

Not Loving the World

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to I John 2. You already have marked I John 1:6 with a "1", if you've followed the suggestions we've made. You've put a "2" after I John 2:1. You have put "3" after I John 2:9, I John 2:14 and I John 4:20. Now, I'd like to suggest you put "4" after I John 2:15, and that you just put a check mark by verse 16 and 17, to remind yourself in the days to come, that these two verses are included in this fourth evidence of eternal life.

I read for you that which shall engage us this morning:

"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."

Here again is that word "love" We found, in the use of it yesterday, and in reference to Matthew 22, that great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God", that used, in this way, the imperative. We're to understand it, not as an emotion or a feeling, a sensibility, but rather, as in the form of benevolence, the committal of the will, the supreme choice of the life, in the case of God, to seek His highest good and blessing and joy and satisfaction with us, and in the case of our neighbors, to seek also their highest good and blessing and joy and fulfillment and happiness in every way possible. And also, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Because of our worth and value, God has established that we are to seek the highest good and blessing and happiness and joy of ourselves, consistent with our love for God and our love for our neighbors.

Now, let's see if that definition applies here. "Thou shalt not love the world." Thou shalt not seek the highest good and joy and blessing and satisfaction of the world. Your happiness will not depend upon the world; you're not living to please the world. To the contrary, you're living to please God, and therefore His commandment, "Thou shalt love not the world," is consistent in terms of the definition. You will not commit your will and your purpose to please the world, to seek the approval of the world or to bring joy and satisfaction to your heart through the world. This definition will work; I think we can accept that. Now the text.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Do you accept as much authority for this commandment as you did for the first and great commandment? You ought to. They are given by the same Holy Spirit. It was the Lord Jesus who said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." And it's God the Holy Ghost speaking through the apostle John, who says, in effect, "Thou shalt not love the world."

Now what does this word "world" mean? It has reference to all that engaged you and held you and attracted you prior to your coming to Christ. That is what He wants us to understand by "world" Now there's a contract here that God has drawn up with us, and I suggest it's this: You cannot walk in the light and in darkness at the same time. You accept that? Is that sensible? Is that logical? Is that common sense? You can't walk in light and darkness at the same time. Now you cannot love the commandments of God and hate the commandments of God at the same time. It's impossible. And you can't commit your entire being to pleasing God and pleasing the world at the same time. Absolutely impossible. You recognize that, you realize that. He's recognized that you either love God or you love the world. You either seek to please God or you seek to please the world. But no one can love both at the same time.

Now there's a rationale for this commandment. "The world passeth away." You'll agree, I'm sure, that it's folly to sell something that you cannot lose in exchange for something that you cannot keep. Doesn't make sense, does it? It's foolishness to trade gold and silver and precious stones for wood and hay and stubble. Especially when the Word tells us that not only the trade absurd and foolish, but more than that, the lusts thereof passeth away, so that after a while, the very thing that you had so intensely desired and for which you made such a foolish bargain, has passed away, and you don't even want it anymore.

We found, with our children, when they were growing up, that they had a great, oh, what a great number of wants they had. And there were so many books that showed various things that young teenagers would like, and they had allowance, and they had some money, and we had some rules. And one of our rules was this: Anything they wanted, they could buy – two weeks after they said they wanted it. It was a family rule. They'd come in, "I want to get this, Dad! I want this!" And I'd say, "Fine. You got the money?" "Yeah, here it is." And so we just put it in the "wait bottle" up behind the cupboard. You know, never once can I remember, when at the end of two weeks, they wanted what the money was sitting there for? Because between then they had three more things they wanted? The lust thereof passed away! The desire thereof was gone. And that's what God says here. Foolishness! To trade something you can't lose for something you can't keep. Trade gold, silver and precious stones for wood, hay and stubble. It's absurd.

Not only absurd, it's also perilous, and we ought to understand that peril. In Matthew 16:26 - "But what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?" In Luke 21:34 - "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unaware." In James 4:4 - "You adulterers and adulteresses - know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Matthew 24:38-39 - "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away." Great peril in loving the world. The Scripture's full of it, I just picked two or three verses.

In contrast to that, that foolishness of such a transaction is the permanence of loving God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Now doing is the evidence of loving. If you love me, you will do my commandments, you will keep my commandments.

And so it seems to me that we should be quite prepared to face this person that is sitting across the table at a café, and asked us at the beginning of a conversation: "You know, I'm not sure I'm a Christian. I'm really not sure that I'm born of God." And we've taken them through "1" and "2" and had them read them. "3" and now we're down to "4". And we say to them: "Now what's your attitude toward the world?" You may know it by the way they live, but don't tell them. Let them discover it for themselves. After all, you're not the x-ray machine; you're just sort of bringing them to where the x-ray machine is – the Word of God is that which divides between soul and spirit. And so you say to that person: "Now what IS your attitude toward the world? Whom do you seek to please? Where does your happiness come from? Does it come from what the world thinks about you? Do you have to have its approval and its applause to make you happy? Or is your happiness from a relationship with God?"

Now the commandment "Love not the world" is enforced by verses 16 and 17 in this way: "All that is in the world," and then, the Spirit of God through John begins to tell us, "All that is in the world is the lust and the desires of the eye." Well, what does the eye see? These things. So all that's in the world includes THINGS. And then it says "the lust of the flesh" or the desires and appetites of the flesh. And that's EXPERIENCE. Sexual experience, sure if it's just a case of being in the world. Social experience with those that are haters of God. And the third thing is the pride of life. And that's POSITION.

Now if you ever see a drawing, a caricature of Satan with a pitchfork, and that fork has more than three times, you'll know it's not correct. Because fork he may have, pitchfork he may have, but there are only three times on that fork. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Mind you, he's devised an enormous number of variations, because he's certainly enticed multitudes, millions of men and women with no other tool than just that, and phenomenally successful, many times in our lives, when we look back upon it, but that's all he has. He doesn't have any more. All that is in the world is the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

Now, these correspond (and some of you who've heard me in the past have heard me refer to this) to three types of idolatry. Whereas they're not only in the areas that I am giving the emphasis, they are in the areas I'm giving the emphasis.

The lust of the eye. The word "Baal" is "owner". And Baal-worship was apparently for the purpose of acquiring things. You know, when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and came in and took the land, occupied it, they took over the

farmsteads and the fields of the people that had been there – the Canaanites, that God had judged and sent Israel there for the purpose of judging them for their iniquity. And they conquered it and they took it, and they lived on it. But the children of Israel did not do as God had told them to do, which was to complete the judgement that God had pronounced upon the Canaanites nation. So, the people that had occupied the area still hung around in the neighborhood.

Can you see an Israelite farmer out there trying to till the ground? It was a bit rocky, a little bit poor, and God had told them how it was going to flow with milk and honey, and about all they had were some weeds, poison ivy. So far they hadn't had much blessing from God, because they hadn't obeyed.

And so, one day the Israelites farmer's out there, trying to get this ground stirred up to get a crop in. And leaning against a stone fence is the fella that used to own the farm – the old Canaanites farmer that's still in the neighborhood. "Don't have much of a crop, do ya?" "Well, no, it's not so good." "Well, if you only knew how to get a crop, you'd do better than you're doing..." "What am I doing wrong?" "It's not what you're doing wrong, it's not what you're doing right, that's where your problem is."

"What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "Did you notice that thick part of the wall down there, in that corner?" "Yeah, I saw that – what was that for? Why'd you make that so thick?" "Did you ever notice it's got those dark streaks running down on it?" "Yeah." "Well, that's where we sacrificed to Baal. See, he owns this field, and if you don't give him what he asks for, you're not going to have a crop."

"Oh, that's what that is..."

So that night, when he gets home, he tells his wife. "You know, I had an old farmer, used to have this place, tell me down there in the corner where they got that thick part next to those stones, and those streaks on it, that's blood, dried blood, and they sacrificed to the evil spirit that owns this piece of ground."

"Well, I certainly wish you'd do something! Because I've gotta have a new rug and some new cooking ware, and a new dress – I haven't had a new dress for three years – I wish you'd do something!"

"Well, I don't know..." He can't stand the heat from the kitchen, so just the funniest thing happens the next day. When he's down there, a little lamb jumps up on that wall and he's just there whittling on his stick, and don't you know it? Accidentally, that lamb runs into that knife and cuts its throat. Runs into it three times, to tell you the truth. Well, it wasn't done deliberately, wasn't done as a sacrifice. Just happened.

But you know, stuff begins to grow, and the crops begin to flourish. Boy, that's getting around. That's how you get a good crop. You, er, sacrifice to the owner. Baal. Well, why? Because, you see, if you've got more grain than you're going to eat that year, you can trade it for some of the things somebody else has. You can buy things with it.

And so what do we read? "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim." In Judges 3:7-8 "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them."

That's the lust of the eye. Things. Compromise with the god of this world to get things.

And there was a second - the lust of the flesh. Now, that carries us back into Genesis, where there's an interesting thing. It says "Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord." But that word "hunter" is, literally, "rebel". And just a few generations from Noah, when God had judged the world because of all its sin and now Nimrod has become a mighty rebel against the Lord, and he leads the people in revolt, and he says, "You know, if we build us a tower to reach clear up to heaven, we could take this Jehovah God down out of it, and we could have our own religion, and we wouldn't have to be restricted in our pleasure, doing the things He wants us to do. We'd decide how to be happy."

And so the Tower of Babel was built. And we're told by Hislop in his volume "Two Babylons" that he got his father's wife (not his mother, but Semiramis), and he sort of enthroned her as the goddess of heaven, and commanded the people to worship Semiramis. And their worship was associated with all kinds of lustful, sexual indulgence. Later on, it was Ashteroth, the successor to Semiramis. And the worship of Ashteroth - Astarte. And then in history it's Juno. In Ephesus it was Diana. But it was just a continuous succession, different names, but for the same purpose of giving licence to immorality. And in Judges 2:13 we read: "And they (that is, Israel) forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashteroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of the spoilers." In I Samuel 12:10 – "And they served Baalim and Ashteroth." In Judges 10:6-7 – "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashteroth, and they forsook the Lord and served not Him. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines."

Well, we've covered two – the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh. The worship of Baal, the worship of Ashteroth. Now let's come to the third – the pride of life. All that's in the world are things and experience and one other. Position – power, influence, authority. That's the worship of Molech.

Let me read a few Scripture verses regarding this, then we'll comment on it. Leviticus 18:21 – "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech. Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God. I am the Lord." Of king Josiah, who renewed the covenant and destroyed idolatry in Judah, it is written in II Kings 23:10 – "And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech." And Jeremiah proclaims God's judgement upon Judah because "they had done evil in my sight, sayeth the Lord. They have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it, and they have built the high places of Topheth, which is on the valley of the sons of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire." And again, in Jeremiah 32:35 – "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."

Worship of Molech. Well, what is it? Get the picture. Molech is given to us in archaeological records as being a very large statue of a king on a throne, often carved out of one solid piece of stone, as was the statue at Abu Simbel down there in Southern Egypt. Picture showed, what we have, depicts Molech as being this king on a throne with his thighs together, and his hands folded across his knees, so that the forearms and hands created a basin over his lap. Apparently there were tunnels carved into the stone leading behind the statue, and bellows. The bellows would consist of a skin of a goat, and was a means of getting air in, and the aperture would close, and they could force the air up the channel. Putting charcoal in the lap of the statue, setting it aflame, getting the bellows behind there to force the air through it, they could turn that into a very, very hot, fiery furnace, if you please. The worshipper would come, in this case the Israelite - who had been called of God to be a people to show forth His praise. Mother and father coming. They've served Baal, gotten the things they wanted. They've served Ashteroth and gotten liberty for sexual indulgence. But they're still not satisfied. They've got to have position! That requires sacrifice. And so they bring the child down. A first born boy (or a girl, because Molech was made out of stone – he really couldn't tell the difference between boys and girls – but it had to be an infant. And the father would stand there, would address the priest, telling him what position he wanted, what he was asking for, why he was making the sacrifice. And then, calculating trajectory as a basketball player would, trying to get the ball through the hoop, the father would throw the little baby into the air, so that it would land squarely on that bed of coals – a living sacrifice to the god of this world.

And that was the sin of Israel. That was the pride of life. You say: "What a terrible thing!" Indeed, sin is always a terrible thing. And when we find, today, with this revival of Satanism that's rapidly accelerating across America, that little babies stolen from shopping malls and elsewhere are ending up as human sacrifices. It's nothing new. It just goes back to what Israel did back there, and why God judged them so severely.

But, you know, with that as crude, as gross, as horrible, as offensive as it is, there's another type. Strange, when I was pastor in New York City, I often had the children of outstanding Christian workers come, sometimes from other states and from some distance, to talk with me, because they did not want to reflect upon their fathers. And I've had, oh, so many of them, say, "You

know, my father is so busy going around the country preaching, going around the country talking, working with these groups, doing all these things – I never see him. And I've got problems, And I've got this..." Or, "My father's working in his business day and night. And he's neglected us. He claims to be a Christian, and a follower of Christ..." What were they doing? Well, would it be unkind to suggest that maybe the fathers, maybe perhaps the mothers, with their own personal ambitions, were willing to sacrifice their children on the altar of their ambitions? Not with a knife, and not with glowing coals, but just with neglect and indifference and unconcern?

So, what have we here? What we have here is a commandment, by the Holy Ghost, that everyone that has been born of God and made a partaker of the divine nature will not love the world. Because if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Oh, I didn't say that. I didn't write that. I'm only reading it. God said it! Now don't... I'm not trying to be harsh. I'm only trying to be honest. I'm only trying to say what God's Word says. That if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

So when people say, "I'm not sure I'm a child of God," the fourth evidence is: "What's your attitude toward the world?" In I Peter 2:9-10, we're told we're a royal, holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, that we should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

What's the conclusion? What's the evidence of eternal life? You cannot love the Father and the world at the same time, because love for the Father is a commitment to please Him. Now that doesn't mean that a child of God cannot be overtaken in a fault, like temptation, fall into sin. But if he is, if a child of God does, he's going to deal with it, because he's done something he really doesn't want to do. The purpose of his heart is to please God, and he did something he hates. He did it. But the evidence that he's a child of God is that he's going to judge it, and forsake it, and confess it and know the cleansing of the precious blood. It's so important for us to understand this in the light of Titus 2:11-14 – "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a purchased people, zealous of good works."

Understand this, when you're talking with this person, and dealing with evidence number "4": The grace of God that brings salvation, teaches everyone to whom salvation is brought, identically the same thing, regardless of what their culture may have been, their background may have been, their language may have been. The grace of God that brings salvation, teaches everyone to whom such salvation is brought, identically the same thing.

It was my first day at our station, at Malut in Upper Nile province in the Sudan, right on the Nile River, about four, five, six hundred miles south of Khartoum, depending on whether you went by the river, or you had to go by steamboat and by railroad. We got there, middle of the night, went out to our station. The next day, the man with whom we travelled from the States to the Sudan, John Philips, our senior missionary, head of the station, came over to our home where we were having breakfast. He said, "I want to show you around. Come with me." And so I went with him. He showed me the various houses and the outbuildings, and then the school, and we ended up at the building that was the school assembly room, classroom, and where the little local church met on Sundays, the Lord's Day. The headmaster of the school was there. His name was Pala. He was a Dinka man. He'd grown up down in the Nuer district of the Dinkas, so he had these stripes across the forehead. When he was seventeen, to prove his manhood, he had gone to the witch doctor, and had said he was ready for the transition ceremony. He lay down with a little cup at the back of his head in the soil, nothing else. The witch doctor came and put this spear blade that had been worn down, only about six inches of blade, very sharp, on stone, and he put it in Pala's forehead, over here, above the eye, and cut clear through to the scalp. And then he put sort of a curved spot in that. And then about a half inch above it, all the way up his forehead, clear up to the hairline. Pala had that. When Pala had been a baby, about three or four months old, his mother had taken him to the witch doctor, who had taken another knife, and had cut the lower jawbone, and scraped the teeth buds, tooth buds of the four front lower teeth, off of the jawbone, so he had no lower teeth in the front.

Here was Pala, a Dinka. But now, local pastor, headmaster of the school, loved Jesus Christ and faithfully proclaiming the Gospel. John Philips was from Baltimore. He was a graduate of Wheaton College and of Harvard Business School. And here was a guy from Minnesota. And the three of us were standing there, briefly telling about how we'd come to know the Lord. And when Pala finished, just standing in the center of this little grass-thatched-roof house, all three of us were strangely enveloped by a sense of the presence of the Lord. And tears were in our eyes, and I was sobbing. Just the presence of God. What was it? The grace of God that brings salvation, had taught us identically the same thing, regardless of our background or our culture. The grace of God that brings salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts – that's repentance. And to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might save us from hell and take us to heaven when we die. Is that what the Word says? Not in my book. Not in my book. What it says in this book, and in yours, is this: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a purchased people, zealous of good works."

In contrast to loving the world, is to hate evil. The grace of God has taught us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present evil world – not to seek its favor, not to get our pleasure and joy and happiness from it.

How do we illustrate it? How do we illustrate what it means?

Years ago, I read an account of a young man from Great Britain. He was the younger son of a famous family. Had enough money so he could come to America. He'd gone across America on the riverboats and on the Santa Fe trail, he'd got work as a cowboy and he'd gone into the mountains and he ended up somewhere around there where they had the gold strike in '49. And he'd put in a claim, and he'd worked the claim, and he'd gotten quite a lot of gold, a lot of money, which he converted into letters of credit there in California, and he had decided to take the southern route and go across (he'd come across through the north) and he wanted to go across now to Texas and Louisiana, and then by boat from Louisiana to New York and back to England.

He was in New Orleans, and he did like all of us tourists do when we go to New Orleans – he went down to the slave market. I'm sure if you've been in New Orleans, you've done it. Or when you go, you will. The difference was, when he was there, they were still selling human beings as chattel. He'd never seen it before; it'd been outlawed before his time, he couldn't remember it in England, and here was the first time he'd ever saw or seen a human being sold on a block.

As he stood there, he heard the ribald remarks, he saw the cruelty, the viciousness, the iniquity and the lies, eyes and voices of the people who were there. There was one very beautiful young woman, standing there with the slaves to be sold. And he heard some of them talk about how they were going to buy her and what they were going to do with her. One man, particularly, who had a reputation that he overheard, being one of the most vicious slave owners in all of that area, was determined to buy this young woman. She came to the block, the bidding started, and this man seemed to be having it his own way, for no one wanted to incur his wrath. And finally, this Britisher put in a bid. And the man bid again. And the Britisher put in another bid. And the man raised it. And to stop this nonsense, this man raised his bid by a hundred percent. There was a gasp that went through the group. The most money that anyone had ever paid for a slave in New Orleans! He paid out the gold to the cashier, he was given the strap that went around the neck of the young woman. As she came down the steps on the block where she'd been standing while the transaction had been completed, she got on the first step next to the ground, just face to face with the one who had bought her. She had been saving up a mouthful of saliva. And when she stood right in front of him, she spat that saliva full in his face, and hissed through her clenched teeth: "I hate you!"

He said nothing. With the back of his hand, he wiped it away, the crowd opened, he walked through it, he went to someone, he asked some directions, went a little further, asked further directions, was shown a door, went up some stairs to an office. The woman had no idea where she was going. She stood there, she wouldn't flee, because of the price and danger, notoriety for this sale. He went over, someone came, brought someone else out. He paid some money. He insisted, they were saying "No." He insisted. And finally they signed a paper and handed it to him. And he walked back. He stood in front of her and he said: "Here are your manumission papers. You are free." And she looked at him: "You paid more for me than anyone else has

ever been purchased in New Orleans.” “Yes, I’m told so.” “And you bought me to set me free.” “Yes, that’s why I bought you – to set you free.” Tears came to her eyes. She fell to her knees. She put her face down in his rude miner’s boots and started to sob. “He bought me to set me free! He bought me to set me free!” She looked up and said, “Oh, Sir! All I ask is to serve you as long as I live.”

Oh, it doesn’t illustrate – maybe it helps – the great God and Savior who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar purchased people, zealous of good works. Is it hard, then, to hear the Holy Ghost saying: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Can we not, as with her, kiss His nail-pierced feet and say, “He bought me to set me free. My love is toward Him, and not toward the world.”

Father in heaven, seal to our hearts, we ask Thee, this fourth evidence of the new birth. If there be those among us who know Him in name only, might they discover it and deal with it. So each of us, redeemed by the poured-out life of Thy dear Son, realize that He bought us to set us free. That we might glorify Him, and walk back in this world with all of its idolatry, free from being entangled with it, to bring honor and glory and praise to the One who loved us and washed us in His precious blood. In His name, and for His sake. Amen.

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