

Do Not Love the World!

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In 1 John 2 there is a very important Scripture with regard to the believer. It's in verse 15. He says, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

Now, what does it mean to love the world? Well, first of all, we need to define what the world is. The world has to do with all that stands contrary to the revealed will of God. Now, also it says that the world is passing away, so there is a way in which we can also add an extra definition, but we have to be very, very careful. And that is this, the world is also something that is temporal. So the world is, first of all, that which is contrary to the will of God, and secondly, it has the aspect of temporal. So in order to know what the world is, we need to study the Scriptures. And we find those things which God is against. Those ideas, those attitudes, those actions, those words, that are simply opposed to God's Scripture. That is one aspect of the world.

Now, there are some people who are very serious about walking with the Lord, and I praise God for them. And they look at Scripture and they say, God is against this, I'm not going to do it. God's against that, I'm not going to do it. And that's good. But then they also get to this aspect of this thing is passing away, so it must be worldly. And that's a little bit dangerous. Why? There are many things that are passing away, that are not necessarily evil. Let me give you an example. My body is passing away. That doesn't make it evil. The sunset I saw this morning is passing away. But that doesn't necessarily make it evil. Even my marriage with my lovely wife is passing away. But that doesn't make it outside of or opposed to the will of God.

It seems like there's always two extremes in the Christian life. Do you know what I mean? Someone who does not take the commands of God seriously, and simply just living continuously like an unbeliever. And then there's the person who takes God's commandments seriously. But becomes monkish, becomes separated from life. Becomes separated from many of the things that are manifestations of God's common grace in this world. A holy man isn't someone who just goes to church; isn't someone who just reads his Bible, or just prays. A holy man is someone who is involved actively in relationships. It's someone that can look at all the grace that God has given us in this life, whether it's marriage or children or friends or even food, or creation. So many experiences God has given us that are manifestations of His grace. And so many people deny those things. They're opposed to them; they hate them, when actually, they are good gifts of God.

One of the things that I would say is that if you're just like the unbelieving world, you're in trouble. You're worldly. On the other hand, if your desire to obey God has just separated you from almost everything in life, even the good things, and is gradually taking more and more of your joy away, and making you severe and loveless and critical, you've got a problem on the other side. The Christian is someone who is not bound by things. Not even bound by the good things of God. And yet at the same time, knows how to enjoy them and delight in them. One of

the things that I'm so worried about often because of the way I preach sometimes. There's a need to point out sin, but you need to realize that that which is life is not sin. There's so much good in this world. So many things to enjoy. I'm overwhelmed at the goodness of God.

One time, years and years ago, someone told me this and I'll never forget it. They said, "Paul, God put leaves on trees. He didn't put religious tracts on trees." And what they were trying to teach me was this, Paul, just because it doesn't have the title of being religious or even Christian, doesn't make it evil. And I've taken that to heart, because I see that it's biblical. I enjoy my friends. I enjoy even my interactions with many, many lost people that I want to win to the Lord. The times that I've had with them, the conversations, even the laughter I've had with them. I enjoy nature. I enjoy hiking and kayaking. I enjoy laughter, and even though I may get in trouble on this one, I enjoy grabbing my wife in the kitchen and doing a dance through the living room as my children are all applauding and laughing. One of the things also if you're a parent, I want to say this, you know there are so many evils out there for our children, and we have to guard them from those things, but here's something else, you need to replace those things with something good.

If all you ever do is take away the world from your children, but you do not allow them to experience the good graces that God has given us throughout this planet, then you're going to create either a religious hypocrite, or someone who will eventually turn away from the faith, or someone who is severe and loveless and legalistic. And we don't need any of those things. Godliness is not removing yourself to live on some 40 acre farm in Kansas so that the world doesn't touch you. Godliness is living on this planet, interacting with Christians and unbelievers. Seeing all the wonderful things from prayer to Bible study to fasting to walking down a country lane, to poetry. It's being able to take in all these things, and to appreciate them while at the same time loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and seeing that all these good gifts come from Him.