

GOD IS LIGHT: LOVE NOT THIS WORLD

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Mark sat at home staring into his computer screen. His wife was not home. He knew what he had done was wrong. It pained him that he had done it. He didn't want to tell his wife because he knew it would hurt her. He knew that she wouldn't really understand. She always got upset. But the real truth was that he knew it would be hard to tell her, and that it would hurt his pride; that things would be difficult for him for the next while. And it just seemed easier to keep it to himself.

Why did he continue to do what he had done?

Why did he continue when it caused those he loved sooo much pain?

Why did he continue when deep down inside, part of him really didn't want to do it? Part of him wished that it wasn't this way.

Part of him knew that he **could be free**.

Part of him knew that he mustn't continue any longer.

Unfortunately this part of him was not the loudest or the strongest. It was only a still small voice inside his heart. And it seemed frequently to be overpowered by the other part.

The **other** part.

The other part that **enjoyed** what he was doing, far too much.

The other part that secretly **loved** the experience.

The other part that got such a kick out of it, such a high, that he just must continue.

The other part that wanted to be satisfied and pleased.

And why shouldn't he be? Everyone else does it.

It's perfectly **legal**.

In fact there'd be plenty of people who would even **encourage it!**

It's what it is to be a man, right?

This is just the way things are in this world.

He wouldn't like to admit it, but he loved this dark deed.

HE LOVED IT!

James was born into a large family. He knew that his parents loved him very much, and that they would do whatever they possibly could to raise him as well as they could. However with 8 children, it was simply not possible for his Mum to work. She did a wonderful job cooking, cleaning, tidying, delegating work to James and his siblings, and managing the household. But it was a full-time job in and of itself. James' Dad also worked very hard. He didn't earn much as a travelling salesman. He was largely paid on commission, which meant that he was constantly stressed and overworked trying to make enough sales to provide for his family. There was one thing James and his family were always short on: **MONEY!**

"If only we had more money!" his mother would constantly say. "Then we would be happier, and things would be easier."

'*She's right about that,*' James would always think to himself. But he was **happy enough** for the most part.

James worked hard in school, and secured himself a good job when he finished. He started out on the factory floor for a large company that sold food products worldwide. **It was great to be paid!** Finally he actually had money that he could spend.

It didn't take long until his ingenuity, innovation and leadership propelled him into management. He was simply good at what he did! Of course with his promotion came an increase in pay. **More money!**

He started to make the most of his new earnings. He bought himself many nice clothes and all the latest equipment. In fact he started to earn himself a reputation for being the '**boy with all the toys.**' Toys were only the beginning however. After a few more years of climbing the leadership ladder he was offered a significant share of the company. All too quickly he accepted.

The money continued to roll in, however it **never quite seemed to be enough.**

So he continued to invest with what he had. Before long, his hours away from the office were consumed by share trading, and researching for the next best money making investment. As a result, he didn't get out much.

He never really was interested in **women** anyway. They would only be interested in a cut of his money, and he wasn't prepared to give any of that away.

He wouldn't give it away to a woman, and he wouldn't give much away to anyone else either; there's always people asking for money when they know you have lots.

'I wasn't brought up with much money, and I managed to do alright for myself,' he would think to himself, *'everyone else had the same opportunity as I did.'* All the same he would give a little bit away.

He had to **keep face** after all.

But he really didn't like doing it. It threatened his security.

Money was security. The larger the number in his bank account, the happier he'd be. He didn't need anything or anyone else. He could pay for whatever he wanted.

The truth was, though he was never married to a **woman**; he was married to **his wealth. And he loved her.**

His money was his life!

HE LOVED IT! Every last bit of it, though he always wanted more.

HE LOVED IT ALL!

Sarah grew up in a similar environment to James. Only she didn't have quite so many siblings. She was the middle child of three. She also didn't get on as well with her siblings as James did with his. She often felt **neglected**. Given that her older sister Beth was the first child her parents had, she felt like they loved Beth more than her. Her younger sister Ruby was often called the most beautiful of the three, and was always being mollycoddled.

Sarah became a **follower of Jesus** one evening at a youth group event that one of her school friends had invited her to.

She knew that **Jesus was real**, that he loved her, that he died for her, and that she needed to give Him all of her heart. That she needed to follow Him for the rest of her life.

So she became well integrated into the **church**.

When she left school she went to **university** and studied **fashion design**. She discovered that she was very gifted in this field. She received a prestigious scholarship for her second and third years, so decided to stay studying for another couple to achieve a masters.

"You're gonna do soooo well in this field," people would say to her. "You are quite remarkable!"

Upon completing her masters, she was snapped up by a **high-label clothing company** as a designer. She very quickly made a lot of money for the firm. Though they were

paying her handsomely, she knew that she could do even better if she went out on her own. So she did!

She **started her own** clothing label, and earned herself a world-class reputation in a matter of years.

She had all that she ever wanted. She was very well known and respected. Even feared by some of her employees.

There was never a day went by, where she didn't receive some sort of **recognition** from a stranger off the street.

She fed off **every** experience!

She loved the **attention**,

The **fame**,

The **prestige**.

Her faith had remained, but was now buried deep down in some small corner of her heart. She didn't doubt that Jesus was real, but she didn't really **need** Jesus.

She had done well enough **on her own**.

She didn't need Jesus, because she had plenty of other people to tell her how wonderful she was; how much they loved her; how successful and marvellous she was.

The truth was that she **loved** the attention.

She **loved** the fame.

She **loved** the riches, and

She **loved** that people knew how great and successful she was.

The world loved her, so she loved it in return.

SHE LOVED IT ALL!

How familiar are these stories to us?

How many people do we know who have similar stories to **Mark, James and Sarah**, who have fallen in love with the temporary offerings of our age?

Love of **pleasure**.

Love of **money**.

Love of **self** above all others.

Perhaps you have **family members** who have fallen victim to the vices of the world.

Perhaps **close friends**.

When discussing Christianity with non-believers, how often have you heard sayings like these:

“There are just too many good things that I would have to give up to be a Christian.”

“God is such a kill joy. I just wanna to have fun.”

“Being a Christian is just soo boring. All you do is sit around, sing hymns and be nice to each other.”

“Being a Christian is all about rules; So many things that you’re not allowed to do.”

“I just wanna live the high life.”

“I don’t want to be a Christian right now because I just wanna enjoy life a little while I’m young. When I’m older and are sick of doing my own thing, then I will become a Christian.”

The allure of the world is all too compelling.

It’s at this point where we turn to the words of John for this morning’s text. **The words of God!**

Reading from 1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Do not love the world, or anything in the world!

Do not love the **world**.

Do not love the **world**?

Are we not to love the beautiful creation that our heavenly Father has made; the craft of his hands, which he proclaims as ‘good’ in Genesis?

Are we not to love mankind whom he has created also? Aren't we called to love others, including those in the world?

Doesn't God love the world?

John 3:16 begins: For God so loved the world.

It is indeed the same Greek word, ***kosmos***, that John uses in both these verses, however, John's intended meaning is different for both.

John has already described earlier in the epistle what he means by 'the world', in 2:2: ***He [Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.***

Here he describes the 'kosmos' as a place of sin. One scholar puts it like this:

'The kosmos (understood as the world of man) constitutes a uniform subject which opposes God in enmity, resists the redeeming work of the Son, does not believe in Him and indeed hates Him. It is ruled by the prince of the cosmos.'

John strengthens his point from *verse 2 in verse 16* of today's text where he actually describes the things in 'the world' of which we are not to love:

For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.

The 'cravings of sinful man', or the 'desires of the flesh' as other translations put it.

The lust of the eyes.

Boasting of what he has.

Boasting of what he does.

These things are not of the Father. And if we love them, then we do not have the love of the Father in us. *James* puts it even stronger in his epistle chapter 4:4:

Friendship with the world is hatred toward God.

That's **heavy!**

It doesn't always seem that drastic, like in the case of Mark, James and Sarah, but that's how the Bible describes it.

I'm sure we all know many Marks, James and Sarahs; I'm sure we know many people with '**Mark, James and Sarah's disease**. And it is always easy to point the finger, but we must **ask ourselves**:

In what way are we like Mark, James and Sarah?

In what way do we love the world?

John wrote this epistle to a community of believers, not those unsaved.

It would be ignorant and foolish of us to think that we are impervious to being infatuated with worldly desires. Though we are called to be 'not of this world,' we are still **in it!**

And this is where we are to remain.

This is our **mission field**.

So in what way do you struggle with the attractions of the world?

Our **eyes** are constantly bombarded with lascivious and provocative images that demand our attention. T.V., media, billboards, magazines, movies, language, humour and more; we can't escape it! But do you allow yourself to indulge in it?

Perhaps you are in the driver's seat when it comes to your **finances**. Perhaps you're **more** interested in living comfortably and lavishly rather than doing the will of the Father. Not that money is bad. God has blessed us richly in this wonderful country in which we live, and we must be wise stewards with our finances. But who really has the **last say?**

The same is true when it comes to **success**, and **physical pleasures** such as married love, or enjoying the wind blowing through your hair as you drive down the motorway on your Harley Davidson. You all do that aye? These things are not wrong in themselves, but **elevated into a position above God**, and loving them as the world does is what John was warning us not to do.

Perhaps you're more interested in proclaiming and uplifting your own name, rather than the name of Jesus.

Pride is an inherent quality of the fallen man; we are all victim to its grasp. This is why we need to continually **relinquish control over to God**. This is why it is good to worship; to put the focus on God, and Jesus His Son, who deserve all the praise.

Perhaps the enemy entices us in more subtle ways than these. The church is not free from the influence of culture, whether right or wrong. You don't have to look far to find

unbiblical examples of churches in our Western world. One scholar, David Wells, puts it this way:

'It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world as inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He has lost his saliency for human life. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgments no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertisers' sweet fog of flattery and lies.

We cannot live in two camps. We cannot love the world in speech and action, as well as God.

We know that God is light, and that there is no darkness in him.

He does not love the darkness of this world; he loves those in the darkness.

Because **GOD IS LIGHT, WE ARE NOT TO LOVE THIS WORLD.**

GOD IS LIGHT: LOVE NOT THIS WORLD.

John concludes this section in his epistle with a reason for remaining in God's love instead of the worlds. And it's important for us to finish on this point.

Verse 17: The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

The things of this world are **sooo fleeting**. Many of you will no doubt understand this much better than I!

We are in an **eternal race**, living in the light and looking ahead to eternity. This is where our **investments** must be: in the life yet to come, not the doomed domain of the present.

Jesus makes a similar point:

John 12:25: "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

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