

Abiding in Christ

1 John 2:15-29

Following John's opening words to the Church and his reasons for writing, he had given several points of blessings, instructions and corrections for the Church to consider. Now as we move on into chapter 2, at verse 15 John is about to give us a very solemn warning about the choices we make in this life.

But even before we get into these verses, let me back up and attempt to bring us all into the same understanding as far as the context of what John is writing or warning the Church about in these next few verses.

I want you to consider for a moment or refocus on the question, "**Who is John writing to?**"

In the Apostle Paul's letters he will often address the very Churches or even individuals he is writing to, "To all who are in **Rome**... to the Church at **Corinth**... the Churches at **Galatia**..., to **Timothy**, a true son in the faith..., and so on.

Even John, as he writes in 2nd and 3rd John he writes "To the **Elect Lady** and her Children..." and "To the beloved **Gaius**..."

But in 1 John, he just begins, "That which we have heard from the beginning... we declare to you..." but he's not real clear who the "you" is. So for the most part Biblical scholars believe that he was writing either to the Church in General to the Church of Ephesus where he had pastored for a number of years. But, in either case, I think we can agree on, and the thing we need to zero in on is this, ***he is writing to Believers and that includes you and me!***

We see it in his generalized opening statements and even in the verses we went through last week, he address the recipients as Children, Young Men, and Fathers: but with each of them having **some sort of connection with the Lord.**

What I want you to hold on to is the fact that he is writing to Believers

And what we read here is that once again, John warns the Church with a very severe and direct warning. He's did it the same way in the earlier passages. So, I think we can also agree on the fact that John doesn't hold back on any of his punches at this point. **He would rather offend someone with the truth than set someone up for destruction by telling them a lie – making them "feel**

good” for a moment, only to have them stand before God having lived their lives outside His will, plan, and purpose.

Beginning in verse John focuses in an a new concern he had for the Church and it is truly a concern we see in today’s Church –

1 John 2

¹⁵ 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. 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. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

When John uses the word “**world**” he uses the Greek word *kosmos*. The word itself is actually used multiple times throughout the New Testament, **at least 152 verses that I can find**. Then there’s another 20 plus verses where the English word “**world**” is used but it refers to “*this age*” – it’s the Greek word *aion*.

But let’s get back to *kosmos*, the world in Greek actually has multiple meanings depending upon the context. It can refer to **a)** the universe itself, or **b)** just this planet we live on, or **c)** even to mankind in general. But in a moral sense, “*kosmos* – or world” through the context of many of the scriptural references, it actually refers to **mankind as fallen**, and/or the **fallen culture** surrounding us.

We see that dual application even in John 3:16-17 –

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world (kosmos) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world (kosmos) to condemn the world (kosmos), but that the world (kosmos) through Him might be saved.

Although he uses the same word, the meaning actually changes, due to the context:

“Go loved fallen mankind so much He sent His Son into the created universe to mingle with the fallen culture, not to condemn fallen mankind, but that fallen mankind through Him might be saved.”

So that helps us understand how we can read here in 1 John 2, “*Do not love the world...*”, and then in John 3:16 read, “*God so loved the world...*”

Even the word “love” used here in 1 John 2 it actually is the Greek word *agape*, which we’ve spoken in length about at other occasions. It has the understanding of a deep and abiding love, a true care and concern, a self-sacrificial commitment to, it is always active, not self-seeking. The word also speaks of “*having a total commitment to.*”

What John is telling us in 1 John 2:15, as he speaks of “*the world*”, is that we should not be **overly or overtly attached** to the things of this **created universe** and of particular, **the fallen culture surrounding us**.

*If you have this kind of an attachment for the things of this world; that system of values and goals where God is excluded, then the fullness of the attachment you should have for the Father can't be in you. **The two cannot co-exist.***

When writing about this issue in the Church, James uses two extremes, “*Friendship with the world is hatred toward God.*” (James 4:4) He uses the light hearted word, *Friendship* and compares it to the severe extreme, *Hatred*.

This is a very serious issue when it comes to our ongoing and growing *fellowship or Koinonia* with God. First of all because our God is a **Jealous God**, who will not share His honor or position with anything or anyone.

Secondly, our God is a **Holy God** who cannot be in communion with the sin of this fallen culture.

And thirdly, it brings about a divided focus or loyalty, even as Jesus told us on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6

²⁴ *"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.*

The interesting thing about that word *mammon* is that it was a Syriac word; a name given to **an idol worshipped as the god of riches**. Albert Barnes tells us: “*It is **not known** that the Jews ever formally worshipped this idol, but they used the word *mammon* to denote wealth. The meaning is, you cannot serve the true God, and at the same time be supremely engaged in obtaining the riches of this world.*”

That's why John tells the Church at large

¹⁵ *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.*”

Or as Jesus said,

“You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Then back in 1 John 2, in verse 16 John goes deeper in his own explanation:

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. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

He speaks of three areas of concern – *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*.

First of all, as he speaks of *lust*, both of the flesh and the eye, *lust* is the Greek word *epi-thy-mía*. It speaks of an **unharnessed, out of control desire**.

Kittle's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament tells us the **root cause of this type of desire**:

“...disobedience, not irrationality, is the evil in *epi-thy-mía*. (This type of desire) is a manifestation of sin. Under the prohibition of (God's) law, it discloses our carnality, our apostasy from God, and our subjection to wrath (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 1:18ff.). In James it is the root of individual sins (1:14–15), while in John it arises out of the world, constitutes its nature, and perishes with it (1 Jn. 2:15ff.). NT statements about *epi-thy-mía* belong to the message of repentance and self-denial. *epi-thy-mía* is **impulse, lust, or anxious self-seeking. It shows us what we really are**. Even after reception of the Spirit, **it remains a danger**.¹

When John breaks it down to “*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes*” he is speaking of two differing but related issues. One could easily translate the first part (*lust of the flesh*) as “*the physical cravings of sinful man*.” It deals primarily with the “*out of control and out of proper balance*” of the desires of the flesh – every fleshly appetite being catered to and supplied to **in excess**. “*The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes*” both incorporate the idea of inordinate and improper sexual and sensuous desires, but neither of them are limited to just sexual sin.

Related to the “*lust of the flesh*,” and as we look at “*the lust of the eyes*” we move more towards the idea of the **mental and emotional coveting and unbalanced desires of every type** – this also brings into play the idea of coveting, as well as jealousy. These then move naturally to greed and selfishness.

From both of these areas spring the third warning against *the pride of life*. There's a lot of directions this could go, but primarily it deals with the idea of personal and vain glory. That continued and deep inner focus, mentally placing one's self in a superior position of place and status due to: giftedness

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 340.

(yes, even spiritual giftedness), abilities, possessions, and/or even appearance, nationality or ethnicity.

John Peter Lange tells us:

*In classical Greek it signifies arrogance and vaunting, with the secondary idea of untruthfulness and boasting about one's rank or wealth. In James it evidently denotes the outbreaks of that arrogance which overlooks the vanity and nothingness of earthly happiness..., This is the vain braggart at whom and with whom one may perhaps smile; as well as the the haughty man who is irritable and injurious*²

Another commentator believes that *John has in mind that hollow arrogance which presumes that it can decide and direct the course of life without God, determine what it will do, gain, achieve, or enjoy.*³

In all of it, pride is never conducive to and is actually set against the humility called for as a Believer, the humility where we should be considering others above ourselves.

And all of these things we crave for in the flesh, lust for with the eyes, and try to maintain with our pride... but the fact is, all of these things are going to burn.

Every one of these issues deal with something that is worldly and temporary. That's why John once again reminds us –

¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Do you want to do the will of God in your life? You can only completely do it by:

- **a) Actively curbing your appetite for the things of this world. Choosing to walk away;**
- **b) Agreeing with Job to set blinders on your eyes – not just in areas of sexual sin, but in all areas contrary to the will and plan of God in your life;**
- **c) Recognizing that all that we have is from our Father in heaven. The Lord truly does give and take away. We should never carry with us any amount of sinful pride.**

Along with these words from John, we also need to remember the warning of James –

James 1

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and

² John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, et al., [A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1, 2, 3 John](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 65.

³ R. C. H. Lenski, [The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 426.

every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

In verse 17 John said *the world is passing away*. He picks back up on that in verse 18 –

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

If John was led to believe that the time he was living in was the *Last Hour*, then shouldn't we have that same attitude? It's so easy to get caught up in the things of this world, that's why he warned the Church about our flesh, eyes, and pride. All these things tie us down to the temporary.

But John's warning isn't just about how we live and our internal battles, he also is warning the Church against those who would come from the outside to destroy the Church and the message of the Gospel. Yes, there will be that ONE who comes, who will be known as THE Antichrist, but John says there are many even back in the First Century that were in league with THE Antichrist and even today live their lives against Christ in every way possibly, even to the point of working at twisting the Gospel, confusing the Saints and declaring lies – proclaiming it to be the Truth.

Even Paul tells us of the “*falling away*” that will happen in the Last Days. They fall away, because they are being deceived by these who are antichrist: these who are false teachers, and false prophets.

Some of those, those who John is speaking of actually “**came out of the Church**”. But John makes it clear, they **never were really a part of the Church**. Some believe that John was speaking more so of the fact that *they went out from us, but they were not of us* as to the Church in Jerusalem. Since it was a fact that many false prophets and teachers would rotate through the Churches of other cities and lands, declaring they were from the Apostles.

Others believe that John is speaking of those who, though they never were born again by the Holy Spirit of God, through their own natural gifting and talents rose up within the leadership of the Church and had taken on places of leadership and primary teachers within various fellowships. In their places of leadership and teaching they were then proclaiming false doctrine and **leading the Churches away from the purity and the simplicity of the gospel**.

Personally I move with this latter group. Individuals rising up in local Churches who were naturally gifted, but not spiritually directed or empowered; and most probably **never even Born Again**.

They were false converts, false disciples, and false teachers. They undoubtedly had that **look and feel of religion**, but there was **never a true experience with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**.

There was never a conversion in their lives.

Never a heartfelt confession of sin and a cry for forgiveness.

Never bringing into their lives the very Spirit of Jesus.

But John had a greater hope and encouragement for those he was writing to, and I believe we can receive that today.

Look beginning at verse 20 –

²⁰ But you, you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

John understood that his intended audience had *heard the fullness of the Gospel message*. By and large, these weren't new converts, unfamiliar with the fullness of the Gospel message. He knew they understood what he was saying and that they knew it was true.

So then he **brings another test**. This time he focuses on the test of those who were **liars**; and the primary test is that of denying Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Once an individual denies that Jesus is the Messiah, the very hope of Israel, the Savior of the world; and as he wrote in his Gospel record, He was with God in the beginning and He was God, now come in human flesh; *for those who deny that, they are truly denying God – the person of God, the plan of God and the purposes of God throughout all of His creation*.

If you deny the fullness of who Jesus Christ is according to the Word of God, then you are denying the reality and the truth of the Father.

You cannot have one without the other.

And John wants the Church to hold on to that truth with all they have, because the enemy is trying to steal it.

²⁴ Therefore let **that abide in you which you heard from the beginning**. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.
²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life.

They knew the truth. As long as they lived and walked in the truth, they would continue on in Fellowship with the Son and the Father. I'm reminded here of Jesus' teaching in John 15

John 15

¹ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

⁴ "Abide in Me, and I in you. As **the branch cannot bear fruit of itself**, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, **bears much fruit**; for without Me you can do nothing.

⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."

It is through our "abiding in Him" that we hear His voice, we have His covering, and we bear fruit for His Kingdom's purposes.

²⁶ These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

NOTES ARE NOT AVAILABLE FROM THIS POINT ON

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.