

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## LOVE THE WORLD – DON'T LOVE THE WORLD

By Steven Harper

No person who has read the Bible very much is likely to forget the verse: *“For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved”* (Jn. 3:16-17). Some refer to this as the Bible’s golden text. But how many of us remember that the same inspired writer wrote: *“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 lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”* (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Many words are best understood by learning how they are used. When Jesus said that God loved the world, that he came not to condemn but to save the world, He used the word world in a different sense than John used it in 1 John 2:15-17. In fact, world is used in several ways. It describes what God created through the agency of His Word.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him”* (Jn.1:1-10).

God’s creation is good and cannot be inherently evil. However, there is something about the world that we are not to love or desire. The world has changed from the jewel created by God’s artistry to a corrupt environment that breeds sin and degradation. It is this aspect about which John wrote when he told us not to love the world.

The world lies under the domination of evil. John also said, *“We are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one”* (1 Jn. 5:19). The world has conformed itself to evil and away from God. Those held captive by this world’s sin are antagonistic, not only to God, but also to those who are *“of God.”* Jesus told His disciples, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”* (Jn. 15:18-19). Jesus spoke of those in the world as being separate from God.

Paul wrote, *“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh...that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”* (Eph. 2:11-12). One can ill afford to remain in the world, separate from Christ, without hope, and lost.

When John told us not to love this world, he had in mind love in the sense of selfish participation in the way the world functions. God’s children are to love the lost world, as God does, to save it from the awful penalty of spiritual death.

Paul wrote, *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:6-8).

Dean Henry Alford called this love *“holy redemption.”* It is not a love that focuses on oneself, but on others. *“Love not the world, neither the things in the world.”* This forbidden love seeks to participate in the sins of the world. God so loved the world that he gave his son to save it. His Divine love draws lost sinners from this world’s sin and contamination. This prohibition is very similar to something Paul wrote. *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (Col. 3:1-3).

John continued, *“For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of*

*the Father but is of the world*” (Verse 16). We are admonished to love whatever the world has that owes its existence to the Father in heaven, but all the rest is so corrupt that we are to shun it. John mentioned three classes of evil: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.

***“The lust of the flesh.”*** Lust of the flesh is the natural desire associated with the flesh. ***“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin, He condemned sin in the flesh”*** (Rom. 8:3). Sinful flesh refers to humanity’s natural propensity to find sin attractive and to be drawn into sinful practices. The ***“lust of the flesh”*** is part of that which is ***“in the world.”*** It is that which we must subdue.

The fact that humans are flesh does not mean they are born with a fallen and sinful nature. That is a very misleading expression. It is true that flesh becomes sinful, but not through birth. Sin is the transgression of law (1 Jn. 3:4). We do not inherit sin. We are born into a sinful environment in this world, but that does not mean we are born sinful. Being born in sin does not mean we are born with sin in us.

***“The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one”*** (1 Jn. 5:19). Since the lust of the flesh is part of the world, it is one place where Satan can successfully gain control over us. Whether he does or not depends on our efforts to resist him. ***“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”*** (Jas. 4:7). The devil cannot invade your life if you engage the right defense. One who is in submission to the Almighty has the protection necessary to ward off the devil’s strongest assaults.

***“The lust of the eyes.”*** Eyes are windows for men’s souls. What we see affects us tremendously. For that reason, it is very important that we screen out things that affect us adversely. This area can cause even the strongest saints to stumble. Remember King David? He looked upon Bathsheba as she bathed, and he lusted. What he saw led him to commit adultery with her and to participate in her husband’s murder (2 Sam. 11).

Achan, whose sin brought Israel’s onward march to a halt as they invaded the land of Palestine, confessed, ***“When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them”*** (Jos. 7:21).

Eve, the mother of mankind, looked at the forbidden fruit and saw that it was ***“good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate”*** (Gen. 3:6). To avoid giving in to the lusts of the flesh, that which appeals to the lust of the eye has to be masked away from sight. Those who argue that pornography and lurid literature are harmless don’t believe the Bible and know very little about human nature.

***“The pride of life.”*** Pride is the precursor to destruction. ***“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall”*** (Prov. 16:18). Pride keeps one from submitting to God, accepting His word as truth, and living in harmony with the teaching of His Son, Jesus Christ. The proud are classified with ***“backbiters, haters of God, violent, boasters, inventors of evil things, (and) disobedient to parents”*** (Rom. 1:30). Those who become enamored with their own importance are easy victims for the devil. He does not have to convince them that sin is nothing about which to be concerned; they are already oblivious to its infectious and insidious effect on their lives. Their pride is their downfall.

It is interesting that in just three verses, John mentioned the worst foes mankind will ever face. He mentioned the world, sin, and the devil. This unholy trinity of evil sets itself against everything that is good and wholesome. It seeks to discredit and disparage the sacred Trinity that stands as the single bulwark of safety for the whole world. The conclusion: the world is passing away, but those who do the will of God will abide. If you love this world, you love a thing that is doomed. That is pure folly. Take hold of something that will last, that will endure, no matter what happens. That solid foundation is obedient faith in Jesus Christ. Our Lord said, ***“But why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to me, and hears my sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently, and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great”*** (Lk. 6:46-49).

Obedience is the only genuine evidence of man’s faith. Unquestionably, faith in Christ is essential, but it is vain and empty when not expressed through obedience to the Lord’s commands. We urge you to do this today. Remember, do not love this world; it is doomed. Love the Lord. Obey His word and be saved from your past sins. Abide in Him, and he will abide with you. Jesus said, ***“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”*** If you believe Christ, obey His command today. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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