

~ 1 John ~

Lesson 16- Overcoming the Things of this World

We are continuing our study of **1 John 2:15-17**

This is now the third lesson on these three verses, and verse 15 begins with John's first imperative to the children of God, "*Do not love the world*". The world, as John refers to here, is the system of evil, the kingdom of darkness that opposes God and is contrary to all that is holy and Righteous. But those who are God's children, all who believe in Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the cross, have been rescued out from this kingdom of darkness, and translated, conveyed, *μεθίστημι*, our stance has been transformed, into the kingdom of the Son of His Love. Therefore, because of this Love that was given to us, John is warning and commanding us, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world.*"

There are four reasons in these three verses why we do not love this evil world so lets review them again.

1. Because of what it is
 - a. It is the kingdom of darkness and it is not of the Father, 1 John 2:16
2. Because of who we are in Christ
 - a. We are born again children of God and we are of the Father not of the world, 1 John 2:16; 4:4
3. Because of what it does
 - a. Its persuasion to the darkness and things contrary to God
 - b. The system of the world entices sin through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, 1 John 2:16
4. Because of where it is going
 - a. The system of darkness is passing away and has an end and one day will be thrown into the lake of fire, 1 John 2:8, 17

When John states this command, "do not love the world", he is giving this to us as a warning, because there are worldly forces constantly trying to sway us back into the darkness. Christianity is not something that you do once and then live a life however you want. Christianity is being a child of God and having a heart that is constantly yearning for Him. This is the idea of swimming against the current of the world. The world is aggressively coming against us with their lies and deception, but we must keep our hearts aggressively focused on Jesus.

But as we saw last week in 2 Peter, there are Christians who do not hold fast Jesus as precious, they don't have their hearts settled on the Truth, and they get swayed back into loving the world, and when persecution arises for the Word's sake, they stumble, **2 Peter 2:1-3, 13-14, 18-20**. Demas is another example of this apostasy. He was a fellow-worker with the Great Apostle Paul, named in the ending salutation of the book of Colossians 4:7-15 among some amazing people; but then disaster took place as persecution arose for the Word's sake.

Around 64AD, at a time when Rome was under the authority of Nero, and Christians were being blamed for the burning of Rome, there was an all-out assault on Christianity. Paul had been arrested for the second time, and this time, under very harsh persecution, he was sentenced to death. Paul, now at the end of his life, while in his dungeon, awaiting death and facing martyrdom, he writes a personal letter to his son in the faith Timothy. And in this letter, he mentions Demas again, but this time, in a heart-broken plea to Timothy he writes, "*be diligent to come to me quickly (Timothy); for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica*", **2 Timothy 4:9-10**. We do not know the exact circumstances to make Demas apostasize, but my conjecture is he saw the persecution rising for being a Christian and he fled. He saw the beloved Paul sentenced to death. He saw Christians being burned alive as human torches, he saw Christians being fed to the wild animals in the arena, and, having loved this present world, he abandoned Paul and rejected the gospel.

It is vitally important to guard ourselves from these deceptions, but something I want to make clear, the way we battle the evil of the world is not so much focusing on the deception, but rather focus on the Truth. If your eyes are always fixed on Jesus and His Word, you will never be deceived. That is the mindset I want us to have today and always.

John gives us this warning “do not love the world, or the things in the world”. And now in verse 16, John tells us what these “things” of the world are. Lets read verse 16 again...

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁶ ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ,

- ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκός,
- καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν,
- καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου,

οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστὶ.

These are three elements of persuasion the enemy uses to entice us to sin and to sway us into the darkness of this world. And the commonality between these is they all prey on the “flesh”, which is man’s fallen human nature.

“**the lust of the flesh**” is the intense passion of the fallen man.

“**lust**” is the word epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, an intense craving or desire. This word is a combo of ἐπι – upon + θυμός – strong passion = to set your passion upon or to set your heart upon. The lust of the flesh is setting your heart upon the intense sinful cravings of the flesh.

What is the “**flesh**”? It is the word sarkos, σαρκός in the Greek. The flesh is the humanness of fallen man. It is the nature we have received as sons of Adam, and it is our means of communicating and living in the earth. This is more than just our physical flesh. It also includes our soul; our mind, will and emotions. When the New Testament refers to the “flesh”, it is speaking of the whole of this unregenerate soul and body that we must carry around in this life until our glorification in heaven.

We are a spirit, we have a soul, and we live in a body. We as Christians are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Our spirit has been born again, born from above out from the Father. We are children of God. That is what we are. But while we are on this physical planet, we still have an unregenerate soul and we live in an unredeemed body, Romans 8:23. And we are eagerly waiting with hope and perseverance to walk into glorification with our Savior for all eternity, but until then, this unregenerate “flesh” is how we associate to this physical world.

A couple of weeks ago I read the story of Lazarus to you. In this we saw Jesus’ hatred for sin and in response, He spoke His life-giving words that raised Lazarus from the dead. And this was a type, a foreshadowing of our resurrection unto Eternal Life and being loosed from the bondage of sin and death, John 11:25, 33-44. And we as Christians have received these Words of Life by believing in Jesus and we have Everlasting Life in Him, but unlike Lazarus who was immediately loosed from his graveclothes, we are still carrying around this dead corpse of sin. This “body of death” as Paul calls it, Rom 7:24, is still hanging on us.

But I have good news. Even though we are still carrying around this old flesh, it has been crucified. We have died, our old man was crucified with Christ, therefore sin no longer has dominion over us because we have been freed from sin, Romans 6:4-11. Galatians 6:14 says we have died to the world and the world died to us. This includes the “things” of the world that John is describing.

The enemy will try to use this body of death, this “the flesh”, to tempt us to sin, 2 Peter 2:18, using this list from verse 16, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But thank God this list does not have power over us any longer.

Let’s look at the second method of persuasion from the enemy:

“**the lust of the eyes**”- This is the same lust, epithumia, ἐπιθυμία, but now targeting a specific part of the flesh, that is the eyes. The intense craving or desire of the eyes. Satan uses the eyes as a portal of corruption into the soul, and God uses the ears to speak life into the soul. Jesus constantly said, “*he who has ears to hear let him hear*”, Matt 13:9. “*Faith comes by hearing...*”, Rom 10:17. Hearing is usually associated with understanding and receiving Godliness, while

Satan will use the intense passion of the eyes to drive ungodliness into the soul to fuel the lust of the flesh. Psalm 119:37- *“Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way.”* The eyes focus on the physical realm, this world and all the lust of the material things. They use terms like, “eye candy” or “feast your eyes on this”. While God tells us that we are to *“walk by faith and not by sight”*, I Cor 5:7. *“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”*, Col 3:2. The world allures with its flashy media and fancy advertising, promoting covetousness and lust.

And then to add more fuel to the fire, the system of darkness thrives on the third persuasion: the *“pride of life”*. *“pride”*- alazoneia, ἀλαζονεία, boastful, proud, arrogant, braggart. And the word *“life”* is bios, βίος, (biology) referring to physical life or the livelihood in this world. Not the zoe life of God. John uses this same word in 1 John 3:17- *“But whoever has this world’s goods (bios, βίος)... “whoever has the life of the world...”* What is the life of this world? Its their possessions, materialism, boastfulness; the world thrives on these things. To the world, possessions are their life, it is the gauge on how successful someone is. How sad that is. Because we know that all this stuff will burn away, *“it is all passing away and the lust thereof”*, 1 John 2:17.

These are the same three tactics Satan has been using since the beginning: the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the pride of life. You can see this same method in the garden when Satan tempted Eve, Genesis 3:1-6.

This is how the enemy tries to tempt us; through selfishness, lust and pride. But look at the remainder of verse 16... These “things” are not of the Father, but of the world.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁶ ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ,

- ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκός,
- καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν,
- καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου,

οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν.

It is because we are born again children of God, and we are no longer of this world, that John tells us to not love this world or the things in this world. These “things of the world” are NOT rooted in the Father. And Paul tells us we need to change our mindset and walk in this newness of life. We have died, we have been crucified with Christ, therefore sin no longer has dominion over us because we have been freed from sin, so Paul and John are telling us that we must start *“walking as children of the Light”*, Ephesians 5:8; walk as a new creation in Christ, **Romans 6:4-11**.

Notice that we have a decision to walk in this newness of life. This is why John is warning us to not love this world. Because there is a choice involved. If you lose focus of Jesus, and allow the lust of this world to lure you back into the darkness, then you can be swayed to make the decision to put yourself back under the bondage of sin that you were redeemed from, **Romans 6:12-13**. This is what we read in 2 Peter and saw with Demas.

How do we battle this? With the Word of Truth and we stay focused on Jesus. *“We fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life.”*, 1 Tim 6:12. And it’s not that we focus on what NOT to do, but that we focus on Jesus Christ, His Righteousness and His Word.

Matthew 6:33- *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”*

Galatians 5:16- *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* Notice that progression. We walk in the Spirit and then you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Not the other way around. There is no way to change yourself and be good enough on your own. We must do this by the Spirit.

Jesus says in John 6:63- *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”* To walk in the Spirit is abiding in His Word, and allowing the Truth to guide your life.

Romans 13:14- *“put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”* It’s not that we stop the desires of the flesh, but that we engage the Spirit by putting on the Lord Jesus. And because Jesus conquered sin, and has rescued us out from the authority of darkness, the desires of the flesh no longer have dominion over us.

We need to change our mindset to see ourselves the way our Father sees us, as children of God. When God looks at us, He doesn’t see sin, or our fallen nature, He sees His child, growing into Christ-likeness. And this is the way we need to view ourselves. It is His Word, His Truth through the Spirit of Truth that transforms us by the renewing of our mind. Romans 12:2- *“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.”*

What is it that we are having our mind renewed to? That we are children of God. His Word transforms us to think differently, and it changes our mindset, **Romans 8:5-16**. That last statement in verse 16 is the key to everything we have been talking about today. We are the *“children of God”*.

When you know that you are a child of God, a new creation, an ambassador for Christ with a new citizenship from heaven, the things of the world cannot sway you into darkness because you are in love with Jesus Christ. I am not saying you won’t be tempted, but if you keep your eyes focused on Jesus and His Word, the temptation has no power in your life. Therefore, the world cannot sway us into the darkness because we know *“to whom I belong and to whom I serve”*, Acts 27:23.

What is it that a child has in common with his parent? His seed. We have the Seed of God abiding in us, ^{Luke 8:11; 1 John 3:9; James 1:21}. The Christian who has the Word, God’s Seed growing up inside him will not be swept away in deceit, ^{2 Peter 3:17-18}, because the child of God has the incorruptible Seed of God abiding in them by which we were born again, ^{1 Peter 1:23}.

And as we nurture this Seed, give it good soil, water it, feed it, guard it, the Seed will grow into maturity, ^{Matthew 13:18-23; 1 Peter 2:2}. This is growing into Christ likeness, ^{1 John 3:2; Col 1:28; Romans 8:29}, growing into the image of the heavenly man, being a partaker of the divine nature, ^{1 Cor 15:49; 2 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:16-19; 4:13-16}.

This is how we overcome the world. This is how we overcome the things in the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life and not get swept back into the darkness. When our minds are renewed that we are children of God. The Word is growing up inside us, and we will mature INTO Christ-likeness, ^{1 John 5:4-5}.

And we will live with Him forever in Glory