

In the latter part of 1 John chapter two, John describes some of the deeper aspects of our fellowship with God. He makes observations about (1) the things our heart will treasure as we truly fall in love with Jesus, (2) the things that will come along trying to deceive us and draw us away from Jesus, (3) instructions on abiding IN Jesus, and (4) the beauty of practicing righteousness as His child.

Do Not Love the World

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17, NKJV).

When John is talking about “all that is in the world”, he is not talking about the physical world: trees, mountains, rivers, etc. He is talking about the “world system” that is in opposition to God. The older I get, the more I believe there is a coordinated system at foot in the world that is working overtime in opposition to God. By that I mean there are all sorts of ideologies and efforts that are strengthening in opposing Christianity and the truths of God’s Word. In our last teaching on Wednesday, I briefly mentioned a song that was written in 1979 by Robert Allen Zimmerman (we all know him as Bob Dylan).

At that time, he was reported to have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. I remember when the whole Christian world was abuzz over his conversion. It’s hard to determine where exactly Dylan is with the Lord, but there was definitely a change that came over him at that time and appears to still be with him. Speaking to Jeff Slate of the *Wall Street Journal* in December 2022, Dylan reaffirmed his religious outlook: “I read the scriptures a lot, meditate and pray, light candles in church. I believe in damnation and salvation as well as predestination. The Five Books of Moses, Pauline Epistles, Invocation of the Saints, all of it.”¹ In his song, “You gotta Serve Somebody,” Dylan wrote seven verses (perhaps verse six is my favorite):

Might like to wear cotton, might like to wear silk
Might like to drink whiskey, might like to drink milk
You might like to eat caviar, you might like to eat bread
You may be sleeping on the floor, sleeping in a king-sized bed

[Chorus]

But you’re going to have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You’re going to have to serve somebody

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Dylan#Religious_beliefs

Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're going to have to serve somebody

Dylan's song reminds us that in all that we think, say, and do, we are serving somebody. Jesus said it well, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* (Matthew 6:24, NKJV). So, as we make our way through life and channel our efforts, we're going in one of two directions.

V.15 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.

John is urging us to take notice of many things. What do we desire? What do we pursue? Where do we spend our time? Where do we spend our money? Where do we invest our talents and our treasure? What are our priorities? He follows with an explanation.

V.16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Jesus said that if you're going to come after Him, you must deny yourself (Matthew 16:24). The lust of the flesh is talking not just about sexual desire, but desire itself, and the focus of desire in general. What does your soul seek after? Desires of the flesh are not sins in and of themselves. We all desire creature comforts in life. We desire food, water, shelter, sex, safety, security, and comfort. As I always teach, we were created with the need to be loved and accepted, and to have value and worth. These desires are built into us. But anytime we try to fill those desires with anything but Christ, it always ends in frustration and conflict. This past week, I had LaVaughn Landry in my home. He's the guy that owns "La Villa Coffee Company." He left home in Louisiana as a young man and pursued a life as a missionary in Mexico, and later in Russia. He explained it to me this way. He said, "When you really come to the Lord and the Holy Spirit abides in you, it is like eating salt. It makes you hungry for the things of God. You are hungry for His Word. You are hungry for time with Him. Every morning when I wake up, I'm hungry and thirsty for the things of God; for His Word and spending time with Him."

Sometimes we forget just how hungry and thirsty we really are and we get distracted by the things of the world. When those desires take precedence over God's will for our lives, they cause us to violate God's perfect righteousness. They come between us and God, and that is sin. That's what John has been talking about since the letter began. God put desires in us, but they have to be controlled by the Spirit and not the flesh. As an example, the desire for food is necessary to survive, but when it is satisfied and that still isn't enough, we become gluttonous. Eating is good. It is not a sin, but when it becomes THE THING it is a terrible thing.

The same holds true for our sexual desires. They are lovely and beautiful and wonderful when they are enjoyed within the confines of what God desires, but when they get out of control, they become perverse, wicked, debasing, and animalistic. These perversions are all born in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. John says, "These things aren't from God. They are from the world." We are living in an age when the world is invading every corner of decency in our lives. This is why I avoid watching network television. This is why I control what I read on the internet. I do not want my mind polluted. We are living in days when the world is offering ALL THAT IT HAS to us. WE WILL SUCCUMB TO THE WORLD IF WE ARE NOT STRONG IN THE WORD. SO AS WE REMINDED OURSELVES ON WEDNESDAY, LET'S STAY IN THE WORD.

V.17 John ends this commentary on the world saying, "¹⁷ *And the world is passing away and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*" Don't get side-tracked by the world. Do the will of God and you will abide forever.

So often, sin is very tantalizing and pleasing, but in the end, it is the way of death (Romans 6:23)

Sin is the path of destruction. For years we had a guy in our mens' group that would periodically smile and say, "The problem with sin is that it is fun!" He never followed that up with the fact that sin may be fun or entertaining for a moment, but its end is the way of death. We see this everytime a dope addict dies from the effects of what they have become addicted to. The enemy offers excitement and fulfillment, but the end of it is always the way of destruction. You must remember that you have been crucified with Christ, and the desires of the flesh are dead to you. I have heard it said that the only cure for lust is to starve it to death. Focus on the Spirit and the things of the Lord, and it truly will put salt in you that will give you a thirst and a hunger for righteousness.

Deceptions of the Last Hour

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. (1 John 2:18-23, NKJV).

John is again addressing his audience as his "precious little children." He loves them, and he wants God's best for them. John reminds us that Jesus' return is imminent. It's interesting that John says this is "the last hour." Those early believers thought they were in the last days. We too feel like we are in the last days. I don't know, but maybe God

set things up so that in every generation we feel like His coming is imminent. This certainly gives us an urgency to get the gospel out, and it gives us a correct perspective on what matters in life and what does not matter. It also gives us comfort to know that this is not all that there is, and that the wrongs we see going on in the world will be made right. I know that one of the struggles I have had is with materialism. It can be such a trap. I know personally that it's very easy to reach the point where my possessions take possession of me. John calls us to be on our guard from the wrong things that attract us and from the things that distract us from the real thing in our life: God's will for us and His direction in our lives.

He says that people have heard that the antichrist is coming. I know that the spirit of the antichrist has come again and again ever since Jesus left the earth. The spirit of THE ANTICHRIST is here in America RIGHT NOW. It especially seems that the onslaught of evil has intensified. The battle is raging against simple things of righteousness right now. I think it is interesting that "the world" allows any religion in the United States to be lifted up and venerated, but if you bring up the name of Jesus, it is grounds for termination. The assault is against Christianity. It is not against ANY of the other faith paradigms in the United States. Indeed, there are many "antichrists" in the world today seeking to steer people away from God. John says that apparently some of them went out from the church, but they weren't part of the church. I am old enough to have seen some come and go. So whether we're near the time of Jesus' coming is something that only time will tell.

One thing for certain is that these ARE the latter days for me. As I've gotten older, I am logically much closer to my life's end: God taking me home. John is probably focusing once again on the errancy of the gnostics when he says that whoever denies that Jesus is the Messiah, is a liar. These are strong words, but they show the importance of recognizing Jesus for who He is, and that denial is still going on in the world. John also ties belief in Jesus and the Father together. He says that if you deny Jesus, you are denying the Father, and if you deny the Father you are denying Jesus. This tries and convicts those cults today that present Jesus to be less than Who He really is; God in the flesh. This means Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, and Unitarians are in error about who Jesus is. And John says, if you're in error about Jesus then you don't know His Father either.

Vv.20-23 But we have this truth of God that is implanted within us. It is the Holy Spirit within us that confirms and gives us the knowledge that Jesus is Lord! John told us in his gospel account that he had written down what he knew about Jesus for a purpose. John proclaims, *"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."* (John 20:31, KJV).

John reminds the reader that he is writing them because of what THEY DO KNOW. And he is affirming and confirming what they believe. You, too, know whom you have

believed. Daniel Whittle, who served under General Sherman in the Civil War, wrote these lines that are precious.

I know not why God's wondrous grace
To me He hath made known,
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
Redeemed me for His own.

Refrain

But I know Whom I have believed,
And am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto Him against that day.

John tells us YOU KNOW IN WHOM YOU HAVE BELIEVED. HOLD FAST. DON'T GIVE UP. COME WHAT MAY, HE IS WHO HE SAID HE IS. HE IS THE CHRIST; THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD AND HE IS GOD IN THE FLESH. DON'T BE SHAKEN WHEN "antichrists" come this way and say things about Him that are not true.

John then transitions to the idea of letting Christ abide in you, and you abiding in Him.

Let Truth Abide in You

²⁴ Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. ²⁶ These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. (1 John 2:24-28, NKJV).

So, what is it that was "heard from the beginning?" What was heard from the beginning was this:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴ In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-4, 10-14, KJV).

Don't let anyone come along and deceive you. YOU HAVE FOUND THE RIGHT THING. YOU HAVE FOUND THE REAL THING. The anointing which you received is the Holy Spirit of God. That Holy Spirit within you will leap when you hear the truth taught and preached. It will resonate in your soul like beautiful music in the body of an in-tune guitar when its strings are strummed. When you walk in the Spirit you are abiding in Him, and as I've taught, He always abides in you. He is nudging, whispering, pushing, pulling you into a sweet fellowship with Him.

The Children of God

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. (1 John 2:28-29, NKJV).

John ends this part of his letter saying that if we walk in the Spirit daily, we can have the confidence that we will not be ashamed when He comes. If you know that He is righteous, then practice righteousness. I want to end by saying that as I grow older, I realize that the time is closer. His Spirit within me is like salt, and I grow thirstier every day for more of His Word, more of His presence, more conversation with Him, and just more of Him. And my friends, I think that is what John was feeling, and that is what he was writing about.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.