

# Love Not the World

by L. R. Shelton, Jr.

DEAR FRIEND, a false gospel is sweeping our land, and has swept like wild fire through Christendom in these last decades, damning more souls to hell than seemingly any other of Satan's subtle lies; and I've come again to warn you of this FALSE GOSPEL OF CARNAL CHRISTIANITY. In our past messages, we have been showing the fruits that grow on the tree of this false gospel as they are described in II Timothy 3:1-7. We have seen from v. 5 that these fruits are manifested in the lives of those who have a "*form of godliness, but deny the power thereof*"; so these are not worldlings, but professors, converts of this false gospel that deny the power of the *grace* of God to break the power of sin. Consequently, their fruits are the fruits of the flesh, for they have never been born again of the Spirit of God. We have seen first that *their behavior is all wrong*, described by the words and expressions: "blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, traitors, and heady." Second, *their opinion is all wrong*, described under the words and expressions: "boasters, proud, high-minded and despisers of those that are good." Third, *their affection is all wrong*, described by the words and expressions: "without natural affection, lovers of their own selves, covetous, and lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

It is this last expression—THEIR AFFECTION IS ALL WRONG that we wish to consider today: "*Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*," the last fruit given in II Timothy 3:4 of this false gospel of carnal Christianity. And I say, what a sad commentary upon the poor, deceived, so-called "carnal Christian," to believe that he can be saved, that he can be a child of God, an heir of heaven, and yet loves pleasures more than he loves God! Matthew 6:21 tells us, "For where your treasure is, there will your *heart* be also"; and my friend, if your treasure is this world and its pleasures, then your heart is not right with God, and you cannot bring forth fruit unto perfection! You see, we are told in Luke 8:14 that when the seed, the Word of God, is sown among thorns, it is choked with cares, with riches and the pleasures of this life, and therefore *cannot* bring forth fruit unto life or unto perfection.

Now what kind of pleasures are these that men are said to be lovers of, more than the lovers of God? My friend, these are sensual pleasures and vain amusements; this is clearly brought out in Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, and in the Amplified Translation of the Bible. This being so, we need to define the word "sensual" and see how it is used in the Word of God. Follow us now!

The word "sensual" means "fleshly, carnal, self-indulgent, worldly, lewd, sexual, promiscuous in sin, glutton, epicurean, lustful, immoral, and unrestrained lust"; in other words, everything that appeals to the fallen nature of man that would satisfy his depraved heart. And this is said to be the fruit of the carnal Christian gospel—lovers of sensual pleasure more than lovers of God—for these very people who have and practice this love

of sensual pleasure, and who love the things of the flesh more than God, are told that they are saved and going to heaven because they have made a profession of faith sometime in their life! But II Timothy 3:5 not only tells us that these poor, deceived souls have a form of godliness (they think they are saved), and that their lives deny the power of the Gospel of the grace of God to save them from the power of sin, but that we must *turn away* from such, lest we be drawn into the same deception with them!

Dear friend, if you live in and love sensual pleasures more than you love God, *no matter what you profess*, you are dead—spiritually dead while you live, and therefore you are an enemy of God and a stranger to grace and the holy ways of the Lord, for without holiness, “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). One of the strongest portions of Scripture against you is found in James 4:1-4, where you are called “adulterers and adulteresses,” and *enemies* of the living God, the Holy God Who hates sin. Listen to God’s Word, first in the King James translation as we go verse by verse, and then in the Amplified Version: (v. 1) “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”—“What leads you to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your *sensual desires* that are ever warring in your bodily members?” (v. 2) “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.”—“You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To *hate* is to murder as far as your *hearts* are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask.” (v. 3) “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”—“[Or] you do not ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is, [when you get what you desire] to spend it in *sensual pleasures*.” (v. 4) “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”—“You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world] and breaking your marriage vow to God! Do you not know that being the world’s friend is being God’s *enemy*? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.”

Now let us apply this to our own hearts, and see if we are lovers of sensual pleasures more than lovers of God (spiritual adulterers and adulteresses), or if we are indeed children of God by asking the following questions: Do we love to watch and feed upon the majority of programs that are shown on television which appeal only to the sensual, fleshly nature? Do we feed upon the magazines, newspapers and books that appeal to our sensual, fleshly nature? Do we *secretly desire* to do these things, even though we would not openly do them? Has sin become such a commonplace thing, that we can indulge in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and go on saying: “All is well with my soul,” while we actually remain enemies of God and strangers to the way of grace?

Do we love God and His righteousness and holiness, or do our hearts rebel against the narrow way of self denial and a life of separation from the world? Do we secretly despise the way of grace, the way of repentance, the way of bowing to the authority of God's Word and to the Lordship of Christ? Do we follow after our own will and do our own thing, without prayer and waiting upon God for His leadership? Do we love the sexual, lewd, lustful, self-indulgent way of the world; or do we indeed love God and His holiness, and seek to please Him in a life of separation from the world and the things of the world? Let us face these questions, and ask our hearts where we stand before God!

Oh listen to the Word of God! "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 for ever" (I John 2:15-17). Dear friend, do you love the world, and the things that are in the world? You may ask, "What is the world spoken of here?" Listen! It is the reign or kingdom of the carnal mind, the mind of the ungodly system which is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. You see, wherever that mind prevails, there is the world! It is the "ungodliness and worldly lusts" of Titus 2:12. It is fallen human nature, acting out itself under the influences of the Devil, the god of this ungodly world; and its spirit is hostile to godliness. Why? Because it is dominated by carnal ambition, pride, self-pleasing, and sensuous desires and interests. You see, the principles which govern this world, the powers which operate it, the end which it seeks, all are earthly, sensual, devilish, and not of God and holiness. The opinions of the world are false, its aims are selfish, its pleasures are sinful, its politics are corrupt, its honors are nothing but bubbles and do not last. And since the world is the sphere of rebellion against God, His people are commanded not to love it. They are not to esteem it as their portion or treasure. They are forbidden to set their *affections* upon it (Col. 3:2).

Listen to me now! To love the world and its sensual pleasures is to give it the first place in our hearts, to idolize it, to make everything else subordinate to the acquisition and enjoyments of it, and to despise whatever comes into competition with it. It is to make its vanities the chief objects of our pursuits, to share its friendships, to court its smiles, to conform to its ways, and to find our happiness in what it yields in its pleasures. You see, when the world is loved, it possesses and governs the soul, overcoming the conscience and the principles of holiness and the Word of God, for its influence is subtle, powerful, perilous, and leads to damnation and hell!

Listen again to the command: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." You see, one may renounce the world systems that Satan governs as a whole, and yet the *heart* secretly still clings to some of its parts. No, my friend, it is not sufficient that I just renounce the world, but I should detach my affections from everything which seeks to claim them. I am not to value any object of the world if it hinders the performance of my duties to God, if it dulls my relish for His Word, or chills the spirit of praise and prayer. You see, I am to prefer nothing to spiritual things. I must not delight in anything which would cause me to lessen my esteem of Christ and heavenly things, for I

am to love Him supremely; my affections must be set on things above! I may use many of the things that are in the world, but I must not abuse them. I must not put my trust in them; I must not place my happiness in them. In other words, I am to love nothing above God; I am to love nothing equal to God, and I am not to love anything apart from God. And this is the teaching of God's Word!

By the grace of God, I have endeavored to lay before us what it means to be LOVERS OF SENSUAL PLEASURES more than lovers of God, and what it means to love God supremely and not the world which He hates. Now I leave the matter with you: Are you living after the flesh and bearing the fruit of the false gospel of carnal Christianity, or are you living after the Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit, which is Christ-likeness? I leave with you these verses of Scripture found in Romans 8:5-6,12-13, trusting the Holy Spirit to apply them to our hearts: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are of the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is *death*; but to be spiritually minded is *life* and *peace*...Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. *For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die*: [the death of the unrighteous, the ungodly] but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live"—live eternally with Christ in glory!

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