

Love Not the World

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15–17).

Good Earth and the Ungodly World

The world that John exhorts us not to love is not the earth that God created with His Word, “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). We can only marvel at the beauty and splendor of God’s creation. Certainly, we can love and enjoy that which God saw to be “very good” including the gift of life, which He gave to each of us. The world discussed in this text is the ungodly world, which is the creation of the enemy of souls, Satan. The world is tempting and enticing to man—even for a child of God, the danger of falling away into the love of the world is ever present. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus said that we “are not of the world” even though we are in the world, and He prayed that we would be protected from the evil in the world (John 17:15,16).

We often feel like the Old Testament traveler, Lot, who lived among the sinful people in Sodom. The ungodly life of his neighbors vexed (distressed) him daily (2 Pet. 2:7,8). God sent two angels to Sodom, who commanded Lot to leave with his family before He destroys the city. They were told to not look back at the city when they left. Lot’s wife looked back and was changed to a pillar of salt. Apparently her heart had become attached to some part of that ungodly life in Sodom, to the world.

Things of the World

Even though the Holy Spirit that dwells in us is troubled by the sinful world around us, the things of the world are still attractive to our flesh. Our carnal portion has its focus on temporal things. The things that attract each of us can differ at various phases of life but the danger and consequences of sin are the same for all of us, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

Some “things of the world” that are dangerous to one’s faith life, are not necessarily sin in and of themselves, but anything that becomes so important in our lives that it continually draws one away from services and fellowship with God’s children, can have the same consequence of something that is sin. Then the most precious matter in life is no longer being a child of God, dwelling in the kingdom of God.

Paul writes to the Colossians, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1,2). Jesus instructed when He preached the Sermon on the Mount: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19–21).

If We Love the World, God’s Love Is Not in Us

As Scripture indicates, a person cannot travel with a divided heart. The elders have instructed over the years that one cannot walk with one foot in the world and the other in God’s kingdom—such travel doesn’t end well. For a time, a traveler can

hide a divided heart and deceive men, but in time the situation is revealed. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:13). Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).

Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes

The love of the world is close to us, because our carnal, earthly portion only values earthly things. The flesh will not inherit heaven, so it desires the things of the world that are pleasing to the senses. James writes: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14,15).

Apostle Paul describes his own experience with the flesh in his letter to the Romans: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:18,19,24). Paul found that, of himself, he was powerless over the flesh and he asks, “Who shall deliver me?” The child of God is often sorrowful over the sin that dwells in him. This brings doubts, as Paul experienced also, how will I, such a sinful person, make it to heaven? Paul found the answer through faith: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:25).

Pride of Life

Pride is common to man. The disciples asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest?” Jesus gave the example of a child as the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He also said that a person must humble himself to the place of a child to enter into the kingdom of heaven. This is a difficult battle for sin-fallen man, oh, how often we offend others because of pride. We are so slow to humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness; our pride holds us back. We offend the ones closest to us at home many times. A proud one can cause much strife in the home. We must subject our flesh to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. This means that we must humble our proud flesh to receive correction and humbly ask for forgiveness from those we have offended.

The pride of life can be that we want to be “someone,” we may seek the glory, praise, and honor of the world. It can happen that our drive to succeed at our career, business, or even some leisure activity, can consume so much of our time and resources that family relations suffer and fellowship with God’s children decreases. This can cause our hearts to become cold and the desire to hear God’s Word diminishes. It is extremely important that we would put in the correct perspective and balance whatever it is in life that causes this danger.

Not of the Father but of the World

The love for the things of the world, fleshly lusts, and pride are not from God or the Holy Spirit but rise up from our flesh, the world, and Satan—our threefold enemy. Our text tells us that the world and the things of the world perish, but the promises of God’s Word are eternal. We travel with the battling congregation toward our heavenly treasure. Each of us experience our own battles on this way, often feeling weak, tempted, and tried. It pays to continue to “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12). Jesus promises: “Great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:12).

Ray Waaraniemi

Discussion Questions:

1. As referred to in this writing, Colossians 3:2 says: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on this earth.” What things can help us to heed this instruction in our daily lives? What does this mean to us?
2. What do you think caused Lot’s wife to “look back” when she left the city? Does this happen today? Could it happen to us?
3. In what ways can the inherent sin of pride cause strife in our homes, with our family and friends? Is it difficult to humble ourselves to accept that we fall often in this way? Discuss this battle. How does God help with this?
4. Discuss and share blessings that God gives His children when they strive to be obedient to His Word and “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

May 2014 *Voice of Zion*