

A Matter of Perspective

1 John Series #7

1 John 2:15-17

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. John has introduced us to some important contrasts

1. Light vs darkness
2. Love vs hate
3. Each of these contrasts is intended to help us clarify both our faith and the sureness of knowing that we are doing the will of God

B. Now John will offer another contrast

1. It is the contrast of loving the world versus loving God
2. If we're going to love God, we cannot love the world – for these two loves are in complete and total contradiction to one another
3. John seems to want us to think about the way we look at things – to develop a perspective that will serve to motivate us to obey God
4. He knows that if we look at things with the wrong perspective that it is easy to fall prey to the world

C. 1 John 2:15-17

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.

For 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 *a/so* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. NASB95

I. UNDERSTANDING THE WARNING

A. What is the “world” that John is writing about?

1. The Greek word is “kosmos”
 - a. it is a word that carries the meaning of that which has been put into order or arranged so as to beautify
 - b. it also is used to mean the earth and that which is created, a place of habitation
 - c. it can be used as a word that summarizes together all that exists
 - d. it can refer to the totality of humanity existence, what we might call society
2. The first problem is to decide how John is using the word

B. In one sense, we're confronted by a statement that seems to contradict some things we know about God and that conflict with our own experience

1. John 3:16 -- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASB95
 - a. the most popular verse in the Bible says that God loved the world
 - b. if God loved the world, and we're to be like God, shouldn't we also love it?
2. Psalm 24:1 -- The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. NASB95
3. Experience tells us that there are many things to love about the world, to enjoy, to desire, to possess – and we have great difficulty thinking that it is necessarily wrong to have any of these things

C. Still, John forces us to deal with his contrast beginning with the idea that we should not Love the world or anything in it

1. Many commentators dodge the bullet by point out that the Greek word "kosmos" has different meanings
 - a. that is true, and we identified some of those meanings earlier
 - b. but if we had to choose one meaning for "world" as John is using it, the most simple and straightforward is the one that means our place of habitation, the physical globe on which we live, and all that it represents
 - c. but more specifically, John is focused not on the creation so much as what human beings have made out of it
2. John says, "For all that is in the world . . . is not from the Father, but from the world"
 - a. if you take that too literally, it becomes a false statement because it is set in conflict with the plain declaration that God is creator of all
 - b. Genesis 1:1 -- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. NASB95
 - c. John 1:1-3 -- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. NASB95

D. The "world" that John is talking about is anything and everything within our realm of Existence that prevents us from loving and obeying God

1. So it is on one hand, potentially everything in the world
2. But, it is specifically those things that take us away from God

II. WE NEED TO KNOW A FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH ABOUT THE WORLD

A. Illustration -- Ron Bridges

In order to experience a love relationship with the Father, we must be separated from this world, free from its entanglements and control.

In working with young people for a number of years, I found that the issue of forsaking the visible world for an invisible God was the most difficult commitment young people have to face. Youth tend to respond out of their feelings. The world, with its pleasurable enticements, certainly appeals to their feelings. John was writing to Christians in his generation who apparently had the same problem. He points out that love for the world negates love for the Father, since the world is an evil system under the control of Satan¹

1. This is an extension of things John has already said
 - a. 1 John 1:5-6 -- This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; NASB95
 - b. 1 John 2:3-6 -- By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. NASB95
2. It's important that we pay attention to whom these things were said
 - a. they are not said to the unsaved, to people without faith in Jesus Christ
 - b. they are said to the saved, to those who were already Christians
 - c. at issue is the temptation to lose confidence in what they already knew, and to fall prey to the allure of things of no value at all

B. What is the fundamental truth about the world that we need to know?

1. It is temporary – it is passing away – it will not last and has no real future
2. Not only that, but even the “lusts” of the world, those strong emotions that make us think that they are so absolutely important, they are passing away as well
3. The implication is clear – they are temporary
 - a. the one who does the will of God, however, looks forward to a definitively different future
 - b. that person who obeys God lives forever
 - c. if you cannot perceive the advantage of obeying God over giving in to worldly lusts, then you will never understand the problem and you will never find the motivation to resist the world's temptations

¹*Discipleship Journal : Issue 41.* 1999 (electronic ed.). Colorado Springs: The Navigators/NavPress.

III. THE BIG THREE DANGERS

A. 1 John 2:16 -- For 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. NASB95

B. That the world offers a dangerous enticement is a fact, but it is one that Christians often ignore or refuse to acknowledge

1. 2 Timothy 4:10 -- for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me NASB95

2. Exactly what happened to Demas, we do not know

a. but generally speaking, we can assume that the world drew him like a magnet away from serving the Lord along with the apostle Paul

b. David Vardaman says: “Demas loved the world, but that isn’t the greatest tragedy. The greater tragedy is that he started with the Father, then turned back.”²

3. That is what John is trying to prevent by reminding us of the big three dangers

C. What are the big three?

1. The lust of the flesh

a. this is the area of physical desires, those things that present themselves as especially satisfying to the flesh

b. we make a mistake to limit this to sexual desire – it is more accurate to think of this as a problem of sensuality, not just sex, but anything that appeals to the physical senses

c. Gen 3:6 says that Eve saw that the tree was good for food – in other words, it appealed to a hunger of the flesh, and Satan used it to make a false promise about its ability to satisfy her hunger

d. Mt 4:3 – when Jesus had fasted 40 days, Satan tempted him to make bread out of stones – the implication being that satisfying the flesh was not only important but reasonable and understandable

e. this is a great danger to us because the world offers many things that promise to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, powerful emotions that demand satisfaction

2. The lust of the eyes

a. this is the area of personal desires – things that are perhaps unique to us as individuals, but powerful emotional longings that each of us desire

b. Gen 3:6 says that the tree was a delight to the eyes -- think of Eve in the most perfect and beautiful garden ever made, surrounded by the beauty and perfection of God’s new creation, and she finds a tree that is a delight to her eyes

²*Discipleship Journal : Issue 51*. 1999 (electronic ed.). Colorado Springs: The Navigators/NavPress.

- c. Mt 4:8 Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offered them to him if he would but bow down and worship him
 - 1) you don't think it was a personal desire of Jesus to rule over all those kingdoms?
 - 2) though Satan's offer is empty and false, don't miss the temptation
- d. there is great danger to us to seek to satisfy and fulfill those things that are personally desirable to us, things that we want whether anyone else does
- e. there are many things in the world that are attractive to us, and entice us with with the equally empty promise that they can fulfill our desires

3. The boastful pride of life

- a. this is the area of self interest, the unholy ambition for self-display and self-glory
- b. Gen 3:6 says that Eve saw that the tree "was desirable to make one wise"
 - 1) was there something in her that made her feel inferior to Adam because she was a woman and not a man (we seem to struggle with one still today)
 - 2) was there something in her that demanded that she feel equal to and adequate in comparison to her husband because God had given to the man the place of authority?
 - 3) was it simply the suggestion by the serpent that she could be as wise as God?
- c. Mt 4:6 tells how Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tempted him to throw himself down and have angels come to his rescue
 - 1) you don't think it was a self interest of the Son of God to enjoy the protection and privilege of his Sonship?
 - 2) you don't think Jesus had a personal interest in showing people who he was, and demonstrating divine power to prove it?

4. The point is that Satan knew exactly where to attack Eve and where to attack Jesus

- a. the particular attacks were vastly different
- b. but the nature of the attacks were exactly the same
- c. he used the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to pull them away from the Father and into his trap

5. Here's the point you need to see: he knows exactly how to attack you and he will use these three areas -- he will modify the attack to pinpoint your weaknesses and he will use your own emotional nature as the attack point

CONCLUSION

A. Remember this: 1 John 2:17 -- The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. NASB95

B. You've got to recognize these methods of Satanic attack for what they are – nothing!

1. They are real, but they won't last
2. They look good, sound good, feel good, etc., but they aren't good
3. They promise to satisfy, fulfill, and complete – but they are empty and false promises
4. They will not last

C. The only thing that will last is God's will

1. This is where true satisfaction, fulfillment and completion is – everything else is only temporary
2. The person who does God's will lives forever

D. Invitation