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Epistles of John Bible Study (Security)

## 1 John 2:12-17, The Love God Hates

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In the midst of speaking about the characteristics of true disciples so that we can know that we have eternal life, John takes a seeming tangent in verses 12-14 before returning to describing another characteristic of God's people. We have noticed John writing as a spiritual father to these Christians, whom he has repeatedly called his children or "little children." Look at 1 John 2:18 where John again calls all of the Christians, "Children." Before going on to the next test to know if we know God, John wants to take a break and encourage these Christians. A great challenge was laid at the feet of his audience. We were commanded to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to follow the example of Jesus' love for us in how we love others. If we do not love each other then we walk in darkness. Notice the consoling, encouraging words that are found in verses 12-14.

### You Know Him (2:12-14)

Notice that John begins broadly to all the Christians as he addresses the "little children." John writes because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. This statement contains two precious truths. First, your sins are forgiven. You know God and your sins are forgiven. John is writing to give these Christians that great confidence, a confidence that allows us to overcome the world with its sorrows and difficulties.

Second, we are forgiven for his name's sake. Our forgiveness displays God's righteousness. Even our forgiveness is to God's glory, revealing his mercy, power, love, and grace. This reminds us that everything we do is to reveal God and his glory.

John then breaks his audience down into two groups: fathers and young men. As we will notice in the way John addresses these two groups, John is not speaking about physical age but spiritual maturity. The fathers are those who have known the Lord and obeyed him for a long time. The young men refer to all the Christians who are newer in the faith and have been Christians a shorter time. John writes to the spiritually mature (the fathers) because they know him who is from the beginning. John expresses his confidence that he knows that have been with God from the very beginning. They have held fast to God and his teaching and will not let go. As I read this I think it is a good reminder that though we have forceful lessons from God's word every week, the shepherds and myself have great confidence in your love for the Lord and your willingness to conform to the image of His Son. John wants them to have firm confidence that they know God and should not be made uneasy about their salvation by these false teachers. John shifts to those newer in the faith (the young men) and tells them that he knows they have overcome the evil one. You are on the side of Jesus and part of the victorious army. Satan is being tread under your feet (cf. Romans 16:20).

Next, John goes through once more to encourage the Christians. Again he addresses all the Christians: "I write to you, children." These Christians know God. You know him and have confidence in that knowledge. Next, John address the fathers again, the spiritually mature. He says the exact same words that he said in the previous verse. You know him who is from the beginning. You know God and never forget that truth. Finally, John writes to the young men, those newer in the faith, and reminds them that they are strong in the Lord. You have the new life in Christ and have God as your strength. They have been born through the word of God and that word lives in their lives. They have overcome the evil one through their faith and stand with confidence as his children. John is not at all trying to undermine their faith but trying to confirm their faith by these tests of true disciples.

## Cannot Love Both (2:15)

John returns to his tests so that we can know that we know God and have eternal life. The first test was that we keep his commands, serving the Lord fully and confessing our sins when we slip. The second test was if we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will not cause trouble or divisions, nor will we be an irritant. We will love and serve each other. Our next test is that disciples do not love the world. <sup>N<sup>o</sup>t</sup> verse 15. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You do not have love for the <sup>^</sup> world.

Father if we have love for the world. It is not possible for us to love both. We like to think that we can have a love for both. We think that we can love God while at the same time loving the things of this world. Demas fell into this trap as the apostle Paul records.

**For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. (2 Timothy 4:10 ESV)**

James taught the same thing. **“Adulteresses! Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the world’s friend becomes God’s enemy.” (James 4:4 HCSB)**

The imagery is a parallel to marriage. Can I tell my wife that I love her but that I also love another woman? Should she accept me if I tell her that I love two women? You do not love me if you love another. We cannot have divided interests and a divided heart. We are to married to Christ and that marriage excludes all others. That is why God calls our unfaithfulness to his covenant adultery throughout the scriptures.

## The Reason We Cannot Love the World (2:16)

The reason we cannot love the world is because all that is in the world is not from the Father. The world is not full of righteousness and holiness but full of wickedness. We need to have spiritual vision to recognize that the things in the world are not godly. I think we easily lose sight of this truth. John explains three aspects of the world that are in opposition to God.

### The desires of the flesh.

The desires of the flesh are in opposition to God. We are commanded to make decisions based upon the commands of God and the examples of our Lord. We cannot make decisions based upon how it makes the body feel. We cannot let our desires rule our lives. This is the reason people lose control of their lives and become enslaved and addicted to all kinds of vices and desires. Consider that God has given godly outlets for our desires. Generally speaking, our desires are not sinful. What is sinful is the way we try to fulfill our desires. Sexual desires are not sinful. But when we fulfill these desires through sexual immorality, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, and lust then we are in opposition to God. God has given us marriage as the means to fulfill these desires. God has given us Jesus, our physical families, our Christian brethren, our spouses, and the like as the means to properly channel our desires for love, comfort, encouragement, etc. The problem is that we seek to fulfill our desires in ways that God has not commanded. When our physical appetites become our god and we seek to fulfill ourselves through

ungodly means. then you see why the desires of the flesh are in opposition to God. Following the desires

of your flesh will not lead you to a relationship with God. Listening to the body will bring us to sin repeatedly.

### The desires of the eyes.

John also identifies everything that entices the eyes. The desires of the eyes gets us in all kinds of trouble. We see things that we want and we have to have it. We often lack self-control. We see it and we want it. There is no such thing as having discipline. We follow our eyes and we are enticed by materialism. We have to rise higher than the mere decision process of, "Well, it looks good." This was the thinking of Eve when Satan tempted her. She noticed that the fruit looked good to eat. So often we make our life decisions based upon how it looks. We cripple ourselves from being able to give to others and give financially to the expanding of God's kingdom and strengthening of our faith because we have spent our money on our desires. Making decisions based upon how appealing it is to the eyes will not lead us to a relationship with God. The desires of the eyes will bring us to sin repeatedly.

### The pride of possessions and lifestyle.

The idea is the pride that comes from what people toil to acquire. That's why some translations use "the pride of possessions" while others use "pride of one's lifestyle." This is reflected in whatever status symbol is important to me or seems to define my identity. Our society teaches us to have this kind of pride. We are told to have pride in who we are and take pride in status. We need to have the best. We may wear particular clothing for the status or drive a particular car for the status. We may have a particular job for the status. One of the great dangers we have of falling into this sin is by finding our value in our work. Our world tells us that you are only worth whatever you do for a job. That is why mothers who stay home are criticized as lazy. The world is all about status. Notice what God teaches is to be the ideal for a woman.

**Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (Titus 2:3–5 ESV)**

The world spits on this teaching. The world says your status as a woman is in being stronger than your husband, ignoring the home, showing your strength, and running the show. God disagrees strongly. For men, the world tells us that our status is in long hours, having a power job, bringing home large amounts of money, and possessing all there is to own in this world. You have to have new cars regularly and need to flaunt your wealth. Your status is in your stuff. God says that your status is found in loving your

wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:23-29). God says your status is being a father to your children (Ephesians 6:1-3). God says your status is in being the provider for your family (1 Timothy 5:8). Your identity is in Christ. We lose our identity when we find our status and value in the things the world says are valuable. Glory belongs to the Lord, not to ourselves. Everything we enjoy is because God has been gracious to give it to us.

## The Foolishness of Loving The World (2:17)

John concludes this section by telling us why it is foolish to love the world. The point is very simple: everything in the world is passing away. Why take joy and pride in such fleeting pleasures? Nothing in this world is going to last nor will it bring lasting satisfaction and joy. The problem is that the world distracts us from our godly focus. John says that those who do the will of God abide forever. Eternal joy and eternal satisfaction is found in seeking the ways of God. Everything else is short-term pleasures. The fulfilling of the desires of the flesh are momentary and fleeting. Sexually immorality sounds fulfilling but disappears in minutes. Letting the desires of our eyes lead us is fleeting. Tomorrow a new toy comes out and the toys you are collecting either break or sit in the corner and no longer important. The status symbols of the world lose their status. Owning the top of the line car is no longer top of the line next year when a new model comes out. Who are you accumulating this status for? Someone you do not know who drives by? You certainly are not impressing any spiritually minded Christians! So a few neighbors think you have it together. So what? Now what will that do for you? All these things are efforts in futility as they do not last and do not truly matter. The love of the world leads us away from the Lord and does not bring the joy that it promises.

## Conclusion

Our third test in John's second chapter: if we love the world then we do not know God and do not have eternal life.

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