

Wrong Kind of Love 1 John 2:15-17 (NIV) bible-sermons.org Nov.8, 2009

We have stepped back in time to the end of the first century and sat with the churches in Asia as they read a letter from the last living Apostle, John the Beloved. He has given us some guidelines to help us distinguish false teachers from true. He's also helped us with tests to assure us of our salvation. Our love for one another and our obedience to Jesus confirms that we have a new heart through the work of Jesus' death and resurrection. (1John 1:7)

Last week we heard about the three stages of spiritual growth. Growth has to do with taking in the mild of the Word, overcoming the influence of the evil one in our life, and knowing our heavenly Father. Someone that missed the sermon asked an attendee what it was about. They told him, "Quit fooling around and grow up!" Well, I guess you could put it that way. I saw it as a challenge to steadily, seriously move toward all God would have us be in Christ Jesus.

In stark contrast to the loving relationship we are to have with one another and with the Father, John goes on to describe the wrong kind of love. It is a love that is contrary to the love believers are supposed to possess as a first fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world.* To understand this command of John to the churches, and what the Spirit would say to us through this text, we must understand John's use of the word "world" (*Kosmos*). He can't be saying that we shouldn't enjoy creation for God pronounced all the He made as very good. (Genesis 1:21) The heavens declare the glory of God. (Psalm 19:1)

I have been taking advantage of our clear fall night skies to commune with God while enjoying the awesome sight. I just sit and talk with Him and marvel at the occasional shooting star. John's not telling us that we have to give that up. Some of you really enjoy mountain biking or hiking. God isn't telling you that you must now stop. (Acts 14:15; Romans 1:20) He actually speaks to mankind through His creation. We certainly should not turn away from that general revelation.

John isn't talking about humanity, for John of all people has related that the Father's love for humanity is seen in Him sending His Son. (John 3:16 uses the same word for "world" but obviously with a different connotation.) He has commanded us to love one another and to even love our enemies. (Matthew 5:44)

Kosmos is the term John uses in this letter for the spiritual order that has ruled the planet since the fall in Genesis chapter 3. (Jesus used it this way in John 15:19) We could call it the ways of man under the rule of the evil one. John clarifies his meaning in the last chapter of this letter. **19** *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.* 1John 5:19 (NIV) Jesus also referred to Satan as the Prince of this world. (John 12:31) John will go on in our passage for today and describe what he means by the things in the world.

It is interesting to me that John uses the word *agape* for love. It is the kind of love we are to have toward God and one another, a love that comes from one's

Commented [notes1]: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Gal 5:22-23 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Gen 1:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Psalms 19:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. Acts 14:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Matt 5:44 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. John 15:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. John 12:31 (NIV)

determined will. So John is giving us an imperative command not to choose to set our affections on the world system or the things in the world. (Colossians 3:1-2) Our unconditional love is to be reserved for God first and secondly those made in His image. That is the great commandment. (Mark 12:30)

John continues, *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Here is another of John's stark contrasts. If you love the world system, the immoral and violent entertainment, the power that comes with ruling, getting all you can for personal pleasure, then you can't say you love God. (James 4:4) Who you love you serve, and Jesus said you can't serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24) You are going to end up loving one or the other.

Let's allow John to present us with his own description of what he is talking about. ¹⁶ *For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.* John presents us with three areas in which the world can capture our heart. They aren't new. We see them in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:6) We see them in the wilderness temptation of Jesus. (Matthew 4:3-10) John succinctly and descriptively declares that there is an unholy trinity of desire that captures the heart of man.

The first is *the cravings of sinful man.* The unregenerate nature craves things to fill the void in the heart, a void that is there because of the lack of a relationship with God through Jesus. What does sinful man crave? You name it. Those cravings come in all types of things, from physical to emotional to even spiritual wickedness. (Galatians 5:19-21) They are always destructive because they keep us from the light and lead us to darkness.

We can crave anything God made or man invented, putting it before God, and loving it instead of God. Food, Sports, relationships, hobbies, pleasures, experiences, religion, almost anything can be loved by the wicked heart of man. Why is it wicked? Because we are loving and serving the thing rather than the Creator and Giver of the thing. (Romans 1:25)

I believe this not only breaks the heart of God who loves us, but also rouses His righteous anger at the arrogance of man to rebel against goodness of God for mere temporal things. Imagine after loving your child and giving them their every need throughout their maturing years only to have them tell you that they don't need you or care about you, they just want to inherit what you have. It's worse than that, for none of us is perfect, but God is the perfect Father and is in His very nature goodness and love. Rejecting God is rejecting His nature for selfishness.

To get a sense of why idolatry is so abhorrent to God, imagine giving your child a gift, a good gift that you would like for them to enjoy. Instead of merely enjoying it, they become fixated with it. They devote all their time to it and completely ignore you, the giver of the gift. Their overindulgence in the gift actually becomes harmful to them, and when you try to warn them, they don't want to listen to you anymore. The gift has taken your place in their life. They love (*agape*) the gift and do not love

Commented [notes11]: 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.
2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.
Col 3:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'[
Mark 12:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.
James 4:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.
Matt 6:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
Gen 3:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"
Matt 4:3-10 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;
20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions
21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
Gal 5:19-21 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: Romans 1:25 (NIV)
25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

(*agape*) the giver. Instead of seeing the love of the giver in the gift, the recipient forgets the giver altogether.

No wonder the Scriptures encourage us to be moderate in everything. (Philippians 4:5) The things aren't necessarily bad in themselves, but when we get so wrapped up in things that they become an idol, then life becomes out of order. Our obsessions affect our relationship with God first, and then with others.

We've all probably seen or heard of cases where someone just couldn't control their spending. Then they began to cheat their company. In the end, the sin always gets exposed because the addiction to things knows no satisfaction. It will always crave more until it ends in destruction. The Apostle Paul describes it as a continual lust for more. (Ephesians 4:19) The world is at war with the kingdom of God. (2Corinthians 10:3-5) These three things are the enemy's tools to capture the hearts of the unredeemed and to distract and make ineffective those who are redeemed.

Let's be very honest. There is satisfaction in those things for a time, but then we need more. Whether it is drugs, food, immorality, or power, the satisfaction only lasts for a time and then we want more. And the more we try to fill our void, the more we crave the thing. The heart is meant to find satisfaction in God, not the temporal kind of satisfaction that does damage, but the eternal kind that is only good for you. The more drugs you consume, the more destructive it is to your life. The more Jesus you know, the more life you possess. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that we can know more and more and more of Him and our heart just keeps getting more and more filled with love, joy and peace.

But I don't want you to get the idea that that means life will be free of trials and problems. Life is full of problems and trials whether you love the world or love God. (Job 5:7) The difference is that the lover of God has the strength and peace to endure. The trials merely refine their character and deepen their relationship with God. (1Peter 1:6-7) Even the trials can be a source of joy.

The *lust of the eyes* was the second worldly thing upon which we can set our love. For Eve it was the way that fruit looked so delicious. (Genesis 3:6) For Achan it was a wedge of gold and a new set of clothes. (Joshua 7:21) For David it was a beautiful woman. (2Samuel 11:2-4) The eyes are the window of the soul, and our soul can believe that a certain shape or look can bring fulfillment. It can, for a moment. (Hebrews 11:25) Think just a second and you will remember what particular sight captures your imagination. It may be that picture of a Caribbean Island or the latest sports car. Whatever it is, the thing in itself is probably not sinful, rather it is the belief that it will satisfy your soul that is. We know that those things always left us wanting more and never filled the void within. We've often been so disappointed in that vacation or that purchase, because we had come to expect so much fulfillment from it. (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11)

The thing that our eyes lust after becomes our idol. We put it before God. It is only when we truly love God, that we can appreciate His good gifts and keep them in their place, thanking God for His goodness to us. (James 1:17)

Commented [notes19]: 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Phil 4:5 (KJV)

Commented [notes20]: 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Eph 4:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:3-5 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 7 Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward. Job 5:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Gen 3:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." Josh 7:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ... [1]

Commented [notes27]: 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. Heb 11:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. 11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. ... [2]

Commented [notes29]: 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17 (NIV)

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, John warns us of *the boasting of what (man) he has and does*. Pride is man's greatest weakness. If things don't capture his imagination and become an idol, then he will often fall for pride in the possession of things, knowledge, achievements or position. That's why we collect our trophies and plaques. We compare ourselves with others. (2Corinthians 10:12) We want to boast of our greatness. It happens in the religious world. It happens when we are praying. It happens when people meet. It is normal sinful human nature. "Look at me. Look at my attainments. Look at what I bought."

Commented [notes30]: 12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.
2 Cor 10:12 (NIV)

There is nothing wrong with being proud of accomplishments, as long as there is the acknowledgement that it all is possible because of your Creator. He made you the way you are. He gave you the gifts you possess. He even gave you the opportunities to excel. (Ephesians 2:10) He delights in your achievements when you give Him the glory due Him.

Commented [notes31]: 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Eph 2:10 (NIV)

I'm proud to be a preaching elder, but I know it is only possible because of God's great mercy. I know I don't deserve it. I guess it's really pride in my awesome heavenly Father. I'm sure He doesn't mind that kind of pride. But if it went to my head and I started thinking it was because I'm special, that it was something I did on my own, not only would I be ignoring my past, but I'd be putting credit where no credit is due.

The Apostle Paul checks our pride with this brilliant question. Do you have anything that you did not receive? (1Corinthians 4:7) Let's see. He gave us our mind, our bodies, our abilities, the time and place we were born, opportunities, and even the air we breathe. Does that leave any room for boasting in what we have and do? Absolutely not!

Commented [notes32]: For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?
1 Cor 4:7 (NIV)

So there they are, the big three that compete with our love for God, *the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does*. Those aren't from the Father. They are from the *kosmos*, the evil world system of things, the misuse of the gifts of God. They are the way the destroyer would have us use what has been given us. (Ephesians 4:19)

Commented [notes33]: 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.
Eph 4:19 (NIV)

People can be so legalistic that they apply good and evil to things. The good and evil is in the heart of man. At one time, piano in church was considered evil. Then it was the guitar. In some places it's still those pagan drums. Some would say the television or the internet. Things aren't evil. It is how the heart of man would use those things. It is whether or not we seek fulfillment in them apart from God. God is the Creator. Are we worshiping the creation or the Creator? Are we using the things for His glory in a way that would please Him? Or are they taking His place in our lives? (Isaiah 42:17)

Commented [notes34]: 17 But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame.
Isaiah 42:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ *The world and its desires pass away...* If you want to get clearer picture of reality, realize that every worldly thing you enjoy in this life will pass away. One man used little sticky notes to remind him of how transitory things are. Each note read, "For the fire". Peter tells us every earthly thing will melt with a fervent heat. (2Peter 3:10) That car you are so fond of, "For the fire". That nice house, "For the fire". That set of new golf clubs... you get the idea. Even the desire for those things will

Commented [notes35]: 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.
2 Peter 3:10 (NIV)

pass. Today's Christmas list is tomorrow's Craig's List! Today's "must have" is tomorrow's clearance sale. I can guarantee you that when you leave your earthly body you are not going to care one iota about those things you spend so much time on in this life. If a doctor tells you that you have one month to live, I guarantee you that your concern for things will vanish!

Finally, John concludes, *but the man who does the will of God lives forever*. John is contrasting the temporary nature of the desire for things and achievements with doing the will of God. The will of God is what is eternal. That is what will lay up for you, as Peter says, *a treasure in the heavens, incorruptible and undefiled*. (1Peter 1:4) As John wrote earlier, *the one that knows God, obeys God*. (1John 2:3) Here is the promise of eternal life. If we know Him, we obey Him, or do His will. If we know Him we have eternal life for He is eternal. You can't separate the knowledge of God from a changed life. To know God is to be in the process of the transformation of your desires. It is a longing to serve the One you love.

We can use John's succinct description to test the choices that are presented to us. Is it a craving of sinful man? Is it the lust of the eyes? Is it a boasting of what I have and do? That is the old nature. Those are worldly things that are passing. Doing the will of God is eternal life. Now that we have our reality glasses on, we can make an informed decision. What decisions are you facing today? Here is how to tell if our decision is worldly or godly.

As with John's other teachings in this letter, we can apply this to false teachers as his flock did. Are they operating in their carnal nature or by the Spirit? You will know them by their fruit. (Matthew 7:20) Are they boasting about what they have and do, or do they humbly give all the glory to God? Some people have a hard time discerning where a teacher's heart is. This is an easy to use yardstick. Where is the glory going? Are they encouraging me to fill my heart with Jesus or things? Do they justify immorality and pride? Do they point to Jesus or to self?

Let us end our time in the word this morning with a heart check. What excites you? For what do you long? What stirs your imagination? If it is *the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does*, we need to repent and ask the Father for a new heart. We need to get a fresh vision of what lasts, what is really of value. We need to see how much greater the Giver is than the gift. We need to thank the Father for His many gifts, and love Him all the more for every good gift from His loving hand.

Let us watch our conversation to see what really matters to us, for out of the abundance of our heart the mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45; Mark 7:21-23) If I say I love the Father and only want to serve Him, but always talk about money, or some pleasure, or my accomplishments, then I need to get honest with God and myself. I'm living for the world and that won't last! It's time to shift the focus of life to the eternal. This world is passing. It has already pushed the self-destruct button of sin and the countdown is nearing completion. (2Thessalonians 1:6-10)

Commented [notes36]: 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
1 Peter 1:4 (KJV)

Commented [notes37]: 3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.
1 John 2:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes38]: 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
Matt 7:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes39]: 45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.
Luke 6:45 (NIV)

Commented [notes40]: 21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'
Mark 7:21-23 (NIV)

Commented [notes41]: 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.
2 Thess 1:6-10 (NIV)

Page 3: [1] Commented [notes26]**Paul Wallace**

2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,
3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"
4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home.
2 Sam 11:2-4 (NIV)

Page 3: [2] Commented [notes28]**Paul Wallace**

10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. 11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?
Ecc 5:10-11 (NIV)