If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.” Then, again, it sometimes refers to the Elect of God, both Jew and Gentile, in terms of what Jesus Christ did for them in particular on the cross. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1: 29) Another similar usage is found in 2nd Corinthians 5: 19, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.”

Or this word “world” can mean Mankind in general as they are regarded as sinners in the sight of God, yet loved by Him in the free offer of the gospel. In John 3: 16 we find the word being used in that very way. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” Notice that in this famous verse the words “should” and “might” are used. The whole meaning of the text would be disrupted if the word “world” meant the Elect alone, because the words “should” and “might” would undermine the certainty of God’s having chosen each of those whom He has purposed to save. The language of election is always “shall” and “will”. Some theologians think that the word “world” here is to be equated with the Elect, as if the verse could be read, “For God so loved the Elect that He gave His only-begotten Son. But it is not the particular Electing love of God that is here in view in these verses, but rather the free offer of the gospel. And so we see that this famous text should not be forced out of its context.

Sometimes the word “world” is used to refer to the Gentiles only. Romans 11: 15 is a good example of this. It says, “If the Jews being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will

their acceptance be but life from the dead.” I think that this is probably a sufficient study of the word, and yet there is one more usage of the word world, and it is found here in our text. “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” Here the word refers to a sinful mentality of loving what God has created as though it exists apart from His directives on how to use it. Worldliness is that which leaves God out, and puts sin in to the good things that He has created. We will open up the particulars of this in the 3rd point.

2nd – We need to ask what we do not have, if we love the world.

Our text says, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So here we find the love of the world and the love of the Father are shown to be mutually exclusive of one another. You cannot be a lover of the world and a lover of the Father at the same time. It is contradictory. We love the Father when we pursue what is holy, good, and true rather than having a worldly mindset and worldly loves. In 1st Peter 1: 13-21 we are told, “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Because it is written, “Be holy for I am holy”. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear”. (He is speaking of our stay here upon the earth, or how we ought to conduct ourselves while we are living here in this world) “Knowing, that you were not redeemed with silver and gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

This “grace that is to be brought to us by the revelation of Jesus Christ” is not just the completion of God’s work in regard to our sanctification when we see Christ at His second coming and we are gloriously made like Him on the day of the Resurrection. It is also referring to girding up the loins of our mind and fixing our hope completely upon the grace that will be brought to us now, during our stay upon the earth now, in that when we remember that we were redeemed by Jesus Christ; when we remember that we were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with His precious blood. And when we go back to the world and conform ourselves to the lusts and desires of the world, the mindset of leaving God out of the good things that He has created, and putting the selfish sin of our goals and pleasures before God’s directions and purpose; then we are taking the Lord’s name (the Father name in this case) in vain. These verses are saying to us that we do not have the love of the Father in us if we have the love of the world reigning in us.

As Christians we have to remember what God has called us to. He has called us to be righteous and holy people. The Father expects us to consciously choose to love Him by putting away this mindset of loving the world. Turn to Romans 12: 1. Here we have perhaps the most famous text in the Bible, apart from the one that we are studying, about the world. Paul says, “I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” When you love the Father and you desire to be transformed by Christ’s grace, you present your body and what you are doing with your body, as a living sacrifice, to His service. You are God’s servant, and you will be going about your days in this world conducting yourself as such. You will be presenting yourself to God with the words of a servant – Here I am Lord; what would you have me to do? You will be presenting yourself to God every day with the prayer, “Lord, please transform my mind and give me the grace to transform and renew my mind by my being thoughtful about what I put into my mind and what I bring forth out of it in terms of the way that I live; for there is a difference between a Christian

and a worldling. And we are now in a position to see what that difference is by our asking our next question.

3rd – What does worldliness look like in a Christian's life?

It should be a tremendous relief to each of us when we discover that God does not leave us to ourselves to define what worldliness is, but He shows us right here in verse 16 what it looks like in its roots and fruits. “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.” Here we can learn to differentiate between what comes from the Father as its source, and what comes from a sinful worldly mentality as its source. The root of worldliness is found in what we love in our hearts. And the desires for getting the most out of this life's sinful pleasures, and holding on to what we have obtained in our proud and independent way, and then boasting of it to others; this is the mindset of the world. “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.” A Christian must guard himself from this mindset of worldliness.

James chapter 4 has a similar thrust to what our passage in 1st John is saying. He says in verse 1, “Where do wars and fightings come from among you?” Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” “You lust and you do not have.” “You murder and covet and cannot obtain.” “You fight and war.” “Yet you do not have because you do not ask.” “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” “Adulterers and adulteresses!” “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself the enemy of God.” “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’” “But He gives more grace.” “Therefore He says, ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” “Therefore submit to God.”

Sometimes people get hung up on trying to distinguish between what is meant by the “lust of the flesh” and the “lust of the eyes.” This need not perplex us long. All three of these phrases are meant to describe different aspects of how sinful worldliness works itself out in our lives. Lusts of the “flesh” are the sinful cravings in our hearts to obtain and to use for our pleasure, the things that God has created, apart from obedience to His declared will. The lust of the eyes is our carefully and continually looking out to see how we can fulfill those selfish and sinful desires. And the pride of life is the boasted satisfaction of thinking that we can obtain, have obtained, and will continue to hold on to the things that we have obtained this way, apart from God's blessing which He gives to the one who seeks Him for all their needs and wants. We could ask ourselves this question. Is worldly to go to movies? There are many Christians who think that it is. But going to movies is not a sin in itself unless it is done without bringing God into the decision, or that we know that there are scenes which portray sin in that movie. It is worldliness if we don't consider God or the content of the movie. Is the movie a good movie? Does it portray good things that would be worth watching and does it set forth good things for our minds to take in? Or does it contain material which will entice us to sin in our heart, and which will ignore what God declares to be of value?

Sex and violence are not something that a Christian can be neutral about on any occasion, whether it is being portrayed in a movie, or whether it is in real life. Those sinful things which other people are acting out in a movie, that you will allow yourself to watch without any objection, are the same things that you will allow your mind and heart to dwell upon in real life. You should understand that this is a test, and God is watching as the jealous God who loves you. What will you do with your time? The time that we give to activities such as movies or television, or entertainments on the computer, are a great indicator of where your heart is. If you can give hours to TV and movies but not much to Bible reading and prayer and the reading of good books, then what does it say about your heart? In doing this you may be leaving God

out, and this is worldliness. If you can go to church on the Lord's Day and then to a movie afterwards; unless it is a movie oriented to the worship of God, is this not seeking your own pleasure apart from God's direction? Are you really improving upon the things that you have heard, from God's Word, that day? Each of us needs to think about these things so that God might be honored. "Do not love the world" because it is a waste of time when you do. The world is passing away, and the lusts of it, but He who does the will of God abides forever. Let us come down front now and I will have a few more words to say about this subject before we partake of the Lord's Supper.

4th – Let us see if we can apply what we have been learning here in relation to our partaking of the Lord's Supper.

"And the world is passing away, and lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." When you think of the word worldly you should think of it, not so much in terms of the outward fashion of things that people of the world pay attention to; what is popular in clothing or hairstyles, and that sort of thing. Certainly this is taken in by the saying, the world is passing away; but it is not the essence of holiness to be much concerned about these things, other than that we should be modest in dress and pleasant in our outward appearance. But you should rather think of the dangers of worldliness in terms of the desires of your heart, what is going on in your heart moment by moment and day by day, the thoughts and desires of your heart that leave out the consideration of God and His word, and which only pays attention to what people around you, who are forgetting God are doing. They are living for the goals and pleasures which will not last. They will have their fun in the sun and may attain to great worldly popularity and fame, but they know not God, and therefore all that they build up for themselves in thought word and deed will only last for a season, and then it is gone, and they die, and perish without the knowledge of God and His holy way of doing things.

We have come to this table to remember Christ. And what do we remember? We remember that He overcame the temptations of the Devil in the wilderness. He was tempted to selfish ambition and pride. He was tempted to act on His own independently from the will of the Father for His life. But He was holy and remembered God's word and kept Himself from sin. Such is what we are called to do too. When we think of not loving the world, we are not to think that we are to be opposed to the world as God made it, but we are to be opposed to it as that which Satan has corrupted by his pride and his sinful lusts, in opposition to all that God has purposed, and all that God had made and done through Christ. The whole world lies in the lap, or under the sway of the wicked one. (1st John 5: 19) Therefore worldliness is that attitude of mind and heart that is not able to distinguish between what God would have you to do and what Satan and your flesh would have you to do at any given point in your life.

But thanks be to God, you do have the love of God in you, if you have believed in Jesus Christ. Dear Christian, if you will see Christ as Your strength and help in all that you are doing, then all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life will not be continually drawing you away from God and what He would have you to do with your mind, your heart, your will, and your actions. You will not be living for yourself and for sinful pleasures. Every holy desire for doing the will of God and keeping His commandments and enjoying fellowship with Him in the Spirit will be established. And you will abide forever. Let us partake of the elements this afternoon with these things in mind, for in abiding in Christ and His grace and truth, we will find true joy and peace in doing His will and walking with Him.