

# (1 John #13) the Exclusiveness of True Love

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God and not loving the world, as love for the world is incompatible with love for God.*

**Duration:** 36:29

**Scripture:** 1 John 2:15

**Topics:** "Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of loving the world as people, but not loving the world as an organization that goes against God's will. The command is to not love the world or the things in the world. The essence of this command is explained as the desire to impress others and seek their approval, rather than living a life that glorifies God. The speaker challenges the audience to examine their motives and actions, urging them to withdraw their love for the world in order to truly love the Father and His children.

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## Transcript

Will you turn with me in the word of God to the first epistle written by John. We continue with our studies in this very wonderful epistle. We take up the thread this morning with verse 15 in chapter 2 and we read the section verses 15 to 17.

1 John chapter 2 verses 15 to 17. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Now, the Apostle John takes it as axiomatic that every true Christian loves the Father and his family. We've already touched upon that in the previous verses and I simply make reference to it today. It is not an optional extra to love God, nor is it an optional extra to love the people of God.

Those who are in Christ, have the Spirit of Christ in them. And the Spirit of Christ within us produces a new life in our souls. And that new life will express itself in love for God and in love for men.

Especially for his own people in the first place, but ultimately for men everywhere. Now, John takes that as axiomatic and that is to be understood as we come to our passage this morning. He has latterly, as you remember, right up from verse 7 to verse 11, which we were considering two weeks or so ago, he has been stressing the importance of loving one another.

Then, last Lord's Day, in verses 12, 13, and 14, we were considering what some people speak of as a digression. The occasion for it is something like this. John appeared to think that the demands that he had enunciated in the previous verses might be a little heartbreaking to some of the Christians.

He was elucidating certain tests that could be put to heretical people that were abroad, who had separated from the church at Ephesus and its environment. And he seems to think that perhaps what he has said is disconcerting to the sense, to the believers, to the genuine Christian. Now, in the passage we were considering last Lord's Day, he assures them that as far as he is concerned, he looks upon them all as genuinely Christian.

Some of them may be but babes in Christ. Others of them may be fathers, really mature, with spiritual children of their own. They've grown up, they're men and women of God, fathers and mothers in the Israel of God.

Now, what is interesting is this. Having so done, John does not for one moment lessen the standard of the tests that he has thus far enunciated. But in the words of our text today, he really adds to the demand for love.

In a sense, he makes it still more difficult. In the first test, that which related to obedience to the commandments, he referred to the necessity for love toward God. In the second test, love for his people.

Now he comes to tell us that if we are to love the Father and love the Father's people, we must of necessity learn not to love the world. And I know from my own heart how this kind of thrust will find us all. We are so much wrapped up with the things of this world.

By nature, we have become some involved with some of the most illicit things in this world. That we find it very difficult to wean our rebellious hearts from earthly things and set them upon things which are above, where Christ is seated. But this is the summons this morning.

But please let us remember, John is fundamentally presenting us with a positive thrust, which is this. We must love the Father and keep his commandments. We must love his children.

But in order to love the Father and love his children, we must withdraw our love for the world in a certain sense, as we shall see in a moment. Now there then is the background and there is the main thrust of our message this morning. Will you be courageous enough with me to look into it and see what it has to say to us? Be prepared for it to speak to you, because it's going to say something.

It has said a lot to me during the course of the week as I've meditated upon it, and sometimes it makes the shoe pinch. But I trust we're all ready this morning to let the word of God search us and find us and direct its shaft into the conscience and into the heart as well as into the mind. Two main things appear here.

First of all, we have the proclamation of a command, and then we have the justification of that command. We look at them in that order. First, briefly, the proclamation of a command.

Now here it is. This is the sum and substance of it. Do not love the world or the things in the world, verse 15, the first part.

Do not love the world or the things in the world, which is the Revised Standard Version. Now, two things I want to say about this. We've got to look at the essence of that command and its extent, the essence of it.

What does John mean by the world? This is very important. We can't obey the commandment unless we're quite sure what it means. Well now, what does John mean? What did he mean when he refers here to the world that we are not to love? Now here we have to be very careful.

I'm sure you have found in reading the Scriptures that this term world is used in many different senses. I'm told on good authority that originally the word meant ornament, the word kosmos. It meant ornament.

And as a matter of fact, we have a relic of it. In our modern usage, we speak of cosmetics, don't we? I'm not going to preach on cosmetics this morning, so don't get excited. But it's the word.

It's the same word. Basically it comes from that. The whole universe is God's handiwork, God's ornament.

And it is meant to tell forth his glory. That's the original usage. Ornament.

Then we notice from Scripture that there are times when the word refers to this earth where we live. Did you notice this morning in our reading, for example, how Satan appointed our Lord to the kingdoms of the world, it says. The reference was, of course, to the kingdoms of this earth, kings and kingdoms of earth, as distinct from the everlasting kingdom of the Son of Man, which we read of in Daniel the prophet, the kingdom that outlives and outlasts every other kingdom.

The kingdoms of this world, of this earth. So there are times when the word world refers to the earth as such. There are times when it refers to the people who live upon the earth.

For example, a very familiar scripture, John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God loved the world.

The end of the verse tells you that what God has in mind is men and women who live here on earth, the whosoever who will come and believe on his Son. He's talking about men and women, people. So too is it used sometimes of worldly possessions.

You remember our Lord's statement, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Now the term world there means possessions. He says even though you have everything that the world can give you in terms of possessions, in terms of prosperity and positions and prestige, you may add the whole thing together, he says, and though you have the whole world of possessions, if you lose your own soul, you're a loser. But now the word is used in another sense again, and that's the sense before us today, in an ethical sense.

There is a sense in which the world is evil. Now, there is a sense in which it is not evil. Everything that God made was good, he said it was very good.

Paul in writing to the Romans says, I am convinced, he says that nothing is evil or impure in and of itself, but this world of ours, says John later on in his epistle, in chapter 5 and verse 19, lies in the lap of the evil one, is under the authority and the dominion of Satan. And as such, the things of this world can choke the

word of God which has been sown into the seed of the human heart, as Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower. The fears of this world can choke us, choke the word in us, choke the work of grace in us.

Indeed, it can make it difficult for men to enter into the kingdom. Loving the world in this moral sense, in this ethical sense, is something which is here forbidden. Now, here of course, John is referring to the world as organized apart from God.

The world in an ethical sense is the world as it is organized by men, fallen men, men who are themselves duped by Satan. Men who may be a mixture of good and evil, ordinary men and women, not necessarily the ultimate in badness or in sin or in evil, but men who are themselves subject to Satan in his hand, who've never been released, who've never been redeemed, who've never been regenerated. Now then, can I sum up? Viewed as people, we are to love the world.

You and I should not withhold our love from any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, anywhere. We should love the world as people. But the world as an organization run without reference to God's will and God's purpose is a world that we must have no truck with.

We must not love it. But now that requires us again, and this is the second thing, to define love. Why can't we do that? Love, in the sense in which it is used here, means living for the object of one's love.

And you and I should never live for the world as an entity that is organized against the will of God. Not only does love mean that, but it also means self-giving, the giving of ourselves, the giving of our affection, the giving of our time, the yielding of our substance, living for it. If you love someone, well you want to, you want to do the best for that person, you want to give that person yourself, your time, and much else.

Now, that kind of love for the world is proscribed, it is prohibited, because the world is organized apart from God. In order to love God, we must withhold our love from the world that is organized apart from him and contrary to his will. It's very logical.

We ought to love the world in the sense of seeking the highest good for its inhabitants, but not in the sense of gratifying ourselves with its pleasures. We should love the world in the sense of being prepared to do anything to save the sinner's person, but we should not love the world in the sense of wanting to share in the sinner's way of life. It's as simple as that.

Here, then, is the essence of the command, and its extent, John goes on to say, love not the world, nor anything that is in the world in that sense. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ said it very cryptically, you cannot serve God and Maimon. My friends, we can add to that.

We can't serve God and anyone, and anything. God has to be served alone. God has to be loved alone.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. God requires the whole of us, because God is one. In consequence of that, James says that friendship with the world can only be at the expense of enmity with God.

Now, so much, then, for the command as it is promulgated here, love not the world, neither anything that is within the world. We must not love it in this sense. I wonder where that command finds us this morning.

I wonder how far it penetrates into our consciences. Is it not all too easy, my dear people, for all of us, each in his or her own way, but is it not too easy for us to be madly in love with the things of this world, so

that the love is eating away the love that should be God's? The world is receiving the possessions that should be used to the service of God. The world is sapping our energies that we should use in the employ of the King of kings and of him alone.

Is it not true to say that if we were obeying this commandment, some of us would not be here this morning? I wonder whether, if we did not love the world, we should be somewhere in the business of the King of kings rather than where we are. Now, let us come to the justification of it. The Apostle John is very careful here.

He does not want us to miss the point, and so he goes on to explain this. It is reasonable, and therefore he really wants us to get it. Now, what has he got to say about it? Well, two things, and we shall deal with the first at some length and just refer to the second.

Now, look at the second part of verse 15. It says, love for the world is inconsistent with love for the Father. You cannot have both.

You cannot love both. Verse 15, the second part, if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I find this very challenging, do not you? Let me repeat it.

If anyone loves the world, in the sense that we have tried to describe, the love of the Father, love for God is not in him. Why? Well, because the two things are inconsistent. The world is society organized apart from God, against God's will, against God's word, against the grain of God's spirit and purpose.

Therefore, I cannot love the twin. I have to choose this day whom I will serve. Love for God, God the Father, is absolutely basic.

We've said it before, I must repeat it again. The word of God demands it, Scripture demands it, the Spirit produces it, and the saints ought always to exemplify it. There should be one thing that characterizes all our lives, every one of us, if we are born again of the Spirit of God, we should be in love with the Father.

The love that trusts Him, the love that obeys Him, the love that is blessed wherever He is, and delights to be wherever He is. But love for the world, in the sense now given to these terms, is incompatible with love for God. It is neither kindled by God nor produced by Him in any way.

It is not of the Father, says John, it isn't produced by Him, it's God. Love for the world, in this sense, is produced elsewhere. It's an illicit thing.

God doesn't kindle it, God doesn't produce it, God doesn't inspire it, it's not of God, and because it is not of God, I who love God should have nothing to do with it. Now John proceeds to elucidate this, to elucidate the statement that it is not of the Father, not of God, this kind of illicit love for the world. And he does it generally and particularly.

Generally, he says, for all that is in the world is not of the Father, but of the world. Everything that is in the world is a fallen world, continuing to be organized apart from God and without reference to His will. All of that, says John, is not of God, but is of the world itself.

God didn't make the world rebellious. God didn't make the world an evil world, the evil world it is. God didn't make it like that.

The world has made itself like that. We are a fallen world. There was a fall at the beginning, and we have all acquiesced to the terms of that fall by our own obedience to Satan and to sin and to our own sensuous nature.

Now, this is just another way of saying, then, what John later adds, that the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one. God did not make the world as it is. The world that is evil that we must not love is not a world as God made it.

Human life as lived by men outside of Christ is not in accordance with God's will, nor consistent with His nature. The world is not only fallen, but in rebellion, and that is the world that we must not love. But now, John comes down to particulars, and this is where the shoe will pinch us, finds us all out this.

He's talking generally so far, but now he says, right, all that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world. What are you referring to, John? Well, I'm referring to three things. For example, he says, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

So, all these things were not even as God they are at the moment. The world that we live, fallen world, has made something or reduced something, which can only be called lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. We must have nothing to do with these.

Now, let's look at them in turn, albeit briefly. The lust of the flesh. Basically, the word lust simply means desire, and I think on another occasion, I have referred to the fact that this is used in a very good sense in the New Testament.

When Jesus said at the Last Supper, Luke records it, with desire, have I desire to eat this Passover with you before I die. You wouldn't believe it, would you? If you couldn't check it up, it's hardly believable. It's the word for lust.

But you see, it was no lust in him, for he was pure. He was not fallen. He wasn't part of the fallen world, and his desire was always pure.

You couldn't call it lust in him, only desire, purest desire there. But with us, it's so different. It is not as God made it.

Our desires have become twisted and tangled and fallen. Now, what are these desires? Well, they are the desires of our fallen nature. You may refer to some of them if you like.

There's the desire for food and drink, the desire for sleep, the desire for sex. As God made each of these desires, each was pure as the driven snow. Each was the perfect thing that could come only from the hand of a perfect God, without a blemish, without a smudge, without a shadow.

But you and I know how these things can be changed and warped and perverted, so that the desire for food and drink becomes something like gluttony. And rather than eat and drink to live, we live to eat and drink. And this is a terrible indictment of our Western world especially.

We eat and we drink much more than we need, whilst our brothers in various parts of the world are starving. Then again the same goes for the desire for sleep. The body needs sleep.

There is a demand, there is something in us that says, you ought to go and rest a while. But you know that can degenerate into something else. And we can become downright lazy.

We can become slothful. And we can just pander to the body. It's the same with the desire for sex.

And I deliberately put this in. It is the purest of the purest. God made it.

But you and I know what it can become. It can make a jungle of any home and of any society. It becomes lust.

With all the ominous accretions that you can add to that word desire, desire becomes lust. And burn away at the purities of life and tear all the sanctities to shreds. Now says John, all that is not of God.

The desire was given by God. It was latent in our human nature as God made us. It was all there.

But you see something's gone wry and wrong. And it's the world in which we live. It's the cosmos and the evil power over the cosmos that has made the desire what it is.

Now the lust of the flesh, he says, you can't love that. You can't give yourself to that. You can't live for that and love God at the same time.

It's impossible. They're opposites. They're inconsistent.

My good people, if this is true, you know God's word to our day and generation is a very challenging one. Very challenging. But come again, the lust of the eyes.

Now I don't need to dwell with this at such length. We turn now from that which arouses men from within to that which arouses us from without and comes in through the eye gate. We find the same principle operating.

God has put us in a world of beauty. Every season has its beauty. Day and night.

Would we appreciate the day if it were not for the night? Would we appreciate the calmest day if it were not for the storm? Everything in God's world is full of beauty and delight even though Satan reigns. But you see, the world has made me the person I am that I can look at the purest, sweetest object. An eye of desires welling up in me which are altogether incongruous with the object I'm looking at and the God who made the world of beauty in which I live.

The evil lies not in the stars, dear Brutus, but in your eyes and in your heart. It's true. And therefore there is a lust of the eye.

Do you remember Eve? Was it not last Sunday night we were considering this? All at once when she's yielding to Satan, the beauty of the tree, it was a thing beautiful to look at. And it became entrancing and bewitching almost. And you see her against all reason putting out her hand and partaking of the forbidden fruit.

She saw the lust of the eye. In my own devotions this week I've been reading from 2 Samuel and I came to that point where David was at home when the soldiers were on the field. You remember how he went out and he saw Bathsheba about her ablutions and he saw there's nothing wrong with a woman's body or a man's body.

If only my eyes were pure and my thoughts. But David being the man he is of the stock of Adam as all of us are, something burnt and the fire was kindled and king of Israel that he was, he said, I must get her. I

know who she is.

I know where her husband is, but never mind. I must get her. And he got her.

But you see that desire has become lust and it came in through the eyes. Oh, says John, don't give your affection to these things because they're not of God. They're of the world.

It's the world has made things as they are and the prince of the world in particular. And then the pride of life. Can I sum this up? The pride of life is something of this order.

It presupposes a desire to impress people. It's not simply a matter of keeping up with the Joneses, but of passing them just that little so that the folk can say, wow, he's a great guy, that fellow. The man who knows something of this spirit is not just a man who wants to live decently and orderly to the glory of God, to pay his debts to the glory of God, to live a life that is beautiful and dignifying to the glory of God, but he wants to impress other people.

And so he will only be seen in the company that will impress people. And he will only do the things that will impress people. If he thinks that he's going to impress people, oh, he'll go on his knees in the gutter to help someone, but only to impress people.

It's the pride of life. He wants people to speak well of him, to sing his praises. Now, didn't I tell you this is a hard shoe? It pinches.

I know it pinches me. What has God to say to you this morning, my friend? If we go no further, my time is gone. The apostle John, the apostle of love, writes to these people and he says, now look, I've asked you, I've told you that it is necessary to keep the Lord's commandments because you love the Father.

I've told you that it is necessary on both counts to love one another. Now look, he says, there's something else about it. You've got to withhold your affection from this evil, sinful world, in its whole or in part, and you must canalize and harness and divert the love of your soul toward God and the things that are pleasing to God only.

I wonder whether your thought is my thought, whether my thought is your thought. There's only one thing you can do at this point. There's only one thing I can do.

It's to acknowledge my sin. But we've got to go one step beyond that. When we've acknowledged how the world has worn our hearts and we've become entangled with things that are illicit and improper in the light of this teaching, now we need to pray that the Lord will set our feet upon a rock and establish our goings and win our hearts again to himself.

We've sung together, Spirit of God, descend upon my heart. And I did enjoy the singing of this hymn, I'm sure you all did. Spirit of God, descend upon my heart.

Wean it from earth through all its pulses move. Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art, and make me love thee as I ought to love. Now, in just a moment, we're going to sing another hymn.

I want to quote the first verse. Will you pray it with me? So that when we come to sing it, it will be a veritable prayer of the congregation. This is the first verse, 445.

Thee will I love, my strength, my tower. Thee will I love, my joy, my crown. Thee will I love with all my power in all thy works, and thee alone, thee will I love till sacred fire fill my whole soul with pure desire.

Let us pray. Father, thou knowest us at this moment in our reaction to thy word and to thyself in thy word. We have not always walked this way.

Time was, perhaps, when, like the church at Ephesus, our love was warm and we loved thee exclusively. But our love has grown cold, and rivals have come in, and spiritual adultery has been committed. We are ashamed.

We acknowledge before thee the things that now, at this moment, come to our minds as being out of alignment with thy will and with thy purpose. Father, forgive us, forgive us. Cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and then renew in us a right spirit, that we may learn to love thee well and wholly and exclusively.

And love the world, not as we have loved it, but as thou dost love it. In all the purity of a passionate concern for its salvation, prepare to give our best and our dearest and our costliest for its redemption. Lord, hear us in heaven, thy dwelling place.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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