

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD

1 John 2:12-17 (Key Verse 2:15)

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

Today I will be delivering our last special lecture on the book of 1st John. However, I would like to remind ourselves, of where we from and what today's lecture is about. The past two lectures we covered which were on 1st John 1:1-10 and 1 John 2:1-11, was about how can we know that we have come to know God. In other words how can you know whether I am saved or not. John revealed three things which should be part of a life of a true believer. Firstly, our faith is based on the gospel of Jesus Christ, what Jesus did for us and what he is continuing to do. Secondly, the life of a child of God is a life of repentance, they confess their sin before God. They can do this because they know that Jesus is faithful and just and will forgive their sin. Thirdly, we know we are saved if we obey God's commandments. As we learned this does not mean we are obedient perfectly, however it does mean we have an attitude and strife to obey God's commands. So that is what we have been dealing with from our past two Sundays. Let me also say, it is important that we know for sure where we stand, whether we are saved or not. It is very difficult if not impossible to grow spiritually in faith if we constantly live in doubt on whether we are saved or not. So, it is important that we are honest with ourselves and fellow believers so you can be supported accordingly.

In today's passage, we have passed the questioning and wondering on whether I am saved or not. Today's passage is addressed to believers, they may be young in the faith, they may still be growing in the faith and they may be mature in the faith. The passage is about how much of Jesus am I becoming? How can we keep holiness as believers? How can we live by doing the will of God? The importance of loving the will of God. And so, it is interesting and amazing that, though the letter is addressed to believers, John stresses the point, **"Do not love the world or anything in this world."** This is because, firstly, we live in a fallen world and secondly, we are still living in our sinful bodies. The word of God today commands us, not to love the world or anything in this world because we can obey this command. We can obey it because of what Jesus did for us on the cross and what he is continuing to do for us. We can obey it because of the Holy spirit who continually helps us to live holy lives. First, part is about different levels of spiritual maturity and the second part is about God's command not to love the world. It is my prayer that we may receive one word of God in our hearts so we may overcome love for the world but rather do the will of God. Amen!

Part I: Spiritual stages in our Christian faith (12-14)

Let us look at verse 12, "I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." The word "dear children" **refers to everyone who is born again**. The passage here is giving a reassurance, whether we fall into sin or fail to obey God's commands, our sins still remain to be forgiven, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Jesus took upon himself all our sin, he became the sinner while we were made holy. He died on the cross in our place, because the wages of sin is death. And so instead of us facing death due to sin, Jesus faces that death. 2 Cor 5:21 says "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Now why was this done? Was it because we were these wonderful people who deserved Jesus love. No, it was whiles we were sinners. As the verse 12 says, Jesus did it because of His name, it was for His name sake that our sins were forgiven. So God did this for his own glory so we may worship him forever and ever. So it is very important that we are constantly reminded of what God did for us to have our sins forgiven. This our reassurance, that our sins, past and those in the future have been forgiven, full forgiveness for the glory of God. This of course can never become an excuse to sin or live a sinful life. It all the more rebukes us from committing sin actually.

John proceeds to talk towards those at different spiritual growth or stages in their faith. **Firstly, lets look at the spiritually mature**. Look at verse 13a, "I am writing to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning." The fathers here are not physical fathers but spiritual fathers. That means this is not just men but also women. Fathers represents those who are the most mature in the faith. They have spent prolonged time in the word. Their minds have been renewed by scripture. They have fought many battles, have been in the front lines. No one starts on the fathers stage. It take time to grow into that stage. They have grown to know God from the beginning. This is similar to our relationships with others. An example is marriage, while you are on a dating stage to marry, you know the person only to a small degree. However, once you marry a whole lot of thing are discovered, it is through marriage life, through making complicated decisions, being venerable to one another, fighting and forgiving one another and many others things that you grow into really knowing the person or each other. Similarly, the fathers are those mature believers who have come to know God from the beginning. They do not simply know about God, but have a lived experience of who God is. They have the true knowledge of God. This indicates to all of us that the most important knowledge to have, is the true knowledge of who God is. And as long as we are alive, we have a great opportunity to know who God is. And this can be through our studies, through our jobs, through our marriages, through raising children and through studying His word.

Secondly, the next level of spiritual maturity John jumps to, **are those who are in their infancy stage**. Look at verse 13b "I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." Young men here refers to those in the ages of 20 to 40. These are the ones who have grown up from their baby stage. Grown up into adult stage, you want your life to matter. These are those who cannot sit in the nursery any longer. Those who want to fight battles for God, win souls for Christ, tear down strong holds, destroy secular ideology. Those who want to be true witness of Christ Jesus. They are the once who have taken off their diapers. No longer passive but active, no longer a spectator. They don't just show up for church any longer. They want to serve and participate. Throughout the week they want their life to matter in God's kingdom.

Thirdly, John talks about those who are babes, those who are still in nursery. Look at 14a "I write to you, dear children [babes], because you know the Father." The word children here is different from the one in verse 12. Here It represents those who just became saved recently. They have genuine faith, just that their faith has not been tested. They know God as their father, just like a baby would know their father. [That's why as a father I looked forward for my son to call me papa or dady]. So children here represent two kinds of people, though fundamentally both are spiritual babes. First person has just been saved, they are new in the faith. The other kind of a person, are those who have been Christians for a number of years. But never grown up, only given the milk not proper meat of the word. They may participate in many church activities an even enjoy church activities to some extent. But they are not daily exercising their faith and so they never build any spiritual muscles. They are really a sad sight because they are still wearing diapers while they have been professing Christians for many years.

From verse 14b to 14c, John re-enforces what he has been saying. Look at verse 14b, "I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning." Again these are the mature in the faith, they know God from the beginning. For all the believers this is the ultimate goal of all believers. We are to grow in our knowledge of God. A wrong knowledge of God leads to a wrong view of the world even a wrong understanding of what the bible teaches.

And then in 14c, we read, "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one." We now see why these young men are strong. Remember this a spiritual stage, it represents both men and women. They are strong because the word of God lives in them. Strong here means mighty. And it is not physical strength but spiritual strength. They are strong in prayer and God's word is not far or distant from them. It abides in them daily, God's word convicts them. They take God's word seriously. There Is also something emphasized here and its that, they have overcome the evil one. What does this mean? It means that they are intentional about living by faith, they are sensitive to how they live. They understand that, they are at war with an evil system, as long they live in this world. And so they depend on God's word. Because to fight a war you need a weapon; their weapon is the word of God. Their Christian life is not only on Sundays, but a day to day life.

How are we measuring up to where we are in spiritual maturity? Why am I at the state am at in becoming like Jesus? What childishness do we still find in our lives? Are we overcoming the devil? Are we growing in head knowledge or are we growing In knowing God? I believe we all want to grow, but the important step is to first identify or know, where are we in our spiritual growth or stage. The we pray accordingly so we may not be Sunday Christians. May the word of God remain in us and convict us so we may daily live by faith and grow towards being mature Christians. Part II will reveal our most powerful destruction towards growing in maturity.

Part II: Do not love the world

From all the different stages of our Christian faith, ultimately we cannot be neutral as we live in this world especially if we are to grow into spiritual maturity. Let us all read verse 15, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them." The world here Is a world system that has perverted values and is ruled by secular ideologies. It can be the world of entertainment, the world of politics, the world of education, the world of religion and so on. This is not to say everyone or everything in the world is evil, but it is to say that there is a network system or infrastructure of a system. A system that has an intentional agenda that is anti God, anti-family and anti purity. It is a system that is ran by or thrives on secular humanism. It is hostile towards God, filled with Godless ideologies that are trying to suppress the truth of God.

Things in the world include worldly possessions, worldly pursuits and worldly possessions. It is things that ultimately become more important than loving God. **Things we prioritize in loving, rather than loving God**. The last verse of this book says, John 5:21, "Dear little children, keep yourselves from idols." An idol is anything you love more than God, fear more than God and serve more than God. An idol does not necessarily mean a hand made sculpture. It can be anything man made, it can be a job, a car a house, a child or family, anything that that pulls us away from loving God with all our mind, with our breath and mind. Matthew 6:24, no one can serve wo masters. Our master could either be Jesus or the world. We cannot love both same time. Either we love the one and hate the other. In fact if our love for God grows our love for the world drops, similar if our love

for the world grows our love for God drops. As James 4:4 says "...don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

He then specifies three deadly forces that are in the world. Look at verse 16, "For everything in the world—**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**—comes not from the Father but from the world." And so it begins with the lust of the flesh. We can see that the first two work together, **the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes**. These are strong cravings, strong desires that has set a strong hook on us. Though our flesh was crucified with Jesus it is still with us, however no longer has power over us. That is why we read in Galatians 5:16, "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." We still have in some way a lion within our flesh. Unless we are intentional in walking by the spirit we will fall prey to these worldly forces. One example is how Eve became deceived in the beginning. Gen 3:6a says, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." She set her eyes on it and that was the entry point into her sole. That captured her and corrupted her from the inside.

Another example is David, 2 Samuel 11:2, "One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful," Now because David set before his eyes what is forbidden. He stimulated and stirred up his flesh which has appetite, for that which is not godly or lawful. In Matthew 5:28 Jesus said, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." So we can see the entry to the heart is our eyes. Matthew 6:22-23 Says "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" So we really need to guard what we allow our eyes to see. What we are looking at is cultivating and stimulating desires within us. We need to be intentional because that is the entry point. That is what marketing or TV commercials thrives on. That is why vehicle commercials in the past, would have a beautiful woman walking around the vehicle to stimulate certain things, so one may fall prey to buy. Because men are virtual creatures.

The third thing that does not come from God is **the pride of life**. What this means is that, what we see that appeals to our flesh, ignites our pride. If I just had this, I would appear to be to myself something, and I would be better than someone else. And they would look up to me because of that thing am looking at. Having it would inflate pride. Whatever it is, it leads to self elevation and self importance. A bigger this a better that. We live in a world that is filled with all kinds of things, nothing wrong with having things, nothing wrong with gaining success in this world. Question is why are we pursuing these things? Why do I want to pass the course? Why do I want that promotion? Why I want to have that car? Why I want to be with that person? Or marry that person? List goes on and on. Are we hoping we will have true life once we have these things? What hopes do we have for gaining these things or pursuing someone?

And now the contrast is in verse 17, "The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." This world is passing away, there is no substance to it because it is actually passing away. It is self destructing. It is passing away with its paganism, hedonism, materialism and idolatry. So the question to you and me is? Why would you and me put our eggs in that basket. Why would you live for this world? The contrast is that, the one on the other hand who does the will of God lives forever. This living forever means that they will live with God or in the presence of God forever. Because we will all actually live forever, it is simply a question of whether we will live with God forever or in eternal hell for ever (separated from God). So in other words our eternal live begins already in this world. Because we have began to live with Jesus in our hearts in this world.

In conclusion, we learned that we are all at different levels of spiritual maturity. However, our Christian faith is not a matter of remaining as babes, but a journey in becoming like Jesus. We need to live out our faith in the world. Grow in knowing God and this is not head knowledge but a life that puts into practice God's word in daily life. Are we where we are supposed to be spiritually? We are supposed to be growing in spiritual maturity. And I can say, its probably normal if most us feel we are not where we supposed to be. When we compare ourselves to the likeness of Jesus. We need to have that kind of humility before God. Realizing that our love for the world may have been our priority rather than our love for God. How then do we move forward? We should not love the world and anything in this world. To achieve this we first need to be under the teaching of the word of God. This is not about Church attendance, studying the bible or testimony writing. But to intentionally obey what we learn from God's word, to trust God and really live by faith. Fighting our fears and doubts with the word of God. Genuinely seeking God in all of our decisions. Secondly, we need to be intentional about what we let our eyes gaze on. Being conscious that, we still live in a sinful body and we feed the sinful desires in our bodies with what we allow our eyes spend time gazing upon. What are we constantly feeding ourselves through social media for example. The world system is on an agenda to capture us, control us and destroy us. Because it knows it is a sinking ship, its time is limited. However, if we choose to do the will of God we will escape from the trap of this world. It is my prayer that, we grow in love for God and in knowing Him so we may not love the world and things of this world. Amen!