

Love Not the World – 1 John 2:12-17

Introduction – John is not writing this letter because he wants the recipients to doubt the reality of their Christian faith (5:13), but to strengthen their assurance at all levels of maturity. The false teachers are spurious, not the loyal members of the church, for they are in the new age enjoying the forgiveness and knowledge of God along with the power to overcome which had been promised through the prophets (Jer 31:33-34).

Children, Fathers, and Young Men (vv12-14) – Working through a pattern twice for emphasis, John seeks to assure all the Christians of their spiritual state. Representing the various stages of Christian maturity, John encourages all believers of what they have been given.

Children – The newness of being born again is the awareness that you are finally clean, “*your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.*” No sin was too big and there is nothing to be earned. Not only have their sins been forgiven; they remain forgiven. This new life is a gift, all grace, and it comes with a personal knowledge of the Father. The church is blessed with this new, fresh love for God, new life in Christ.

Fathers – The older ones of the faithful should have heard John’s earlier tests and nodded their heads in agreement; they have “*known Him who is from the beginning.*” Having known Him, they have believed His doctrine (2:1-2), they have kept His commandments (2:3), and they have loved the brethren (2:10), for they have been those who walk in the light. The church is blessed with aged men and women who have walked with Jesus in deep communion for decades. These know something of God’s unchanging ways from the beginning.

Young Men – Not only enjoying the forgiveness and fellowship of God, Christians grow as they battle the enemy. Growing Christians understand the antithesis, not only of light and darkness, but of the constant, total war that has existed from Genesis and will continue until the end of this age. But the basis of our battle is our Savior’s victory and our victory through Him, and so John says, “you are strong.” The strength comes because of our abiding in Christ and His Word. Through our reading, study, and meditation on the Word (Psalm 119:9), we see where and how to spread out the victory into all the corners of our existence and dominion. The church is blessed with Christians growing in their courage with a holy impatience to see the next area of Christendom manifest in their lives, their community, and through the world.

Do Not Love the World (vv15-17) – The Christian is to love God and his brethren, but he is not to love the world. World (kosmos) is used in the NT to mean many things; it is being used here to mean the way of thinking/living/walking apart from God and Christ. This is made clear in the description of the things of the world in these verses and some would see a correspondence to the first temptation of Eve (Gen 3:6).

Lust of the Flesh – Temptations can come from within; for while sin no longer reigns as it did in us, remaining sinful tendencies must be daily mortified. Paul tells us that the flesh and Spirit do battle, and Peter tells us to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. You have an enemy within. But it is important to remember that you must battle your fleshly lusts, and not someone else’s. These lusts are within, they are not “in” the alcohol, the food, or the act of making love.

Lust of the Eyes – Temptations can begin from outside as well. David saw Bathsheba and the trouble began. Our present-day advertising dollars understand this well, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways telling us “*you need this!*” Whether you are just “*shopping*” on the internet, at the mall, or Home Depot, things lawful and unlawful can trigger the lust of the eyes. When you cannot be content until you have “that,” beware for you have fallen to the lust of the eyes.

Pride of Life – This refers to an egoistic pursuit of making oneself feel good about oneself, finding ultimate satisfaction in our power, prestige, and possessions – or in being found cool by others. Our culture declares that we need to spend time and money to make sure we learn how to love ourselves before we love others. But we don’t need more pride; we need to humble ourselves and worship God.

Love of the World – This kind of love of this kind of world and the things of the world cannot exist with a love of the Father, for they are at odds with one another (also Matt 6:24). This can be tricky to always identify which is why we need the community of faith (vv12-14) where we encourage one another in our knowledge and love of God, growing in our strength as we abide together in the Word. But it is important to hear the command and honestly ask yourself if you are in the light or in the darkness and which is enticing you. Are you sitting at the feet of the Father or at the feet of the world?

The Fading World – There is another reason John gives for not loving the world (v17); it is transient and fading away. Just as we have overcome the wicked one (v13), so it was the “*last hour*” (v18). The Advent of Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of God the Father brought a change over the world (Matt 28:18). The Judaic age was coming to an end and the new heavens and the new earth were being ushered in. A new Adam reigned and a new order had been initiated over the creation. It is with this confidence in Jesus Christ and in those who are in Christ that John gives this assurance: “*he who does the will of God abides forever.*”