

Lesson 9: “The Dangerous World of Me”**1 John 2:15-17****Craig Crawshaw**

The apostle John begins his letter with the positive proclamation that God is light – perfectly pure in every way. He continues by positively proclaiming that Jesus is our heavenly Advocate for sin, having satisfied the wrath of God for sin by His sacrifice on the cross. He then gives positive tests of how we can be confident of our faith – (1) obedience to God’s will, (2) abiding in fellowship with Christ, and (3) loving others with His unconditional love.

In today’s passage, we now see John challenge our faith as to negative things we must avoid. And he first hits on the critically important avoidance of **WORLDLINESS**, which he refers to as “loving the world.” He will make it clear that this “love of the world” is really love of self – making it all about “me.” And so I have chosen to title my message “The Dangerous World of Me.”

Do we dare venture into a consideration of the world that revolves around me, myself and I? It is a dangerous and scary place, to be sure – and a very real place. But that is where John will take us in today’s lesson. So be forewarned that you just might find yourself lurking in its shadows. But John wants to lead you and me out into the marvelous light of loving God. So let us begin the journey.

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 from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

EXAMINING “LOVE” and “WORLD”

First, note that John’s word for “love” is indeed the Greek word “agape” – meaning that this is a choice not of emotion or passion, but of willful choice. We must choose and will to not love this “dangerous world of me.”

Second, note that John’s word for “world” is the Greek word “cosmos.” “Cosmos” at its root meaning refers to “order” – making order out of chaos. Thus, he says don’t unconditionally love this world of ordered chaos. But this word is used over a hundred times in the Bible with many different usages. “World” can refer to the world of people, as in John 3:16. But John is clearly not condemning the love of the world of people. He has already taught us to love one another.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him*

“World” can also refer to the world of creation. But John is clearly not condemning the love of God’s marvelous creation. Notice in this proverb of Solomon that Jesus, the Son of God, is being personified as wisdom, who was with God the Father from the beginning.

Proverbs 8:30 *Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the world, His earth ...*

So here in 1 John, “world” is used in its third primary sense, that is, the world of evil desires and pleasures. John clarifies his “love not the world” by following up with “nor the things of the world” and then further clarifies in verse 16 with specifying the “things of the world.” It is interesting that the Greek word for “world” – “cosmos” – has evolved in our English language as “cosmopolitan” and “cosmetics”, both which have the “flavor” of the third Biblical meaning of the word “world” in its emphasis on desires and pleasures. Selah! (Think about it!)

LOVING GOD – THE OPPOSITE OF LOVING THE WORLD

Now note in verse 15 that John teaches that the exact antitheses of loving the world of pleasures is loving God. And furthermore he teaches that the two are mutually exclusive, meaning if you love one you can’t be loving the other. In this way, loving the world and loving God are like oil and water – they can’t mix. John is being very “black and white” here, saying you can’t have it both ways. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ teaching.

Luke 16:13 *No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.*

“Mammon” refers to the evil things of the earth, specifically that which money can buy.

Essentially this is another test of our faith. “Loving God” is a way of designating a Christian. And to love the world of things is a way of designating one who is not a Christian. John is not just challenging our love of things; he is challenging our very faith and our love of God. This is brutal, but worthy of serious contemplation. You see how we are venturing into the “dangerous world of me.” And now, John gets even more specific and probing.

THE 3 “THINGS OF THE WORLD” (verse 16)

1. Lust of the flesh
2. Lust of the eyes
3. The boastful pride of life

For a cursory understanding we can think of these 3 as:

SELF, STUFF and STATUS

or PLEASURE, POSSESSIONS and POWER

“Lust of the flesh” refers to any behavior regarding the body or self, that is improper or out of balance. Areas of concern could be excessive body building, body enhancement, diets, pornography, tattooing, age reduction techniques, homosexual experimentation, sexual stimulation or just time in front of the mirror. If it is about making “me” look or feel better I am in the “danger zone.”

“Lust of the eyes” refers to any fascination with “stuff” and the acquisition of possessions, whether it be cars, houses, jewelry, collectables, toys, cell phones, computers or other technology. If I need the “newest,” “fastest,” “trendiest,” or “most expensive” I am in the danger zone. If I find myself spending more time with my “stuff” than with God I am definitely in the “dangerous world of me.”

“The boastful pride of life” is about achieving status and power and recognition. If I find myself tooting my own horn or bragging about an accomplishment or fishing for a compliment I am in the danger zone. If I am willing to compromise my integrity for promotion or position, I am definitely in the “dangerous world of me”. And we know pride is the sin that brought down the devil, and it will bring me down as well.

MIRRORING THE TEMPATIONS IN THE GARDEN AND THE WILDERNESS

John’s 3 worldly temptations mirror how Satan tempted Eve

Genesis 3:6 *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

“Good for food” = lust of the flesh; “delight to the eyes” = lust of the eyes; “desirable to make one wise” = the boastful pride of life.

John’s 3 worldly temptations mirror how Satan tempted Jesus

Matthew 4:2 *And after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” This is tempting the “lust of the flesh”*

Matthew 4:5-6 *Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You ... so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’” This is tempting “the boastful pride of life.”*

Matthew 4:8-9 *Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me. This is tempting the “lust of the eyes.”*

You can be sure John’s 3 worldly temptations are how Satan will tempt you!”

NOTE: Any desires along these 3 lines are “not from the Father” but “from the world.” Beware!

WISE WARNINGS TO HEED

√ LOVING THE WORLD LEADS TO SEPARATION FROM GODLY INFLUENCE

2 Timothy 4:10 *For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.*

√ THE “RULES APPROACH” TO MASTERING WORLDLINESS DOESN’T WORK

Colossians 2:10-23 *If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” ... These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*

√ CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD IS A SPIRITUAL DEATHTRAP.

TRANSFORMATION OF MIND AND RENEWAL OF HEART IS THE ANSWER

Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

WORLDLINESS EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Which do you seek with more fervor: the things of this world, or the things of God?
2. Is your confidence more in the money you have (or wish you had), or in the faithful God who has promised to supply all your needs?
3. Which gives you the greater joy: spending money for your agenda, or giving money to further God’s agenda?
4. What more dominates your thoughts: ways to get ahead and further your dreams, or ways to help others further their dreams?
5. Are your prayers to God mostly about asking Him to grant your wishes, or are they mostly about asking Him to help you fulfill His wishes?
6. When you think about the future, do you think mostly about your future on earth, or your future in heaven?

Dear brothers and sisters. avoid like the plague the “dangerous world of me.” Don’t allow your focus to be about self, stuff and status. A life of pleasure-seeking, possession-seeking and power-seeking will surely not satisfy. Just look at the supposed “happiness” of the “rich and famous.” Make the willful choice to love not the things of the world, but to love God first and only.

As the old chorus says:

This world is not my home, I’m just a-passin’ through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from heaven’s open doors.
And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

Do you love Jesus supremely? Then prove it.