

1 John 2:15-17

“A Love That God Hates”

When is it ever wrong to love? After-all isn't love one of the foundational precepts or principles of the Christian faith? Doesn't the bible say just a little later in this very epistle that God is love? Didn't Jesus teach, "...*love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you;*" Matt 5:44 Why then and when is it ever wrong to love?

It's true; the bible *does* classify love as a preeminent premise of the Christian faith. The bible *does* state that God is love, and Jesus *did* teach us that we're to love our enemies. However there is always context that qualifies the commands of the bible. There is a specific *kind* of love that's to fill us and flow through us as believers and that is the *love of God* that has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom 5:5). Understand that there is a love that's *pure* and a love that's *polluted*, a love that's proper and a love that's inappropriate for the child of God.

The bible declares in no uncertain terms in the 12th Ch of the book of Romans that as it pertains to you and me as sons and daughters of God that we are to, "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*" Rom 12:9 The book of Psalms states it this way, "*You who love the Lord, hate evil!*" Ps 97:10 You say, "Well yeah! Isn't that the obvious, that if you *love* God you should *hate* evil?" You would think that it *would* be and undoubtedly it *should* be but unfortunately it's not. It's amazing to me the amount of believers who are engaged in ungodly activities, ungodly endeavors and the sad fact of the matter is that they're loving it. It's as though they've come to the place that Isaiah warned us against when he said, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" Isa 5:20 They've come to a place where they seem all but impotent against the desires, the cravings, the longings of the flesh and the find themselves feeding their flesh, feeding those cravings, loving the gratification that comes from it.

You see, John has just given us the command concerning love, that we're love one another, even as Jesus Himself has loved us. Not conveniently, or if He likes you personally, but rather whole heartedly, unconditionally, sacrificially and all the rest... John has said that if you say you're in the light (that is in fellowship with God) yet you hate your brother the truth of the matter is that you're in darkness, you're blind, you're mind is clouded and confused. It's the one who *loves* his brother who abides in the light; and it's with in this context of the command to love that John speaks to us now. Yes we're to love; but there *is a love* that God hates; and we're not to open the floodgates of love so wide that there's no discretion, no discernment involved. There is a wrong kind of love; it's what the bible calls the love of the world...

Vs15

Now when we 1st read that we might be tempted to jump to the defensive and think, “What do you mean don’t love the world? My heavenly Father owns the cattle of a thousand hillsides, the whole earth is filled with His glory!” So the question comes up, should we not love beautiful sunsets, or leaves blooming in the spring?

Should we not love gorgeous landscapes, mountains and streams, or ocean views, white fluffy clouds against the backdrop of a blue sky? Is that what it means when he writes, “Do not love the world?” No, listen; it doesn’t say, “Don’t love the earth, or this planet” and there’s certainly nothing wrong with having an appreciation for God’s creation, the bible is clear that the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof (Ps 50:12). There’s nothing wrong with glorifying God as you enjoy a breath taking landscape or watch the sun come up over the horizon as your heart wells up with praise toward the Lord for His goodness, His creativity, His beauty and His glory.

Nor is John here talking about unsaved humanity. After all we read categorically in Jhn 3:16, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” So the command to not love the world isn’t a reference to the planet and it’s natural beauty, it’s not a reference in general to humanity so once again we’ll look to the context to qualify the command.

The word “world” here is a word that has a broad meaning but ultimately it points to an ordered system; it doesn’t have to include all things though it can, but when you hear a broadcast from the “world” of sports you’re not thinking the whole planet is a sports arena or that there’s another planet somewhere that’s being broadcast from, the “world of sports.” You understand he’s talking about an ordered system or environment that’s focused on a particular agenda; sports. with in this context we’ll come to find that the reference is to that of an ordered system that stands in opposition *to* and is in fact hostile *toward* God; a system that moves in the polar opposite position of God. One man (Vincent) defined this word “world” like this, “The sum-total of human life in the ordered world, considered apart from, alienated from, and hostile to God, and of the earthly things which seduce from God (John 7:7; 15:18; 17:9, 14; I Cor. 1:20, 21; II Cor. 7:10; James 4:4).” Another said, “...it is the ordered system of which Satan is the head, his fallen angels and demons are his emissaries, and the unsaved of the human race are his subjects, together with those purposes, pursuits, pleasures, practices, and places where God is not wanted. Much in this world-system is religious, cultured, refined, and intellectual. But it is anti-God and anti-Christ.”

So when John says that we're not to love the world he's saying that we should be careful that we not find in our hearts a fondness or an affection for those that system that seeks to distract people *from* God or pull them away from their relationship *with* God be it subtly or quite candidly and very directly. Our heart shouldn't have a longing, or a love for the ways of the world. You know, doing whatever it takes, hurting whoever you have to in order to get ahead, you shouldn't be on board with those who seek to justify sin and facilitate open rebellion against God politically under the banner of freedom and liberty. Free country? Yes, but it's not God's heart that we be free *to* sin, but that we be free *from* sin. Listen, this is God's universe; He created it, He has every right to order it as He sees fit. He's not seeking to squelch our fun, He understands the ramifications of sin and He's seeking to save us from the path that will only lead to our destruction, not only temporarily but even throughout eternity.

You might also note that *worldliness* isn't limited to activity, it also includes the *attitude*. It's completely possible for a believer to stay away from ambiguous activity and doubtful places yet still love the world; worldliness is a matter of the heart. There is a fondness or affection for things that are in opposition to godliness.

Remember Paul said of Demas (one of his ministry associates) that he had forsaken him having *loved* this present world (2 Tim 4:10). Yet the exhortation of the scripture to you and me is, "...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." Romans 12:2 The proper relationship of the believer to the world is that we're to be dead to it, and it's to be dead to us. Paul said, "*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*" Gal 6:14

Yes, we're to be *in* the world, but we're not to be *of* the world. We're like a ship in the sea, as long as the ship is in the sea all is well, but when the sea gets into the ship it's a disaster; and if it's not remedied quickly the ship is destroyed. As long as you're in the world all is ok, be the light *of* the world, but when the world begins to get into you, or into me it's disastrous. If not remedied and repented of quickly we'll be destroyed, we'll be sunk.

"Do not love the word, or the things *in* the world." You might note what seems to be obvious here, the world wants your love. That is, your time, your attention, your support, your money; and the world will seek to persuade you to give those things to the *priorities* of this world rather than designate and dedicate them to the things of God. and Should you choose to love the world you will be rewarded *by* the world, be it in prestige, or status, perhaps honor or comfort; the world will seek to gain your love through the great things it has to give us.

Cars, houses, gadgets, modern technology and convenience, things that entice our hearts to be at home right here in the world. Because we're better off for having these things, modern technology, comforts and conveniences can make us better off, but they can never make us better. Only God can do that.

Now when John talks about the things *in* the world what's he talking about. Again it's not aquatic life, or the animal kingdom, but rather he's referencing those things that will "feed the machine" of this world's system, things that will facilitate your downward spiral to spiritual destruction, those things that feed our flesh.

In the gospel of Mark Jesus spoke of a certain sower who went out sowing seed in his field, and he said that as he sowed some fell along the wayside and was snatched up by the birds of the air, other seed fell on stony ground, still other seed fell among thorns, but some of it fell on good soil, took root, sent up a shoot and brought forth fruit some 30, some 60 and some 100 fold.

Later on when His disciples asked Him what He meant by that He explained it to them. Let's leave 1st John and look together at Mark Ch 4 (beginning in Vs 14-20)

Now certainly every bit of this is applicable to you and me, but it seems to me that as it pertains to modern day USA that our primary point of concern centers around Vs 18-19. Hearing the word, but the *cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things* entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. We find ourselves falling in love with the things of this world allowing them to choke out the things of God, His desires, His design for our lives. Think of Judas, distracted by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things. Paul told Timothy, "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" 1 Timothy 6:10 Does that mean it's wrong to have money? No, but if money has you it's a real problem. Again we read in Colossians, "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*" Colossians 3: 2

"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." Here's the deal, you can't have it both ways, it's one or the other. Jesus said it like this, "*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.*" Matthew 6:24 You cannot love the world and have the love of the Father in you, they're mutually exclusive.

I love the fact that John absolutely abhors ambiguity. with him you're either in fellowship with God or you're not, you're either in the light or in the dark, you're either filled with love or hatred has somehow poisoned you and you either have a love for the world in you or the love of the Father in you, but you can't ride the fence or have it both ways. God's love is either in you, guiding you as the ruling principle of your life, or its not and if you love the world or the things in the world, its not, it's that simple. Again it's not that you'll never sway or struggle, but the idea is that of a habitual unrelenting mindset and frame of heart, if you're all about the things of the world you're not about the things of God, period.

Vs16

Vs 15 gives us the exhortation, Vs 16 is an explanation and in Vs 17 we'll see the rationalization. Why can't you love the world if what abides in you is the love of the Father? Because everything (categorically) that's in the world is not *of* the Father, it has no part *in* the Father.

When you boil it all down there are only 3 things that exist in this "world system" and they're all hostile *against* or in opposition *to* God. #1 The lust of the flesh, #2 The lust of the eyes, and #3 The pride of life. Consequently it will always be in one of these three avenues (if not all three) that Satan (or this world) will seek to entice you through so as to draw you away from a love relationship with God. It's all that Satan ever *has* used, it's all that he ever *will* use, it's all that there is.

"The lust of the flesh" the word *lust* speaking of *cravings* or *desires*, a *longing* for that which is forbidden; so when he references the "lust of the flesh" he's speaking of a longing or a craving not just for forbidden, or illicit bodily appetites, the word "flesh" doesn't necessarily imply your physical being. The body is just a means (if you will) that you utilize to serve or gratify a particular end. Jesus was in a body just like ours, but it wasn't sinful. The word "flesh" here speaks of the inner depravity of man that governs ones will, rationale and emotions. It speaks of the desire that comes from the sin nature of man, the body only comes into play in that its used to serve and/or gratify those wicked cravings that *stem* from our sin nature.

"Lust of the flesh" is not limited to sexual connotations though it certainly includes that. But it stretches to include any desire that perverts God's original intent. The children of Israel lusted after meat, they were sick of manna and wanted meat. We read in the book of Numbers, "*Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat?'*" Numbers 11:4 Paul wrote of their wilderness wanderings be it concerning their lust for meat, idolatry, or sexual immorality and he said, "*Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*" 1 Corinthians 10:6

Of course our relationship to the flesh should not be one that *gratifies* it but rather one that *crucifies* it. The bible says, “*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*” Galatians 5:24 Jesus said that if we’re to follow after Him we’re to *deny* ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. (Matt 16:24)

What does it mean to “take up your cross”? The cross was the instrument of death to the flesh, self will and self want, we’re not to gratify the flesh, we’re to crucify the flesh, we’re to put to death our desire to feed the sinful tendencies with in us and walk in the Spirit, not after the flesh. The bible never has anything good to say about the flesh, *everything* God says about the flesh is negative, that it’s *weak*, that there’s *no good thing* that dwells in it, that it profits *nothing*, that we’re to place *no confidence* in it. Yet how often we’re enticed by the lust of the flesh.

“The lust of the eyes” again it can have a sexual connotation isn’t limited to that by any means. It can speak of covetousness, looking upon and longing for something that isn’t yours, remember Achan; Joshua Ch 7? The Israelites suffered a devastating loss at Ai and couldn’t figure out why. God told Joshua that there was sin in the camp, someone had taken of the things that God had said not to in that particular campaign. So Joshua confronted him and said, “Give glory to God son, what have you done?” We read, “*And Achan answered Joshua and said, ‘Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.’*” Josh 7:20-21 He sinned through the gate of what he *saw*, the lust of the eyes. Hollywood has mastered this approach. A man by the name of A.T. Robertson said this, “The use of the ‘movies’ today for gain by lustful exhibitions is a case in point.” Guess when he said that; 1932... David said, “*Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way.*” Psalms 119:36-37 The proverbs say, “*Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.*” Prov 27:20 The lust of the eyes.

“And the pride of life”, this phrase “pride of life” speaks of an *empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources to sustain itself*. It’s bragging over your stuff, it’s pride in possessions. The pride of life is a false sense of security or even superiority because of your stuff. I’m reminded of the rich man whom Jesus spoke of who’s ground yielded plentifully. Turn to Luke 12 (16-21). The pride of life, a false sense of security and superiority because of personal possessions; that’s why Jesus warned in Vs 15 of Luke 12 (read).

As I mentioned earlier all that stuff might make us better off, but it doesn’t make us better, better than others, or better (that is more secure) spiritually, it’s Christ who is our security.

But Satan has employed these tactics from the beginning. Genesis Ch 3, see the scene; there's Eve in the garden and Satan approaches her, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree in the garden'?" Eve says, "We can eat of any tree we want, except for the one in the midst of the garden. God has told us not to eat of that one because the day that we do we shall surely die." Satan says, "You won't die; God knows that the day you eat it you'll be like Him, knowing good and evil." He gets her to question God's motives behind His commands. Much like he does to people today. But we read there. "*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.*" Gen 3:6 What's that? She saw that it was *good for food* (the lust of the flesh), that it was *pleasant to the eyes* (the lust of the eyes) and a tree *desirable to make one wise* (the pride of life). He rolled them all up like a nice little package and gave it to her and she fell for every bit of it. People are still falling for it today.

Many of you will watch the super-bowl later today, take note of the tactics employed in their commercials. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.

Whoever uses their product will inevitably be surrounded by beautiful women, they'll be on some beach or great place in life, and the life of the party whom everybody loves. For some reason you never see someone passed out in puke, or having lost everything dear to him being kicked out of his home and cut off from his wife and kids with a Corona in his hands, you see him on the beach with white sands, blue skies and a beautiful woman. Why, because it works, the appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Satan sought to use them on Jesus but of course Jesus didn't succumb to his tactics. He'd fasted 40 days, "Hey, since You're the Son of God turn these stones to bread" (the lust of the flesh). "No need for the cross Jesus, that's painful, full of shame and humiliation. All the kingdoms of the world are mine (I don't think he left America out of the equation), if you'll only bow down and worship me I'll give them to you in all their glory" (the lust of the eyes, all the kingdoms of the earth and all their glory). "Since you're the Son of God throw Yourself down off the pinnacle of this temple, after all it's written 'his angels shall bear you up lest You dash Your foot upon a stone'" (the pride of life). Yet in each temptation Jesus overcame him through the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

"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." That is they don't have the Father as their source, but the world as their source. What is of the Father? God would have us to love the things of the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit as opposed the lust of the flesh.

God would have us to seek Him, and those things that are above as opposed to seeking to gratify the lust of the eyes; God would have us to walk in humility serving one another rather than puff ourselves up with the pride of life. It's no wonder then that James said, "*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 an enemy of God.*" James 4:4 Don't try to reform the flesh, don't try to cut back a little with regard to the flesh, refuse to provide for it, let it die, is it painful, you bet, that's why it's called "crucifixion." There's no other way, walk in the Spirit and refuse to fulfill the lusts, the longings, the cravings of the flesh. Not by your tremendous will power, but by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Vs17

The exhortation, the explanation, here's the rationalization; it's all going to burn anyway. The things of this world are temporary, don't get distracted from the eternal perspective. Think about how we invest ourselves, be our time, our money, our efforts and energies, our priority is so often in the things of this world, into that which will not and cannot last. It's passing away.

Think of how powerfully this point was illustrated with Lot (again in Genesis). He invested himself in what seemed to be lucrative ways in this world, he had status, influence, wealth and comfort in the city of Sodom. Yet it all went up in smoke in a moment of time; Lot was burned by the fact that the *world is passing away*.

The words "passing away" are in the passive voice meaning that they're being caused to pass away. God has a plan and that plan does not include this earth forever, this world will come to an end. "But he who does the will of God abides forever." What a strong contrast the *passing away* of this world.

How much time to you place upon the things that are eternal? Why not invest into that which will yield permanent, everlasting results?

This world is passing away, it's no wonder Jesus said then that what would it profit a man if he gained the whole world, yet lost his own soul? Trading the eternal for the temporary, present passing of this world; how staggering it is how many people seem content in trading a drop of life in the ocean of eternity, a vapor's worth of time in the scope of the eternal. They'll cling to their sin and reject God's offer of righteousness so that they might gratify themselves in some way temporarily when God offers to satisfy their soul eternally...

The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. Set your affections *on* the Lord, give your love *to* the Lord that you might abide forever *with* the Lord...

Prayer Points:

Father convict our hearts and empower us by Your Spirit that we might walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, not succumb to the lust of the eyes, not inflate ourselves in the pride of life. But help us to seek after you, to walk in humility and be as clay in Your hands. Fill our hearts with Your love, and deliver us from the love of the world and the things in the world. We're so thankful for your grace, teach us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age to the glory of Your name.

If you recognize yourself in that place whereby the love of the world has filled your heart, the love of the Father isn't there, you've not come before Him, you've not surrendered to Him, you've never been forgiven *by* Him having humbled yourself and repented of your sin. Let God have His way in your heart today, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, we serve a God of new beginnings; let Him make you brand new today...