

1 John 2:15-16

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[0 : 00] And please send in your Bibles to 1 John. It's been a while hasn't it since we've been here but we're continuing our series in 1 John.! You'll find that on page 1021 in the Black Bibles. 1 John and chapter 2.

And we'll read in chapter 2 from verses 15 to 17. So 1 John 2.15 on page 1021.

This is what the Holy Spirit says.

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.

For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world.

[1 : 18] And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. Let us pray.

Our Father, as we come to listen to your word, we pray that what we know not that you would teach us. What we have not would you give us. And what we are not would you please make us.

In Jesus' strong name. Amen. Well, you've been to the doctors. And you were in an accident a while ago. But you're doing alright. You're healing up okay.

The doctor is overall quite happy with how you're doing. But given your circumstances, given the injuries that you got, given what happened in the accident, he thinks you might be at risk. You're in the at risk category for certain things.

For certain diseases. And so he wants you to be on the lookout for symptoms for various things. In many ways, that is precisely what John is doing in tonight's passage.

[2 : 27] You may remember that the church that he is writing to has been through a very difficult time. They have been through something of a split, which we'll see more details about next time.

And he wants to assure them that they're doing okay. They're doing well. They were right to stay where they were. They were right not to leave.

And this last time we looked at this short poem in verses 12 to 14. And in that poem we saw a little bit about how they made it.

How they got through that really difficult time. They did it together. So he talks to lots of different groups to highlight that they did it all together. And they did it especially with a simple focus on the gospel.

So in verse 12, where he calls them little children. Or end of verse 13, where he calls them children. That's when he's talking to the whole church. You'll see, I'm writing to you little children because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

[3 : 32] And what's the point of that? At the end of verse 13, I write to you children because you know the Father. Very basically, they are the forgiven children of the Father. And they held on to that.

And that is how they got through this very difficult time that they went through. And I mentioned as well that this poem acts sort of as a hinge from the introductory section of the book to all the rest of it with sort of the main body.

It's like a bridge from one part to the next. And so we're just getting into this main body of the text tonight. And so before he was speaking in pretty broad terms.

Of the importance of the true message of the apostles. The message of Jesus Christ, man and God. And he's spoken how important it is to have a right view of sin, hasn't he?

He's highlighted how important it is to take sin seriously. And he's worked to assure them as well that they do know the Father and he can tell because they obey his commands.

[4 : 39] So that's a brief summary of what he was saying in pretty general terms before this hinge. And now he's kind of going into more detail. And so to start with he wants to warn them that they are in the at risk category.

For whatever reason, they're in an at risk category for something. And so in these few short verses he's telling them five things.

Some will spend quite a while on, some will be very brief. So don't worry. First of all, he gives them the warning. Then he tells them what the danger is. Then he tells them the symptoms to look out for.

Then he gives them some perspective. And then a promise. So the warning, the danger, the symptoms, the perspective, and the promise.

First of all, the warning in verse 15, very clearly. Do not love the world or the things in the world.

These people are at risk of loving the world and that which is in the world.

[5 : 48] And we need to take some time to figure out what he means. Because immediately, when John says this, you can imagine two people standing up to object. But these two people will help us understand better what John means.

So the first person stands up and said, hang on a minute, John. Don't you believe that God made the world? Don't you believe what the Bible says?

That God made the world and he saw it and said, that is very good. So how come we're not supposed to love the world if it is made by God and if it was good?

And it's true. God did make the world. John is surely not disagreeing with that. And he is not saying, like many philosophers of that time and even false teachers in the church would have said, he is not saying that physical things are bad things.

He is not saying that material things or physical things are inherently bad. Neither is he saying that there's absolutely nothing you can appreciate or enjoy in this world.

[6 : 58] There are plenty of things that you can appreciate and enjoy and thank God for. But we do need to remember that this is the creation that rebelled against the creator.

And mankind especially in Adam and ever since Adam has been living in hostile opposition to God. So when John says don't love the world, he means don't love this God-hating, rebellious system that you are living in.

Because that's what you're living in. You're living in a very God-hating, rebellious system. And so that objector, he's satisfied with that answer. Then the next objector comes up.

It says, hang on again John. Literally the most famous thing you ever wrote was God so loved the world. What's up with that?

God can love the world but we can't? Well what did God's love for the world mean? Well in that very same verse it says it meant for him to send his son to save the world.

[8 : 09] Without the world, in that verse it says everyone is on the way to perish, aren't they? They need to change course to trust in the son.

Otherwise the world is perishing. And so God had to send his son to save the world. And so what kind of love is that? It's not the love that you earn, is it?

It's not he loved them as sort of an earned admiration. It was just mercy for rebels. I saw a pastor from America who had tweeted, I think possibly yesterday, said to understand that verse, imagine that, if you're familiar with Lord of the Rings, imagine that it said, for God so loved Mordor.

It's not that he really liked Mordor. And it's not that Mordor was any good. It's evil. But God loved Mordor.

That's what the world is like. And we're all orcs, basically. And so we can't love the world the same way God loves the world.

[9 : 22] We can't save the world, can we? His love for the world would have to be unique as the creator, and as the only one who could save the world. So we shouldn't expect to love God in exactly the same way.

But there is a kind of love we can have in terms of, we shouldn't hate the people in the world. But it doesn't mean that we should be unkind to people in the world.

We should want people in the world to be saved through Jesus Christ. And so it's not hating our neighbours, and it's not being unkind to anyone. That's not what John wants when he says, do not love the world.

And so the second person is happy, and he sits down. But that's the warning. Do not love the world. Don't let this God-hating system that you live in, or anything in it, get a grip on your heart, and command your admiration, and your affection.

That is what they're at risk of. And why is that so bad? So secondly, the danger. Why is it so bad to love the world? Well, it lies in this stark contrast that John gives at the end of verse 15.

[10:40] That you cannot love the world and love the Father. So verse 15, if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Now we heard very helpfully from Paul this morning, from Deuteronomy, about loving God. And I recommend getting the recording if you missed that. And so tonight we need to think about the opposite, don't we?

These are two opposites. Loving God is one option. But if you're not doing that, the opposite is you're loving the world. And everyone is either doing one or the other. If you love the world, you don't love the Father.

Not if you love the world, your love for the Father is a bit lacking. You don't love him. Even if you think you do, you don't. And here he's writing more concretely than he was in his more general introduction.

So before he's talking in more sort of general terms about light and darkness. And so the message he was preaching very clearly was God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

[11:49] And now instead of speaking generally about darkness versus light, here it's about the world versus the Father. So from darkness and light to the world versus the Father, and you can only love one of them.

When I was little, it was, I think, pretty much accepted in our house that the worst thing that could possibly happen was for my little brother to get the remote control for the TV.

If he got it, my sister and I had absolutely no say in what happened. And we would never be happy with the results. When he had it, we had no control over what was going on.

You might be able to try and negotiate with him, but he was a younger sibling so he had it pretty good. So negotiating with him is pretty hard. He had pretty much everything he wanted. But either, so either the Father is in control of your affections or the world is in control of your affections and the results will be very different.

And there will not be any negotiating happening. No deals ever. So while John's readers have done really well through this crisis to withstand and to remain united, remain united with the apostles, remain united with the church, they need to be sure that that wasn't all in vain, don't they?

[13:19] It's good to still be in fellowship with the church and hold to the right doctrine, but if our love is mainly for the world rather than for the Father, what's the point?

So, do not love the world that is so at odds with God. So at odds with the Father. That is what he wants to say. If you love the world, you do not love the Father.

That's the danger. Nothing could be worse. Now, if I just asked you, do you love the world? I'd imagine most of you would say, well, of course not.

There's no way I'd love the world. Or if I told you, which one do you love, the Father or the world? I'm pretty sure you'd mostly say the Father. But as Paul mentioned this morning as well, the heart is deceitful above all things.

And so it's not a matter, it's not as easy as just asking you, which do you love? You can't trust your own heart. And so John needs to tell them the symptoms. So there are three symptoms here of loving the world.

[14:34] And we see those in verse 16. This is a way of testing where our allegiances are. So first of all, the lust of the flesh or the desires of the flesh.

I think some translate this quite helpfully as cravings. You could say urges. So in the world, people are driven by the desires or the lust of the flesh.

It's the same word in Greek as lust. Desires or lust. But he's not just talking about sexual lust or desire. It is helpful to translate it as desire because it is a more general category.

It is... But sexual desire is included in that, but in broader. Sexual desire and just lust and desire for anything in general is what he means.

It means any kind of craving or urge. That is how the world operates. He's not saying that desiring anything is wrong. He's not promoting Buddhism here. And he's not saying that buying or acquiring things, even nice things, is wrong.

[15 : 41] But what's particular about the way the world works is that people are driven by their cravings or their feelings or their urges. And there are some extreme examples these days, aren't there?

People will have a particular urging or feeling to want to drastically change their bodies and their legal status and how people talk about them based on how they feel inside.

But there are plenty of ways in which we see this every day. Ways that we are more susceptible to falling into. I think we can all think of cravings or urges that rule our actions in some way or another. Whether or not those actions are sinful in themselves that the world's way of deciding is based on I feel this and I want this. Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple, understands this really well.

And he uses it to his advantage. What does his company make? They make machines, don't they? Many people have them. I'm using one right now to read my notes.

[16 : 52] And it does a decent job. They're well-designed machines. They're useful. But Tim Cook knows that the most effective way to sell his machines to this world is not by persuading you that this will be useful.

Or that this will be something that you will want to use in everyday life. He knows that it's more seduction than persuasion. He once said this, a great product depends on how it makes you feel. the best way to sell something is really to appeal to the desires of the flesh, the lust of the flesh. Don't just make something that will be really useful or even beautiful, but make something that will make people feel good.

So that's the lust of the flesh or the desires of the flesh. Second, there's the desires of the eyes. So in addition to being driven by urges and cravings, the world also follows its eyes everywhere. In the world, people see something and they must have it. So she's walking home, walking by the shops, sees something in the window, glances, looks again, walks in and buys it because she must have it.

[18 : 16] he's just sorting something really banal on his computer. He sees an unhelpful image at the bottom of the browser screen. He looks again and before even giving himself the time to think, he's clicked.

Driven by the eyes. And everyone in the world knows this and uses it to their advantage. No shop is going to wait for you to decide, oh I think I need to buy some clothes.

To go and buy some clothes. Or I think I need to go and buy some food. To go and buy some food. Or anything. So they're going to spend thousands or even millions on just putting pictures of their products in front of you wherever they go.

Don't they? We're surrounded by them. Because they know that if you can see it, you will want it. They know they can appeal to the desires of the eyes.

And if you can't do that, like with a perfume, you can always appeal to the desires of the flesh. And do an advert based on that. Or even, you could do it based on this third symptom that he mentions, the pride of life.

[19 : 29] So it's the desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and finally the pride of life. So one commentator, quite helpfully, calls it the lust for advantage and status.

boasting. Sometimes it's explicitly boasting and just picking yourself up and telling people how amazing you are. Sometimes it's just working really hard to impress people.

That's the goal. Lusting, advantage, and status. So someone who loves the world, I think Martin Luther perfectly described when he encapsulated the essence of sin, it's man turned in on himself. Man turned in on himself. That's what a sinful man is. It is self-worship. That is what the world wants you to do.

The world would love you to worship yourself. So that you say, whatever I want, I will get. Whatever I see, I will want. And I'll do all of it to my own praise, my own glory.

[20 : 34] Whereas of course, what we all need to hear is, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love him.

You shall love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength. I don't know about you, but I can get worried when I look at these symptoms and how easy it is to see how quickly they apply to me.

And if these are true of us, we are loving the world and we are not loving the Father. Well, to encourage us to love the Father and to persevere, John has two final things to say.

So next, we've seen the symptoms, so now we get some perspective. The perspective. In verse 17, John helps us with that and he says, the world is passing away along with its desires.

The world's passing away, it's fading. It doesn't seem like it though, does it? We've got huge, great big nations and movements and companies, but they are all fading.

[21 : 46] The UK is fading. America is fading. China and India are fading. Russia is fading. Microsoft and Google and Apple are all fading.

the advertising industry is fading. It doesn't always feel like it, but that is true. It's fading. It doesn't want you to see that it's fading, but it is.

It's precisely what that hymn says. Fading is the world bling's pleasure, all its boasted pomp and show. I think pleasure, boasted pomp and show perfectly summarizes those three symptoms. But it's all fading. Solid joys, and lasting treasure, none but Zion's children know. John has actually spoken a little bit about this in the introductory section, but with different language.

There he was talking about darkness rather than the world, and he said that the darkness is passing away. Why? Because the light is already shining. God is light, and the light is shining because the last days are here.

[22 : 54] Jesus has come, so it is thanks to Jesus that it is fading away. So that's in 2 verse 8. The darkness is passing away, and we'll see more about this new age next week.

So to love the world makes as much sense as to love a rain cloud, or to fall in love with the rolling closing credits of a film.

It really makes no sense whatsoever, even though it doesn't feel like it. the world is very good at hiding that from you. So finally, the promise. The promise in verse 17.

Whoever does the will of God abides forever. If we love the Father as his forgiven children, remember that's what they are from that little poem, they are the Father's forgiven children.

If we love him, we will obey him. We will know solid joys and lasting treasures if we know him and love him and obey him.

[24 : 06] And these are joys that we will be tasting tonight when we come to the table. This week, the world will be vying for your attention and for your affections.

it desperately wants you to love it. One minister, when he took his people to the Lord's table, he gave a brilliant illustration, which I've always found really helpful, of the security instructions they give on an aeroplane.

And they always say, you know, your exits will be here and here. And they'll sometimes say, look out, your nearest exit may be behind you. Your nearest exit may be behind you.

And this is why he said it. The world will be clamouring for your attention and your love this week. You will be under attack from that seduction all week.

But the best exit may be behind you, meaning, it may be right here. You will have been to the Lord's table. You will have been raised to heaven to feast on Christ, to feed on the Lamb who was slain.

[25 : 24] You will be able to say this week as the world is attacking you, this world is fading and I tasted the thing that is lasting last Sunday. And I know that that was real.

It was only a little sample, but it was real. That was the solid joy, that was the lasting treasure. I know in comparison with what I tasted last Sunday night, this is fading.

All of this that wants me to love it, to have to crave it, to want to get all as much pride as I possibly can, all of this is fading.

But that little sample I tasted Sunday night, that was real and that will last forever. I will have eternal life. And what is eternal life but to know Jesus Christ and God who sent him.

So the world will not have my heart because I will go through that exit that's behind me remembering what I tasted. I will love the Father and do his will.

[26 : 35] And we can pray Savior, if of Zion city I through grace a member am, let the world deride in pity. I will glory in your name.

Let us pray.