Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770.469.9069

A Letter to Dear Children, Part 6

A World of Woo

Text: 1 John 2:15-17

One of the New Testament’s best-known verses, John 3:16 begins, *God so loved the world...*

In this section of 1 John which begins at 2:15, John sounds like he is denying that wonderful statement. John says that these first century believers should see to it that they *don’t* love the world. Which is it? Should we love the world, as God so loved the world? Should avoid loving the world, as John suggests in 1 John 2:15?

There are **two** different *worlds* to be considered here:

1. The physical world (the globe), the created universe. God pronounced that *world* good (Genesis 1:31)
2. The culture, the society, the material sphere in which we work and play.

In both texts, the Greek word is *kosmos.* The context will tell us how to interpret the word. For instance, in John 3:16, *kosmos* obviously refers to the globe, the whole earth. God loves the whole earth so much that He gave His only begotten Son. In 1 John 2:15, John is not saying we should not love that same whole earth God loves. No, here the prohibition is against loving the culture, the society, the system. Cf. 1 John 5:19:

*We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

When Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17, Jesus said,

*I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me..*.(John 17:9). That is, Jesus is not praying for the globe, but for the people in a particular culture. If we were to stay in John 17, we would see Jesus’ take on the world in which we live and the world which God loves (John 3:16).

* Jesus would soon leave the earth, but leaves His disciples in the world, in the culture, to affect it (John 17:11)
* The world hates a person who refuses to be worldly (John 17:14)
* Jesus intends His own to stay in the world, live victoriously over evil and change that world (John 17:15).
* The world is the disciples’ mission field (John 17:18)

Just as we show that God’s love and life are *in* us when we love others, we show that God’s love is *not* in us if we become secularized or worldly (v.15). That’s the core of the problem. It is not that you and I may not enjoy the things of the world. Rather, we are to guard our attitudes and our actions so that we don't become entangled with the world’s system, the world’s way.

What’s so unspiritual about becoming thoroughly secularized? John would say, logically, we cannot serve two masters. We cannot be wholly devoted to the world and be entirely devoted to God.

John summarizes the secular society by the listing of three components. They constitute a three-point warning for believers. These three are as relevant today as they were in the first century.

1. The lust of the flesh.

**Illus.**

Years ago, I heard a very conservative preacher describe women who wore makeup as those who were, “lusting up their flesh”. That is not what this phrase means. Both *lust* and *flesh* are morally neutral words. The context of a sentence will determine whether we are speaking of bad *lust* or bad *flesh.*

The lust of the flesh. This phrase is variously translated:

TEV- what the sinful self desires

NIV - the craving of sinful man

JB- the sensual body

NEB- all that panders to the appetites

CEV- our foolish pride

NLT- the lust for physical pleasure

Yarbrough- what the body hankers for

The lust of the flesh refers to the desire to satisfy the most base, carnal temptations and experiences to which we are exposed. In the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, A.C. Thiselton writes that flesh designates *“the outlook orientated towards the self, that which pursues its own ends in self-sufficient independence of God.”* (NIDNTT I, 680)

B. The lust of the eyes. Good eyesight is a metaphor for spiritual vitality. Matthew 6:22-23:

***22****The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.* ***23****But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Robert W. Yarbrough renders this phrase, “what the eyes itch to see*”* (1-3 John. Robert W. Yarbrough. P. 133).

This is the state of being aroused by what we see. It could be inappropriate magazines or web sites. It could be the temptation to rearrange your whole life because you saw some*body* or some*thing* that demanded your attention.

C. The pride of life

The Greek word for *pride*(alazonia) is used in James 4:16 and is there translated, *boasting.* When we are becoming thoroughly secularized, we start becoming cocky, arrogant, boastful and proud.

Verse 17 juxtaposes the temporal and the eternal. Look at the pair: That which passes away and that which is eternal.

1 Corinthians 7:31

...the form of this world is passing away.

**John says it’s dangerous to want everything we see and then get it and then boast that we are self-made.**

John’s very pastoral warning is that the world is wooing us, trying to squeeze us into its mold. The world is trying to suck us in. If we are not careful we could invest all our energies in getting comfortable and competent in worldly ways only.

**Illus.**

Nathan was a salesman who closed many sales using this line: "Let me show you something several of your neighbors said you couldn't afford."

What is the nature of your investments? Eternal? temporal? Spiritual? Worldly?

**Closing**

September 1, 1985

Thousands packed into Madrid's Monumental bullring on September 1, 1985 to bid a final goodbye to local son Jose Cubero, 21, who fought under the name Yiyo. He was gored in the heart and died Friday in a bullfight staged just outside the city. Ironically, Cubero was gored by a bull which was, itself, dying. Cubero had delivered the final fatal sword thrust to the bull. One account says he lost his balance and fell and was gored to death. Another account says that after Cubero thrust his sword into the bull and the bull collapsed, the matador began to take his bows. The bull then rose up and gored the matador in the back. Pride is like that. We are taking our victory laps around the ring, congratulating ourselves on our having killed the bull. As we are doing so, pride kills us.

The last clause of verse 17: the one who does the will of God doesn't go down like that!!!

Amen