

## Warnings To Growing Christians

#4

### 1 John 2:12-17

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In this epistle, the Apostle John is trying to expose the heretic Gnostics and their false teachings. He has shown that true Christians: 1) walk in the light, 2) keep the commandments of God and 3) love the brethren. Those who are false, professing, and counterfeit Christians have no desire to: 1) walk in fellowship with God, 2) keep the moral law of God or 3) love the children of God. These professors declare themselves to be unregenerate with no salvation abiding in them because their lives do not show the reality of the new birth which comes from God.
- B. John does not mean to give his readers the impression that he thinks they are in darkness or that he doubts the reality of their Christian faith. It is the heretic Gnostics whom he regards as spurious, not the loyal members of the Church. So John digresses to tell them his view of their Christian standing and state.

#### II. FELLOWSHIP AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH 2:12-14

- A. Introduction: In this section, John addresses himself to: 1) children, 2) young men and 3) fathers. This has nothing to do with age or sex but with levels of Christian maturity. God's family like every human family has members of different maturity.
- B. ***"I write to you dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name". "I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father."*** -- John assures the babes in Christ that they have had their sins forgiven and know the Father. They are in the family of God and have experienced the new birth. Since they are in God's family, they cannot get out. The way into God's family is through the new birth which comes from God and man's responsibility is to believe in Jesus Christ.

*As John Wesley went about England, everywhere he would preach on that text, "You must be born again." Someone said to him once, "Mr. Wesley, why do you so continually repeat that text, 'you must be born again'?" Mr. Wesley said, "Because, you must be born again."*

Remember the time when you became a Christian? There was the lifting of the load of guilt, the solving of the problem of eternal destiny and the joy of the forgiveness of sins. What a wonderful experience it was and God's joy flooded your hearts. A babe, in Christ, while immature does know the Father. He has come to know the Father in a real and personal way through Christ. **Matt. 11:27:**

***“No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” John 14:6: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** No longer is God feared as a Judge but is loved as a Father who knows our deepest needs and loves us with an everlasting love. Those first days after salvation with the Lord were wonderful beyond words and yet often in Christian circles we are trying to cling to the joys of those early days but the Lord desires that we should push on deeper into maturity for a more consistent walk with Christ.

*The Christian life is much more than a beginning in conversion; it is what happens after that which is of supreme importance. Christians who have never grown up are always a problem and cause many difficulties. If you are a brand new Christian, who has just come to know Jesus Christ and still rejoicing in the thrill of a new found relationship, I am not speaking to you. You are not a problem, particularly, for there is always room and provision for babies in a family circle. But Christians who are yet babies after ten, twenty, thirty, even forty years of Christian life, these are the problem. They are immature; they refuse to grow up.*

- C. ***“I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.”*** -- The fathers are mature or spiritual adults in the congregation. These are the older, spiritual men or women, mature in the Christian life, having gained much personal knowledge of God by experience. Their first flush of ecstasy in receiving forgiveness and fellowship with the Father was an experience of long ago. The Fathers have progressed into a deep communion with God.

Only time and constant use of the Word of God can make a person spiritually mature. Listen to an older man who is spiritual. He always has something to teach us. The spiritually mature are not perfect, far from it, but they apply the fundamental principles of spiritual living and know that God never changes.

- D. ***“I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”*** -- This refers to those who are adolescents in spiritual maturity but are growing spiritually and are busily involved in the battle of Christian living. They are spiritually minded but not yet mature.

The Christian life, then, is not just enjoying the forgiveness and fellowship of God, but fighting the enemy.

1. These young men have overcome the evil one and are continuing to overcome him. When Satan attacked, the Christian withstood it, proving or demonstrating that he was a child of God, moving on into maturity. He has

come to understand the true nature of the struggle of life. We fight Satan and his forces. **Eph. 6:12: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”**

*Our problem is not people. It is the immature Christian who says, “If so-and-so would just leave me alone – my boss, my mother-in-law, my daughter, my son, my husband, my wife, the Internal Revenue Department – if they would just leave me alone I would be fine. It’s people who are my problem.” But anyone who has learned to overcome the evil one knows differently. He knows we are battling Satanic forces. The battle is in the mind, with ideas, with attitudes, with subtle and alluring temptations that come in hidden ways. Here is the true battle.*

2. To be victorious over the attacks of the Devil a Christian must be strong in the Lord. **Eph. 6:10: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”** The secret to being strong is found in abiding in the Word of God. Knowing and applying the Bible to life is the secret to all Christian living. This is why the devil fights this whole matter of Bible study, the building of your life around the centrality of the scriptures and the authority of the Bible. Ignorant and rebellious Christians are great tools in the Devil’s hands but victory is for those who know and apply the Word to their experience through faith and obedience.

### III. FELLOWSHIP AND THE WORLD SYSTEM 2:15-17

- A. Introduction: Now the Apostle John will give a warning to Christians. They are not to be flirtatious with the world, for the world system hinders one’s temporal fellowship with God.
- B. **“Do not love the world or anything in the world.”** This does not refer to physical world of nature but the world system.” -- The world here is used in the sense of the world system, which is: 1) headed by Satan. **2 Cor. 4:3-4: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** 2) has its own philosophy. **Eph. 2:2: “in which you use to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.** 3) includes all humanity outside of Christ. **1 Jn 5:19: “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”** 4) anti-Christ and anti-Bible. **John 15:18: If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.**

*World here is the ordered system of which Satan is the head, his fallen angels and demons are his emissaries, and the unsaved of the human race are his subjects, together with those purposes, pursuits, pleasures, practices, and*

*places where God is not wanted. Much in this world-system is religious, cultured, refined, and intellectual. But it is anti-God and anti-Christ.*

1. This verse has been terribly misused. Most of us have heard it used to denounce everything from 1) buttons to beer, 2) from opera to operations, 3) from the waltz to the watusi. Anything that is currently the subject of Christian disfavor has been crammed into this passage, labeled “worldliness” and denounced. John is speaking about something far more subtle, dangerous and damaging than just certain externals.
  2. Christians are not to love this world system. The world will lure us, trap us, delude us and ultimately defeat us in our Christian experience. The world’s philosophy is that all life is the “here and now” so let’s get all we can out of it. Let’s eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. It is a philosophy which is bound at one end by a cradle and the other by a casket. This philosophy is: 1) plastered on every bill board, 2) it is alluded to in every magazine 3) it is shouted from the radio and television. What is it? *There is nothing better, there is nothing higher, and there is nothing more precious than what this earth can give you: its money, its pleasure, its fame.*
  3. John makes it clear that we are not to love this world system. We are to: 1) love God and his kingdom; 2) we are to love right over against wrong; 3) we are to love Christ more than things and self! We are to love the people in the world but not the world system. We must divorce one’s philosophy from the person himself, for God loved the world in that he gave a Savior to it. **Jn. 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**
  4. Christians live in the world but are not of this world. However, we must use the world to some degree but never abuse it. **1 Cor. 7:31: “...those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.** It is not wrong to: 1) have money, 2) a nice home, 3) a pretty dress, 4) go out to eat or whatever as long as Christ is first in your life and the world and its things do not possess us! If we cannot live without things other than necessities, then we are in real trouble.
- B. **“If anyone loves (habitually) the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”** -- The word “loves” is the Greek present tense, which means “continually” or “habitually.” *Here is a warning to Christians, for, if they say they are Christians but live only to possess things, they may not be true Christians at all and have never experienced the Father’s love in salvation. Materialistic America needs to examine this warning with earnest prayer, for Jesus said, [“No man can serve two masters for he cannot serve God and mammon.”] or riches*

- C. ***“For everything in the world,”*** -- Now John will speak of some specifics in the world which we are to avoid as Christians. The world is reduced to that with which we actually come into contact.
- D. ***“The cravings of sinful man,”*** -- The “sinful man” refers to “the flesh” or the “sin nature” or “the fallen nature in every person in the world, including a Christian. Every person has sinful desires and passions because they have a sin nature. God has made us, as men, to have certain urges and hungers, and to satisfy these is not wrong. But the flesh, that sinful tendency within us, that fallen part of our nature, always seeks to add something, to go beyond the satisfying of God-given desires.

*God has so made our bodies that they hunger for food, in order to maintain life. This is as it should be. But the flesh goes beyond and craves special foods, delicacies. It urges gluttony, more than we need. It demands the best, the softest, the most flavorsome. God has made us to have need of shelter, as human beings. But the flesh demands that it be luxurious shelter. There is a constant craving after ease and luxury. God gives us the wonderful function of sex but the flesh wants to indulge in this in any direction at any time, not observing God’s laws for the proper use of sex.*

- E. ***“The lust of the eyes,”*** -- These are temptations not from within but from without. The eye symbolizes that which pleases the mind or inner life. God has given us the desire to own things and possess them. But the lust of the eyes pushes that into greed that is never satisfied. We want more! more! more! This results in the common phenomenon of “keeping up with the Joneses” -- the desire to have things we do not need, bought with money we do not have, in order to impress people we do not like. God has given us a love of beauty, but the lust of the eyes: 1) perverts the beauty of a woman into vulgarisms, 2) love of the erotic, 3) pornography, and 4) idolatry.
- F. ***“the boasting of what he has and does,”*** -- The first two points about the world dealt with things that were not possessed. This new point deals with wrong behavior with regard to what is possessed. The “pride of life” refers to the vainness of men in the area of wealth and rank, where they try to outshine others and boast of the wealth or position God has given them. This produces a vain assurance in one’s own resources and a person snubs God.
- G. ***“Comes not from the Father but from the world.”*** -- These things do not spring from God but from the world and man’s sinful nature.
- H. ***“The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*** -- John’s point is that this world is temporary, fleeting and will pass away, but he who does the will of God (by believing in Christ and seeking to follow Him) will abide forever. Therefore, don’t put all your emphasis upon earthly things but live in light of eternal values.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

- A. You, who are living only for self and to get what you can out of this life materialistically, have adopted the philosophy of the world and are steeped in the Satanic world system, which has separated you from God and will lead ultimately to eternal judgment.
- B. But Christ alone can deliver you from sin, this present evil world and the certain judgment to come.
- C. If you are without Christ in your heart, I urge you to trust him now. Your whole eternal destiny is at stake!