

September 16, 2020

There are many calling themselves Christians but the evidence of their lifestyles indicates that their lives are grossly out of balance. When a person is more in love with the world and all things associated with it instead of being in love with God then their life is out of balance. This is becoming a common problem in the Church. Read with me from 1 John 2:15-17

*15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

I noticed an old problem for God's people is resurging in the lives of God's people. This resurgent old problem is a deep love affair with the things of this world. People camp out overnight to get tickets to sports events and concerts (though obviously not during the pandemic). They stand in line for hours and in some cases days to get the newest technological marvel. Yet when it comes to doing the things which God requires of us many in the Church are nowhere to be found. The resurgent love affair with the world and all associated with it will eventually lead some people to inordinate selfish prideful behavior that will estrange them from God.

Let me address the issue of pride first. There are two kinds of pride. The first is pride that boast in Jesus Christ and in the things of God. Paul wrote of this pride in Philippians 3:1-9. Declaring that all things of which he thought he had "reason to be proud of in the flesh he now counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7). The source of this healthy pride is love for God. The second kind of pride is pride that

points back to one's self and not toward God. The source of this unhealthy pride is love for the world.

The evidence for and results of love for the world are obvious to those who are rooted in love, grounded in Scripture, and filled with the Spirit of God. Lust of the flesh is manifest in a person's behavior and attitudes. When a person lusts after the flesh it leads to immoral behavior. Immoral behavior is not limited to sexual issues it involves other things as well. Paul warns the Christian, "Flee immorality! Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against their own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). The lust of the flesh finds its most dangerous expression in the way we use other people for our selfish gain. When we take advantage of another person we are lusting after the flesh; to lust after the flesh is to use another person for your own benefit.

Lust of the eyes is a second manifestation of love for the world. When a person exhibits the lust of the eyes they are coveting that which they do not possess. This form of love for the world causes division, jealousy, and dis-harmony. In our society we have an idiom which captures the essence of the lust of the eyes. This idiom is "Keeping up with the Jones." It is such a great problem for us that God made it #10 in His top ten sins. In Exodus we read, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20: 17). An updated rendition of this commandment might read, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's spouse or his new car or his 52" plasma TV, or his IPone, or his lifestyle or anything that belongs to your neighbor." The lust of the eyes is also selfish.

The pride of life is self-exalting. When we become “full of ourselves” there is no room for compassion, kindness or love for others. When we are contaminated with the pride of life then the focus of all we do can be summed up in the statement, “It’s all about me! It’s not about you.” The pride of life is self-focused and self-absorbed instead of outwardly focused and concerned with the needs of others. Jesus likens this to the self-righteousness of the Pharisees as He asserts, “Do not be called leaders; for One is your leader, that is Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:10-12).

Love for the world always leaves a people empty. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes wrote extensively about the vanity (emptiness) of pursuing the things of this world. The pursuit of this world’s allurements and attractions is not satisfying. We will never have enough. We will always crave just a little bit more. The challenge for the Christian is to be content with what they have. We get into trouble whenever we start desiring those things which we do not have; this kind of attitude and unhealthy preoccupation will always lead us into the pride that leads to our fall. Instead we should be searching for ways to maximize that which we do have so that we can put it to use in service in God’s kingdom. Love for the world makes us enemies of God. James the brother of Jesus admonishes, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Scripture reveals “The Lord your God requires that you revere the Lord your God, walk in all His ways, love Him, and serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12). This is a requirement of the Christian life. When we revere the Lord, which is to

worship Him in all aspects of our life, live in obedience to Jesus' commands, and serve God as we serve others whole-heartedly then we love God from a sincere heart. Our love will be seen by others not because we are drawing attention to ourselves, but because we are pointing others to God through Jesus.

Our love for God is manifest in humble service to others. This was the example that Jesus gave to us at the Passover feast. Recall how Jesus took on the form of the servant as He washed His disciples' feet; after which Jesus taught, "If I, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:14-15).

When we love God it will be reflected in all that we do. When we live in humility before God and before each other that life style will glorify God and point to Jesus. Others will see the manner in which we live and thereby Glorify God. Paul the great apostle encourages us "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor" (1 Corinthians 10:24) (see also Philippians 2:4). Matthew records that Jesus expresses this idea in the following words, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

When we live our lives for ourselves we live with unhealthy pride that leads to eternal death. If you live for yourself and not for God, take time to confess your sin. Once you confess your sin to God your life will change because the focus of your love will change. You will love God and not the world. You will live for Jesus and not for yourself. For those who accept Jesus know right now there is a great celebration in heaven for you. Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, we thank You for caring for us, protecting us, and providing for us through Jesus Your Son and our Savior and Lord, amen.*

Remember to enjoy what you have and using for God's glory through Jesus Christ.

Until the nets are full