

1 John - Protecting our Fellowship

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[0 : 00] I'm stunned, shocked. You're all sitting down within about 15 seconds. It normally takes about 15 minutes. I don't know what happened. I don't know what to do or say. I'm going to ask Chris to come up. She's going to read for us from God's Word. So thanks, Chris.

Two readings this morning. The first one is from Matthew chapter 6, beginning at verse 19, and that's on page 971 of the Church Bible. It's Matthew chapter 6, beginning at verse 19. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? 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. And the second reading is taken from 1 John chapter 2, verses 15 to 17, and that's on page 1226 of the Church Bible. That's 1 John chapter 2, beginning at verse 15.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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.

[2 : 28] The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. Thanks very much, Christine, for that. So keep your Bibles open there at that section in 1 John chapter 2. We have a small section, but there's a lot that's contained in it, so we're just going to look at three verses this morning. And all this is part of a wider series. Just as I say all of this, if you wouldn't mind handing out the pens and the...

So there's a piece of paper for you to take notes on and a pen. If you'd like a pen, just keep your hand up and one can be given to you. So this is all part of our series on confident fellowship. Fellowship is simply our relationship and our partnership with God the Father and God the Son. So that's the big theme and the big heading of this series. And this morning we're looking at protecting our fellowship with God from 1 John chapter 2 verses 15 to 27.

Let's pray together.

Father, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Father, please would you help us this morning to see where the treasure that we set our heart is. And to do all things possible to make sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is our ultimate treasure. That he would consume consume us. That we would gaze at his beauty, at his greatness. That we would love the treasure of the Lord Jesus. We pray that we would do everything possible to make you centre of our lives.

Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore we ask that you would use the teaching of your word to bring that about. May your Holy Spirit bring us to a place where we can say that you are our all and our everything. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[5 : 55] Well, Fort Knox is perhaps the most secure building in the world. To break in, you would have to scale four fences, two of which are electrified, and then sneak past the armed guards lining the perimeter.

If you've gone that far, you then have to get through the granite walls, which are four foot thick, and reinforced with 750 tons of steel.

Once you've managed to get inside, you have to find your way through a maze of locked doors, armed guards, and then open the 22 tonne vault door. That's quite simple. All you have to do is bring with you all the members of staff who each have a piece of the code and get them to key it in

in the right order.

And then once you've got inside and robbed it, all you have to do is get past the 30,000 troops that are now alerted and stationed outside.

Why so much security at Fort Knox? Well, inside is 5,000 tons of gold bullion, which is worth about \$380 billion.

[7 : 21] And that's just the gold. It's treasure worth guarding. Now, we have a treasure that is worth guarding and protecting.

That treasure we've been learning is fellowship with God. Remember back in chapter 1, verse 3, it tells us there that we have been invited into fellowship with God.

Through faith, we get to share in and participate in the love that the Father has for the Son and that the Son has for the Father. We get to join in and experience that love.

And it's in this fellowship that our joy is made complete. This is where we are fulfilled and satisfied in this fellowship with the Father.

So the big message of the text this morning from chapter 2, verses 15 to 17 is this. Secure the treasure. Protect your fellowship with God.

[8 : 34] But what are we protecting our fellowship from? Well, the threat comes from the world.

Look at verse 15. He says, it's a command. Do not love the world or anything in the world.

Now, the world in this context is not the material world. It's not the created planet all around us. The material world, we're told, is good.

It's like God's playground that has been given to his children, people like you and me, to enjoy. So things like music and work and creativity and food and friendships, all of these are good gifts from God that is meant for us for our pleasure and to enjoy.

But in verse 15, the world we are not to love is the world that stands opposed to God.

[9 : 42] So the world in this context is the pattern of behaviour. It's a particular outlook on life that rejects God's ways. Let me show you.

There's a very helpful verse in 1 John chapter 5 verse 19. Just turn to that. 1 John chapter 5 verse 19. I think this will help us get a grip on what we mean by the world.

1 John 5 verse 19. It says, You see, it's as if the world has declared war on God with the evil one, the devil himself leading the charge and all the people kind of following up behind.

And it's the world is making their stand against God, saying, We oppose you. We don't want you. And they oppose God by ignoring him and disobeying him.

That is what is meant by the world under the control of the evil one. Back to verse 15. So when he is encouraging us, or commanding us rather, Do not love the world or anything in the world.

[10 : 59] He is saying, do not love the world's values and attitudes because they are in opposition to God. In other words, do not love each other's sinful behaviours.

Do not love them because the world is in opposition to God. Now the reason, and this is important, the reason we are not to love the world is, yes, it's in opposition to God, but because the world robs us of our joy.

It robs us of our joy. Look at verse 15 again. Do not love the world or anything in the world. Why? If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them.

You see, you simply cannot enjoy the love of the Father and at the same time love the world.

You can't mix and match. They don't go together. You can't enjoy the love of the Father and at the same time love the world. It's a little bit like having an affair.

[12 : 22] If I came home with a young lady on my arm and I sat down in my living room to watch television together and Kirsty walks in and says, Who's this? Oh, don't worry.

She's just my new girlfriend. No. It can't work. You either love one or you love the other.

To enjoy the love of your spouse, to experience that deep, intimate relationship, you cannot give your love to another. And that's what he's saying here with our love with the Father.

To love the world is opening up your heart to a thief that is going to come in and rob us of that deep, personal and relational joy that we have with the Father.

So we need to be very careful of where we focus our loves. Because wherever we focus our loves, that's where our treasure will be.

[13 : 29] And love for the world will rob us of our joy. Love for the world will rob us of our joy.

So let's have a look at what this love of the world looks like. The danger is, every one of us in this room has the capacity to love the world.

Instead of protecting the love with the Father, instead of enjoying that rich relationship with Him and making sure we do all things possible to enjoy that relationship, we begin to look to the world for our pleasure and our joy.

So look at verse 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.

So what we're going to do now is we're going to look at the three ways in which we can love the world that are listed here in verse 16. Now we're going to take a bit of time to go through it and look at each one individually.

[14:52] And it's going to be quite heart-searching for us. So let's look at the three ways we love the world. Again, let's read the beginning of verse 16. Number one.

For everything in the world, The Cravings of Sinful Man. You know what it's like to be sitting down watching the TV.

I'm sure you all do that. And all of a sudden, as you're watching your favourite programme, you have this sudden craving for chocolate. Or is it just me?

You put it off for a while, but the desire for that rich, smooth, galaxy chocolate, or whatever your favourite bar is, consumes you so much that you can't help but to get up out of your seat and go to the cupboard or the fridge and get that chocolate.

And it's never just a bite, is it? You scoff the whole lot. You see, craving something means you have to have it.

[16:01] It consumes you. It masters you. Rather than you being able to control the desire, the desire controls you. So, shaped by the values of the world and driven by our sinful hearts, we crave material wealth.

We crave sexual gratification. We crave success. We crave the perfect body. We crave... You fill in the blank.

What is it that you crave? What is it that I crave the most? We have to have it. Because the world says you will not be satisfied or fulfilled without it.

So, we crave it. Now, that doesn't mean to say any of these things that we crave are necessarily wrong. The problem is the attitudes to them have become distorted.

We are controlled and mastered by them. You see, what we crave becomes more important to us than the deep personal joy we have with the Father.

[17:17] In fact, our cravings for something else begin to replace our fellowship with God. So, rather than looking to the Father's love to be satisfied and fulfilled, we begin to look to other things and other people.

Rather than looking to all that the Father has given to us and the immensity of his love to his children, we take our focus off that and we begin to love other things and look to be filled with that. You see, the point is very simple. We can't enjoy the love of the Father and at the same time love the world.

You cannot mix and match. So, that's the first love. The second, let's read verse 16 again. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes.

Now, I have a confession to make. I have a lust problem. I was walking around B&Q; the other day and I saw a beautiful set of screwdrivers made by Stanley.

[18:44] Not B&Q; Stanley, the real Stanley. Now, the problem is I've got lots of screwdrivers. I've got a whole toolbox full of screwdrivers. But what I saw, I wanted and I said to myself, I want that.

and I came home with another box of more screwdrivers. You see, lust is just like a craving.

Shaped by what we see and what we look at, we say to ourselves, I want that.

And so, we take it regardless of the consequences to our fellowship with God. And the world constantly tell us through the media, and through every other means, that if you see something and you want it, take it.

You deserve it. You're worth it. Take it for yourself. So, fuelled by the values of the world, we take all sorts of things.

We swap our wife or husband for the virtual image on our computer screen and gaze at endless images and videos.

[20:04] We see what our friend has and, driven by envy, we go to the shops and buy one too. We're enticed by that new gadget that's just come out and we convince ourselves, I really can't operate without it.

I need it. So, instead of looking and gazing at the goodness and the beauty of God, we begin to focus our eyes and turn our eyes to other things and other people and we convince ourselves and say, if I have that, I'll be satisfied and I'll be fulfilled.

And all we're doing is replacing that love of the Father with something else. You see, we can't enjoy the love of the Father and at the same time love the world.

We cannot mix and match. You see, this is a really deep-rooted problem. Let's have a look at the third love.

Let's read verse 16 again. For everything in the world, the cravings of our sinful hearts, the lust of our longing eyes and the boasting of what we have and we do comes not from the Father but from the world.

[21 : 41] Have you ever watched the TV series, The Apprentice? All those people who go on to be Alan Sugar's Apprentice? If you listen to them, they talk non-stop about their achievements, their academic qualifications, the money they've earned, the businesses that they've set up, the awards that they've won.

They are God's gift to everybody. It's just one boast after another and they talk non-stop about themselves, how great they are.

Now the thing is about watching The Apprentice, it's actually like watching a mini-series of our own lives. Not that we necessarily have the same academic qualifications or business, but do we ever kind of take that little moment, that little moment of pride, and we look at our careers and say, I've got a really good job.

I earned this. I got this through my hard work at college. I earned those points and I did well and look where I am today.

Or we get in our car and we say, I earned this, as we put the boot down a little bit more. I bought this with my hard-earned money.

[23 : 02] Or we walk around our house and sit down in the comfort of our living room. We look at our possessions and we take that moment of pride and go, I own all of this.

And inside we might necessarily broadcast it to the world, but we boast inwardly of all we have and all we do. You see, the subtle and destructive attitude of the world says, I don't need God.

Every boast that we make about ourselves says, I don't need God. I can manage without God. I can live life without God. And our love for the world leads to live independently.

from God. So instead of turning to God as the source of all that is good and right and beautiful, instead of turning to the one who gives the gifts, we look to ourself as the means of getting all that we want and desire.

And it's back to the same issue. We can't enjoy the love of the Father and at the same time love the world.

[24 : 18] we cannot mix and match. It's serious. Now can we begin to see how dangerous and how destructive love for the world is?

Loving the world might seem at one level innocent enough, but the world is not our friend. world will only rob us of our joy.

It takes that deep rich fellowship that we have with the Father and it ruins us. It takes it away from us. And we do not experience the love of the Father.

God love the love of the Father. Let me ask us all this searching question. Do you, do I experience the love of the Father in my life?

Are you experiencing the love of the Father in your life? if not, if not, then everything we are living for, look at the end of verse 16, comes not from the Father, but from the world.

[25 : 39] If we do not experience the love of the Father in our lives, it's because we are looking to other things and other people, instead of the source itself.

it's dangerous and destructive to love the world. So, last point, how do we protect ourselves from loving the world?

How do we protect ourselves? Well, there's two ways we can protect ourselves. If you like, two security systems that we must download or install into our lives so that we protect and enjoy our fellowship with God.

So, every time there's a temptation, every time there's a drawing away from the love of the Father to love the world, there's like an alarm that goes off in our lives and we're drawn back again to gaze at the beauty and the love of the Father instead of turning to the world.

So, what's these security systems that we download? Well, they're very simple. here's the first one. It's called What the World Offers is Temporary.

[26 : 55] Download this into our memory system. Make it your security. Verse 17. The world and its desires pass away.

It's simple. The lie of the world says, love me and I will satisfy you and fulfil you. Love me, says the world, and everything will be good.

Well, the truth is, what the world offers is all temporary. It doesn't last. Look at verse 17 again. The world and its desires pass away.

Just like the lush flourishing leaves in summer, so they wither and they die and they fall in autumn. The things and people of this world, they simply do not last.

So, sorry to burst your bubble, but your beauty fades. Your strength fails. Your loved ones die. Your money gets spent.

[28 : 00] Your possessions break. Your careers end. Everything is temporary. It will not last. You see, when we crave something, when we lust after something, when we get it, we're not only realising that the happiness that it brings is only short-lived, but our fellowship with God is broken and the deep personal joy is lost.

And in its place, we're left with guilt, disappointment, and emptiness. So, security system number one.

What the world offers is temporary. Remember that. Security system number two, that we must download.

Here it is. What God offers is eternal. Let's read all of verse 17. The world and its desires pass away. But the person who does the will of God lives forever.

You see, the promise of God is life now and life for all eternity. That life as we've been seeing is fellowship with the Father and with his Son.

[29 : 24] This is where we experience life in all its fullness. It's sharing in that deep relationship that will never fail us. Entering into the love the Father has for the Son and the Son has for the Father.

And in this fellowship, in this relationship, we find joy in all its fullness and all its completeness. This is life. And if we are to know this life, look at verse 17, it says, we must do the will of God.

We must do the will of God. So what is God's will? What must I do to have this life? You may be remembered to what Ralph said as he introduced the songs.

We don't have to do anything because it's all by grace. So what do you mean we have to do something? Well, have a look at chapter 3 verse 23. It's just over the page.

Okay, here's what God's will is. This is what we have to do to experience this life in all its fullness. Chapter 3 verse 23.

[30 : 36] And this is his command. So this is God's will. Here it is, to believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ.

That's his command, that we would simply believe, that we would simply trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that everything, that all we should ever want or imagine is in him.

God's will is that we would believe that God loves us and gave himself for us. So my encouragement to us all this morning is to readdress the cravings that we have.

Crave a deeper understanding of God's love for you. How do we do that? Pray for it. Ask God for a hunger and a desire to know more of God and to experience his love in your life.

Look at the beauty of God instead of looking at other things. Look at the beauty of God in all that he is and all that he has done for us. Gaze at his mercy and grace as you open up your Bible and read about God and all that he has done.

[31 : 54] Just marvel at his mercy and grace. Let the goodness and greatness of God begin to control you and consume you and direct your passions and your desires to the Father who loves you.

And boast not in ourselves but boast in the cross of Jesus where we find our all and our everything. so install these two security systems into your life.

Every time we're drawn to love the world the alarm will sound, it will bleep and it will tell us and we will remind ourselves that what God offers is eternal but what the world offers is temporary.

do not love the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them.

Let's pray together. as for man, his days are like grass.

[33 : 26] He flourishes like a flower of a field, the wind blows over it and it is gone and its place remembers it no more.

But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him.

Our Father God, it is our desire that you would be our treasure that you would be our all and our everything.

And so we pray and ask that you would give us a hunger for you, that our passions and our desires would be directed to you, that we would long for your spirit to work in our lives to see that the Father's love is sufficient and is enough.

Please forgive us for the times we look to the world instead of looking to you. And we pray that you would help us to see that everything around us is temporary whereas you and your son are eternal.

[34 : 45] Help us to walk closely with you, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. As we finish, we're going to sing When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.

And as we've been thinking about where we place our gaze, where we look, what consumes us, what consumes us,