

**RCC in the Word**  
**Week of November 19**  
**1 John 2**

*Devotional thoughts from the first epistle of John*

“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 of 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 does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15-17

This week, we will take a brief look at these verses from John’s first epistle. Classified as one of the general epistles because there is no greeting or any other indication of specific recipients, John’s words are universally applicable to the Church in every age the world over.

If we are to avoid loving the world, we need to be sure that we know what John is referring to as “the world” and also what it means to love it. It would be erroneous to think that John means the earth when he uses the word “world.” We have no choice but to live on the earth as this is where God Himself has placed us. And furthermore, He “richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17b), meaning that as we acknowledge Him as Creator and Giver of all things and receive His blessings with thankful hearts, it is a God-honoring thing to enjoy and love His created world.

It is helpful to think of the world that we're being commanded not to love as the “world system.” So do not love the world system that man has created while either leaving God out of the equation altogether or at least keeping Him at a safe distance. We must bear in mind that there are two and only two powers at work in this world--God who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and Satan, that ancient serpent (Revelation 20:2) who has long been in complete rebellion to Him. Ever since Adam and Eve's fall into sin, Satan has been at work (using blinded and deceived human beings) to build a system or kingdom to oppose everything that God intends to do with His created order.

John states that “if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” This is not the only place in the scriptures where the love of God and love of the world are set up in opposition to one another. Jesus spoke of this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:24) and elsewhere in the gospels. James speaks clearly of this, stating emphatically that “friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4), and Peter implies throughout his letters a necessary separation from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In fact, almost every page of the New Testament contains something of the idea of it being impossible to be on friendly terms with both God and the world.

John goes on to divide this concept of the world into three parts: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. Here is a brief explanation of each of these elements of the world.

The desires of the flesh would include appetites for sex, food, sleep, and all manner of things that are geared towards pleasing self at the expense of pleasing and honoring God. These appetites are never satisfied, particularly the appetite for sex. They may seem like they are satisfied for a short time but the gnawing desire always returns and attempts to satisfy it always ultimately come up empty. Furthermore, it is frightening to observe the lengths that human beings will go to in their attempts to satisfy the desires of their flesh, resulting in broken families, ruined lives, and other unspeakable sorrows.

Desires of the eyes can be described as covetousness in all of its various forms. These desires are rooted in discontentment with what God has given. They need not be limited to material possessions (although they could be this). But it could be another person who appears to be more capable of meeting our needs than our spouse does. Perhaps it is the life circumstances of another family in the church that seem more manageable than our own. Or maybe more income, a more fulfilling job, more free time, etc. In any case, the common thread is a discontentment with the life that God has given for *us* to live, with the story that He is writing for *us*, that is different from the one that He is writing for our neighbor. The net result of pursuing the desires of the eyes is a mindset that God Himself cannot satisfy, that we really need something else that He is withholding from us and then we will be happy. Again, we come up empty.

The third element of the world that John mentions is the pride of life. Such pride that he is referring to is a man-centered self-sufficiency with a complete disregard for God. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," says the writer of Proverbs (16:18), and "One's pride will bring him low" (29:23). The scriptures are full of examples of people who were operating with a prideful spirit and subsequently were brought down in some way. I myself have recently had to repent of a prideful spirit which was working in me a harsh and judgmental attitude towards others in the church. I'm very thankful that the Holy Spirit through His Word and through a set of circumstances revealed this to me. Along with the pride of life often comes a sense of self-entitlement--another opposite characteristic to godly humility. May the Lord deliver us all from such forms of pride. In my case, it was subtle, beginning with a heart burden that I thought was very well-meaning. What began as a desire to honor the Lord became mixed with pride and resulted in me dishonoring Him in other ways. May the Lord continue to be merciful in revealing these things to us.

John concludes this paragraph by mentioning that "the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever". May the Lord reveal to us through His Word and through our relationships with one another the various ways in which the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life creep into our lives. And may we, aided by the Holy Spirit, strive to be heavenly minded as we continue on our journey towards our eternal home.

-Written by Eddie Lyrene