

"Forbidden Love"

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[0:00] And if you would open up your Bibles, please open up your Bibles to 1 John 2, verse 15-17.

And let me read this passage to you. This is not an easy passage to listen to and take to heart. Hear God's Word. This is God speaking to you, child of God.

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

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

And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever, child of God, is doing the will of God, is abiding forever.

[1:15] May God bless the reading of his Word and now may God bless the preaching of it. Have you guys heard about the frog in the kettle?

Apparently, if you heat up water in a kettle to a point of boil and then you drop a frog in it, that frog jumps right out of it. But if you take a frog, put it in lukewarm water in a kettle, but you gradually heat up the water, unbeknownst to that frog, that frog gradually gets cooked.

Brothers and sisters, are we being gradually cooked by the godless passions and priorities of the world?

Unbeknownst to us? This past Thursday, our life group gathered on Zoom and we were talking about this very passage.

This passage is about how a Christian is to relate to the world. And in the study that we're doing, it started with two questions. What do you think is the main failing of churches today?

[2:37] And then things got really kind of uncomfortable. What is the main failing of your congregation? So, think about it. Could you imagine being in a life group with me having to answer that question?

What is the main failing of your church and your pastor? We had a great conversation. They were very kind and gracious.

But what those two questions get at is raising how we evaluate ourselves as Christians in relationship to the world. Have we blended in to the world?

Are we virtually indistinguishable from the world around us and we don't even know it? Have we gone back to the world?

Have we given ourselves back to the world? The very system God in His mercy and His grace has called us out of. God in His great love towards us when He poured out His love to us through the cross of Jesus Christ.

[3:46] He called us out of the world for Him. And now we're in the world but not of the world. So here's the big idea. Child of God, don't give yourself back to the world.

Child of God. Christian, don't give yourself back to the world to the very place you were called out of.

To the people who you no longer are of. Child of God, don't give yourself back to the world. So in this passage, you can see it in your bulletin the way I've structured the sermon, the bulletin outline. There is a loving command that's in verse 15 and then that's followed by two reasons. Two reasons why you should not love the world.

that you should not give yourself to the world. Child of God, don't go back to the world. Don't give yourself to the world.

[4:47] So let's look at this loving command. The loving command. Do not love the world. You see it in verse, chapter 2, verse 15.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. Right from the get-go, we need to spend some time saying what does John mean by the world? That word, world.

If you look in the three verses that we're looking at, that word, world, is used six times in three verses. That's a lot of real estate. And then if you count its desires in verse 17, there are seven explicit references to the world in these three verses.

And so I don't know about you, but I have this sense upon reading this that what John is telling us not to love, what is being forbidden for us to give ourselves to, to set our affections on, is something a little bit more complicated than just the planet.

God is not saying you cannot love koala bears and zebras and baby bunnies. It's a little bit more complicated than that. And so to help you see just exactly what John means by the world, let me show you in 1 John other references to the world and what we learn from it.

[6:09] So look at 1 John 3, verse 13. We read this. Do not be surprised, brothers, Christians, those called out of the world, that the world hates you.

Mountains don't hate people. We're talking about something more complicated than that. Already out of the gate, we realize the world is not neutral to Jesus or those who follow Jesus.

If you look down at chapter 4, verse 1, and verse 5, beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

There are people who are proclaiming false gospels in the world, to the world. And if you look down at verse 5, these false prophets, they are from the world.

Therefore, they speak from the world and the world listens to them. We, brothers and sisters in Christ, are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, John the Apostle says, into the truth of the gospel.

[7:19] Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. So you see what's going on here? The world sends out false prophets to the world to proclaim a false message that the world says, yeah, I'll listen to that, but the world does not listen to the truthful preaching of Jesus Christ apart from a working of God.

The world is not a neutral place. It's not neutral to Jesus. It's not neutral to those of us who belong to Jesus.

And if you want the convincer, turn to chapter 5, verse 19, the three verses away from the very end of this book, we read this. We know that we are from God.

Again, he's referring to Christians. We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

It's a reference to Satan, the devil, the prince of the power of the air, Ephesians chapter 2, the Antichrist that's all over 1 John. And this is the God of this world according to 2 Corinthians 4.4 who has blinded the minds of unbelievers.

[8:41] So let me try to bring this all together for you. What is the world? The world is sinful humanity in organized rebellion against God under the power of the evil one.

It's a complicated system of opposition to God. And just to let you know, this world, this organized system of human rebellion against God under the evil one, it transcends cultures.

It transcends governments. The world defined this way works great under communism. It works great under socialism. It works great in a democracy.

It adapts fine in all of its various oppositions to God. what you need to understand is the world is actively opposing God and His purposes.

The world disconnects everything from God. The world is seeking to distort God's good design and gifts.

[9:58] The world empowered by Satan is deceiving and it is passing away. It's on its way to destruction. So what we're being prohibited to love is the very system that opposes God.

Don't give yourself back to the rebellious system under the power of the evil one that God has called you out of. And it's to that end I just want to remind you of who John is writing to.

He's not writing to the world to not love the world. He's writing to those called out of the world by His grace. He's writing to Christians.

We see that in 2.1 My little children family of God 2.7 beloved it's a reference to Christians 2.12 little children 2.13 fathers 2.13 young men 2.14 children 2.14 fathers 2.14 young men He says the word of God abides in you all you have overcome the evil one greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

He's writing to Christians those who belong to God who've been called out of the world He's saying don't give yourself back to that system now I do think that there's a possibility of some confusion here I don't believe John is forbidding us to love the world in a redemptive sense I don't think John is saying hey if you are burdened for your non-Christian relatives and neighbors you shouldn't love them that way that's that's not what he's saying I mean we can make a case from 1 John itself I mean if you look at 1 John 2.2 Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world we read the same in chapter 4 where Jesus is sent to the world in verse 19 Jesus is the savior of the world for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life what is being forbidden the kind of love being forbidden is a conforming love to the world a love for the world that says

[12:38] I want to be like you blending in being like who you love you become like who you love you're conformed into their image that's why in John 17 Jesus prays for his disciples not to be taken out of the world but to be sanctified in truth that they would love one another and bear witness to the savior of the world that's why Jesus says in Matthew 5 you are the light of the world a city on a hill don't let Satan blow it out don't put a bushel over it let your light shine what we're being we're being to love the world in some kind of conforming way where we become like the world in its values passions methods priorities they're all godless disconnected and opposing god and i just want to finally just say this remember why there is a not do not love the world it is a loving not it's your heavenly father the word father is used two times in this passage to remind you who you belong to and your father's great love for you god is forbidding a love for the world because he loves us could you imagine if you're a parent of an 18 year old son and your son you learn that your son is leaving your house to go visit a prostitute what are you going to do oh son please don't do that you know

I love you this is not who you are these are not the kind of desires that you want ruling your heart this is not going to end well son I in the book of revelation the world is called the prostitute Babylon we're not to have anything to do with her God in his love is saying don't give yourself back to her and so when you hear this command what I am very interested that you hear is that you're hearing your loving father say no he loves you this is a loving command not to love the world child of God don't give yourself back to the world and now to reason number one incompatible desires we start seeing this at the second half of verse 15 if anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him the love of the father talking about is love for the father there are two kinds of loves here love for the world if you love the world you're going to be conformed to the world and love for the father if you love the father you're going to be conformed to the image of the son what you love you're conformed to the image of and what's being said here they're mutually exclusive you can't love the world and love your father simultaneously it's either one or the other they're incompatible loves with incompatible desires

Jesus talked about in Matthew 6 when he talked about no one can serve two masters you'll either love one and hate the other you'll be devoted to one or despise the other you can't love both you can't serve both God and money so let me just give a little bit of a warning here I know that every Christian in the room right now would say this I agree I agree that no child of God should be loving the world I'm not so concerned about your profession I'm concerned about what's actually functioning in your heart because I think it's possible for you to say I don't love the world but in reality you actually live as though you can love God and love the world simultaneously and I'm here to tell you you just drank from the poison of the Kool-Aid of the world doesn't work that way very clear here it's one or the other in this passage

John says do not love the world or the things in the world and when you hear things you're probably thinking okay I'm not to love slot machines I get it but that's not actually what John has in mind because if you look at verse 16 he says for all that is in the world now he's picking up where he started in verse 15 and then he lists out a bunch of desires all that is in the world is a reference to operating governing motivations for all that is in the world he goes into this toxic cocktail of worldly passions and desires it's the trifold of godless motivations and do you see them the desire of the flesh the desire of the eyes the pride of life these are the governing motivations of the world and so my task now is to help you evaluate yourself in light of these worldly motivations

I want you to look at yourself I want you to take stock of what's rolling around in your own heart now the temptation is to think about you know what you need to preach this to Jim he really needs to hear about his worldly desires Jesus says before you take the speck out of your brother's eye be sure to take out the log out of your own God the next temptation will be this when we start drilling down here you're going to start thinking am I even a Christian how can this be in me remember what John writes in 1 John 1:5 through 9 walking in the light is not denying sin it is not sinlessness it is being honest about your sin to God so let's unpack these three toxic elements to the worldly motivations that are operating around us and what you need to see is that they're incompatible with love for God they're all part of this rationale this is why you don't love the world so let's dial in the desire of the flesh the flesh is used all throughout the

[20:02] New Testament to describe that part of you that is still in opposition to God that part of you your cravings your longings your desires that want to rebel against God that does not want to submit to who God is and what he calls you to that's your and what you need to know brother and sister in Christ is that when you became a Christian you you became a walking battle zone of desires because the moment you put your faith in Jesus the spirit of God came to indwell you and what we read from Galatians chapter 5 verse 6 17 and 18 is the desires of the flesh and the desires of the spirit are at war with each other opposing each other so the time you became a Christian likely you became even more aware of sin in you that's right that's normal it should be that way now if you want to see a catalog of the works of the flesh look at verses 19 through 21

Galatians chapter 5 but I just want to help you see five five the first is this one of the desires of the flesh that we regularly encounter in ourselves is sexual lust desire that is running over the banks of God's good design Matthew chapter five Jesus calls it the adultery of one's heart this can wreak havoc it can rule your life and if you belong to God that desire is incompatible with loving God and then there's the love of money greed idolatry Jesus calls it a master that you can serve first Timothy six talks about money the love of money as being the root of all evil the love of money can rule one's life and it is incompatible with love for

God then there is destructive anger your need to be right burns bridges it destroys it wreaks havoc on people in Matthew chapter five Jesus talks about anger as the seed of murder James one says the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God unchecked anger is incompatible with love for God and then there's this arresting anxiety that we all deal with it's it's a fear of unknowns it's circumstances ruling our lives and what it actually is it's a functional atheism because we become so aware of what may or may not happen we totally forget that there's a sovereign God reigning over it all carrying out his purposes it's incompatible with love for

God you feeling this I've been in this all week and then there's the fear of man the fear of man proves to be a snare problems and there's one particular way I want to impress upon you in which I believe the church in America is being tempted to fear of man and that is to accommodate to the moral order of our day it's to say no no no you can talk whatever you want about gender issues I'm just not going to enter into that oh no no no you can redefine sexuality and sexual and sexual you want I'm not going to touch it because I'm afraid to touch it the fear of man proves to be a snare in light of that I want you to look at 2nd Timothy chapter 4 verse 3 the fear of man and blending into the world can take over the church 2nd

Timothy 4:3 the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers John would say false prophets to suit their own passions desires we cannot we cannot do this these are desires of the flesh that are all around us

and when one of these or a number of these are the ruling governing motivations of your heart you have already blended into the world now what do you do what do you do when you start seeing these things operative in your heart you confess them you confess them to God for what they are God this lust is not your design for my sexuality

[25:43] I confess that change me this love of money money is not my God Jesus you are this anger this does not rule me Lord Jesus you're controlling all things I'm going to trust you anxiety fear fear of man you confess them if you look at verse 16 of chapter 2 this is very helpful the desires of the flesh this this thing that's from the world it's not from your father it's from the world you don't source this from a holy loving father these sinful motivations are from that systemic kind of reign of the devil controlling and organizing sinful humanity opposed to God it's not from God it's from the world but I want to remind you of this

Romans 13 14 put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires so you tell your lust oh I love Jesus more you tell your greed I want the treasures of Jesus more you tell your anger I am more zealous for Jesus glory you tell your anxiety and fear oh I am trusting in the timeline of my God you tell your fear of man you have no place in my heart because Jesus is way bigger than you the desires of the flesh are incompatible with love for the father that's why we don't love the world and then there are the desires of the eyes I call them dark optics remember the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers they can't see clearly non-Christians are short-sighted they think that today we eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die and so they don't think in terms of eternity they think now it's short-sightedness and there's this condition called dancing eyes in people where their eyes are shaking and they can't focus in everything is blurry spiritual blindness keeps people blurry from seeing what is most important focusing in on God his word and the souls of men as most important there's this thing called stereo blindness in which someone is unable to see depth they can't see in 3D and this blinding effect of the devil on people blinds them to the spiritual realities that are existing in everything our battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual principalities spiritual blindness this desire of the eyes when that's operative in you do you know what do you know what effect it has you don't see yourself clearly nor do you see others clearly you for sure don't see God clearly it distorts everything so have you unwittingly adopted the world's way of seeing yourself seeing others and seeing God are you seeing people as means of being of approval of accomplishment of status is is this is this saying something that you hear just be true to yourself this past week I read an article by Brett McCracken in which he expressed much concern of what's called expressive individualism it's about my voice being heard above all else are you viewing people according to what the world says is most important that's not from God it's from the world God's word says people are image bearers with eternities God says we are not to value people according to the flesh but to see them and their standing on which side of Jesus so maybe you're sitting in your pew and you're saying you know what

I'm not sure if I'm seeing straight well confess it say Lord Jesus I am not seeing these things clearly and that's why you need the corrective lens of God's word God's word makes things clear God's word helps us to look beyond the here and now with an eternal perspective God helps us through his word to focus on what's important God his word in the souls of man God's word helps us to see the spiritual realities by faith that exist everywhere are are you seeing life through the optics of the world or through the lens of scripture seeing through the lens through the optics of the world is a desire that is incompatible with love for

[31:35] God confess it find his mercy and then there's the pride of life and what is essentially being addressed here is the pride of possessions that word pride actually means bragging boasting and it goes beyond bragging in what you have whether that is a huge bank account or nice clothes or cool techno gear or a cool car house or houses cool appliances it goes into accomplishments boasting in what you've accomplished whether that's personal records promotions rewards whether that's sexual exploits giving someone the raw end of the deal bragging in your authority bragging in your experiences bragging in your political exploits that's

not from God that's from the world the pride of life the pride of possessions is this false belief that this world has everything to offer you which makes it the sum total of life it's not true it's not from

God that's from the world and so you need to confess it when you become aware of it when it's ruling you the world is not the final authority on what you live your life for Jesus is and that's why in Matthew chapter 16 we hear him say something as amazing as this if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul it's one or the other we don't boast in our possessions but we do boast you know what we boasted who possesses us we belong to

Jesus that's our boast okay so this is the trifecta of desires of worldly motivations they're very real temptations and they're not from God they're incompatible with loving God this is reason number one why we don't love the world that these desires they're not to be true of us they're not what God has purchased for us they're incompatible with walking in the light as God is light so what do you do when you become aware of these you confess them if we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all of these ungodly motivations of the world and its place do you know what he wants to do in you he wants you to treasure

Jesus above all else he wants you to obey Jesus and all of his commands he wants you to abound in your love for those who belong to Jesus that's what he's looking to do in you those are the desires that he's looking to cultivate check this out you know the Chicago river was reversed it used to flow in but now it flows out all of these desires of the flesh desires of the eyes the boasting of life these are desires that are taking desires from me but when you experience God's love in the Lord Jesus Christ the spirit of God reverses the course of your loves from taking it to me to giving it out for the glory of

Jesus to obey his commands to love other people that's who you are that's what Jesus accomplished for you now reason number two contrasting ends and I am at the end of my time but I want to point you to one thing in verse 17 and the world is passing away along with its desires but whoever does the will of God abides forever it's a contrast between passing away and abiding forever the world is sinful humanity in organized rebellion against God under the power of the evil one the church is redeemed humanity in organized obedience to God under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ the righteous one if you're living for the world you're living for something that's passing away it's got an expiration date and if you sniff it it smells bad but if you're doing the will of your God your Father that smells wonderful to your

[37:26] God and it demonstrates that you have actually been given eternal life because the verbal tense is there if anyone is doing the will of God he is abiding forever it demonstrates that you've been given eternal life reason number two why we don't love the world it's not who you are you've been born again and you belong to God this morning we've been given a clear prohibition from our loving heavenly father do not love the world or the motivations of the world and he's given us two reasons why not to first is the world's desires are incompatible with loving your father so you've got to continually confess them and secondly the world is passing away but you child of God you're doing the will of your father and you're going to live forever it's not who you are so child of God don't give yourself back to the world you've been called out from the world so let's proclaim

Jesus to the world what do you think what do you think what do you think is the main thing that we belong to Jesus not the world Lord Jesus would you impress upon us the wonder of who you are the glory of who you are that there is no one or no thing that compares to you Lord Jesus would you take up rightly the throne of our hearts and would you govern all of our desires and motivations that all that we do we would do unto the glory of your name and for the good of all people help us Lord Jesus Father pour out your spirit in us to bring this about and help us help us now to be honest with you about our sin and find healing and forgiveness yet again in Jesus name we pray amen