

## I Intro. (June 22, 2008)

We come now to perhaps one of the most familiar passages in this letter. It has to do with some of the most basic issues concerning the world's system, something that is common knowledge to most of you. Perhaps obvious enough, we are not to love the world (1Jn. 2:15). The controlling forces of the world originate with the world (2:16). The world's system is utterly temporary as opposed to the one who does the will of God (2:17).

## II The World's System as Opposed to the Will of God (1Jn. 2:15-17)

### A. Do not love the world (2:15).

1. (vs. 15) After discussing forgiveness of sins, knowing God, and overcoming the evil one in the previous section, John now directed his leadership to what encompasses us all everyday, the world, which as he will say later, "lies in *the power of the evil one*" (1Jn. 5:19b). Thus he says: "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" (*Mή ἀγαπᾶτε* ["of the love for things; denoting high esteem for or satisfaction with something...or striving after them"]<sup>1</sup>; "The imperative is commonly used to forbid an action.") *τὸν κόσμον* ["the system of practices and standards associated with secular society {that is, without reference to any demands or requirements of God}—'world system, world's standards, world.'"]<sup>3</sup>; "*the world*, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and deprave...The κ. stands in opposition to God"<sup>4</sup>; "the system of human existence in its many aspects, *the world*...as scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, sufferings...*the affairs of the world*...The latter pass. forms an easy transition to the large number of exprs. {esp. in Paul and John} in which...*the world*, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved...The κ.

stands in opposition to God"<sup>5</sup>] *μηδὲ* ["negative disjunctive particle...and not, but not, nor continuing a preceding negation {almost always w. μή}...in such a way that both negatives have one verb in common: in the ptc. Mt 22:29; Mk 12:24; in the pres. subj. 1 Cor 5:8; 1J 3:18; in the imper."]<sup>6</sup> *τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* ["the universe as an ordered structure—'cosmos, universe.'"]<sup>7</sup> *ἐάν* ["a marker of condition, with the implication of reduced probability"]<sup>8</sup> *τις* ["anyone, anything; someone, something; many a one or thing...*τις*, *τινέσ...*ἐάν *τις*"]<sup>9</sup> *ἀγαπᾶ* ["to have high esteem for or satisfaction with someth., *take pleasure in*"]<sup>10</sup>; "to have love for someone or something, based on sincere appreciation and high regard—to love, to regard with affection, loving concern, love."<sup>11</sup>] *τὸν κόσμον οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη* ["the quality of warm regard for and interest in another, *esteem, affection, regard, love* {without limitation to very intimate relationships, and very seldom in general Greek of sexual attraction}...of human love...{w/ the, ed.} indication of the pers. who is the object of interest...expressly mentioned...human beings...*love for someone...God or Christ...love toward God* {but in many cases the gen. may be subjective}"]<sup>12</sup>; "love...of human love...expressly mentioned...God or Christ ἡ. *τοῦ θεοῦ love toward God* {but in many cases the gen. may be subjective}"]<sup>13</sup>] *τοῦ πατρὸς* ["Oft. God is simply called ὁ πατήρ {the} *Father*"]<sup>14</sup>; "objective sense"]<sup>15</sup> *ἐν αὐτῷ*.

The term "world (κόσμος)," from which we get our word, *cosmos* ("The universe regarded as an orderly, harmonious whole.")<sup>16</sup>, is very

<sup>1</sup>Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. 562.

<sup>2</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>3</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. LN 1.1.

<sup>4</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:785.

<sup>5</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>6</sup>William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). 5.

<sup>7</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989). 1:292.

<sup>8</sup>William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). 6.

<sup>9</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>10</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>11</sup>Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

<sup>12</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:507.

<sup>13</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>14</sup>Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

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<sup>1</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>2</sup>Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

<sup>3</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:507.

<sup>4</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

important in the NT, occurring in the Greek text a total of 186 times there alone. It has quite a wide range of meanings. A book could easily be written covering the gamut of meanings. It is essentially a reference to earth, its inhabitants, and all the events and actions and states of being connected with it. It certainly differs widely from our word “cosmos.”

It can be simply a reference to the place of human existence: “I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father” (Jn. 16:28); “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rm. 5:12).

At times it appears as a reference to this created world, “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (17:5); “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24); “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him” (Jn. 1:10; See also “foundation of the world,” Mt. 13:35; Lk. 11:50; Jn. 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Hb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pt. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

It can be viewed as the present state of things, a rather benign entity, to be used as we function in our daily lives, “and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away” (1Cor. 7:31, 33-34).

The term “world” appears equal to “everybody” in one place; “For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world” (Jn. 7:4).

Also the “world” can be a reference to the coming millennial reign; “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rm. 4:13).

Strangely enough, the world is the present possession of the believer; “For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to

Christ; and Christ belongs to God” (1Cor. 3:21b-23).

It can be a reference to lost mankind; (Jn. 3:16), and “And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world” (12:47); “namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2Cor. 5:21).

At other times, it is a place inimical or hostile to God and His people, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (16:33); “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith”; “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn. 15:19). It is this last sense that is our intended meaning here. Obviously, if John said, “For God so loved the world” (Jn. 3:16a), and then commands his readership “Do not love the world,” evidently the term “world” has more than one meaning.

John did not define “world” here. He has only mentioned it once in this letter, and that is in 1Jn. 2:2, where he made it plain that Jesus died for the sins of “the whole world,” which would make it a reference to the totality of sinful mankind. That Jesus is the propitiation for all of sinful mankind is clearly a manifestation of love for all mankind. So John assumes that when he said, “Do not ( $\mu\acute{\eta}$ ) love ( $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon$ , lemma,  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega$ , *present, active, imperative*) the world ( $\kappa\acute{o}\sigma\mu\omega$ , lemma,  $\kappa\acute{o}\sigma\mu\oslash$ ),” his readers will know the difference between loving sinful man and loving man’s sinfulness. Unsaved man is controlled by the selfish dynamic of sin. Sin is anything that is contrary to the character of our Creator. The world is contrary to the character of our Creator. We are thinking of “world” here in the sense of the totality of the expression and description of man without God on earth, who he is and what he does. That totality is summarized in vs. 16. In reality, that totality of all that natural man is and does fails to

take God into account *at all*. What else are we to make of vv. 16-17, not to mention Rm. 3:9-18.

It is no wonder then that John commands his readers, “Do not love the world.” For to do so is to fail to abide in Christ and to acquiesce to a state and actions utterly contrary to Christ and to who we are in Him. When John adds, “nor the things of the world,” he referred to specific facets of worldliness that one might find appealing, suchas those listed in vs. 16 or subpoints to those facets. So one might think of individual acts of sin that one might love.

Why did John give this negative command to his readers? The obvious answer is that they as believers might decide to love the world and the things in the world. Could anything be plainer? Yes, his readers might decide in favor of the world over doing the will of God (vs. 17b). Hodges says that the world is, “profoundly seductive...and no Christian, however advanced, is fully immune to its allurements. If Christians think that they are impervious to its blandishments, they do not understand the intrinsic sinfulness of their own hearts. By their overconfidence they invite the very failure to which they feel they are immune: ‘Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall’ (1 Corinthians 10:12).”<sup>17</sup> Though “love” here might well be defined as “denoting high esteem for or satisfaction with something...or striving after”<sup>18</sup> something, at bottom it is to decide in favor of what the world has to offer. One of Paul’s coworkers, named Demas, did exactly that. After joining in the closing greetings of two of Paul’s letters (Col. 4:14; Phm. 24), Paul later wrote to Timothy in 2Tm. 4:9-10a, “Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world (*αἰώνα*), has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.” I am sure that Demas was well aware of Paul’s instruction to the Romans, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The world is powerful and exerts considerable force to try to press us into its mold, but we can and must resist that and decide *against* to the world.

What can we conclude about the believer in whose case this happens? John said, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father (“objective sense”<sup>19</sup>) is not in him.” Proto-Gnostic thought allowed one to venture into impossible areas wherein one might ostensibly yield to any worldly desire and still claim to love God because of their dualistic view, which said that the evil, physical realm is one area, the good, spiritual realm is the other and never the twain shall meet. This was a myth and still is because the reality is that if one loves the world, that is, if he decides in favor of the world, he cannot also decide in favor of the Father. Years before, Jesus had already said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt. 6:24), which is essentially the second facet of worldliness in 1Jn. 2:16, the lust of the eyes, or the love of material things or money.

The consequences are grave for believers who love the world, and yet there is no shortage of believers who boldly do just this. James said, “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” (Jm. 4:4).

#### B. The source of worldly things (2:16)

1. (vs. 16) The vast bulk of worldly minded people think that the world *is reality*, that it is what is important. The fact is that world’s system is no bigger than this world’s system: “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” (*ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ οὐ ἐπίθυμία* [“denotes strong desire of any kind, the various kinds being frequently specified by some adjective...The word is used of a good desire in Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23, and 1 Thess. 2:17 only. Everywhere else it has a bad sense. In Rom. 6:12 the injunction against letting sin reign in our mortal body to obey the lust thereof, refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. They are equally the lusts of the flesh...a phrase which describes the emotions of the soul, the natural tendency towards things evil. Such lusts are not

17Hodges, Zane C., *The Epistles of John* (Grace Evangelical Society, Irving, Texas, 1999).

18Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

19Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

necessarily base and immoral, they may be refined in character, but are evil if inconsistent with the will of God.”<sup>20</sup>; “desire, longing, craving...in a bad sense as a desire for someth. forbidden...the gen. can also indicate the origin and seat of the desire”<sup>21</sup>; “to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else and/or to engage in an activity which is morally wrong—to covet, to lust, evil desires, lust, desire.”<sup>22</sup>] τῆς σαρκὸς [“the psychological aspect of human nature which contrasts with the spiritual nature; in other words, that aspect of human nature which is characterized by or reflects typical human reasoning and desires in contrast with those aspects of human thought and behavior which relate to God and the spiritual life—‘human nature, human aspects, natural, human.’...‘few of you were wise from a human point of view’ 1 Cor 1.26...‘what human nature does is quite plain’ Ga 5.19...‘he who plants in the area of his human, natural desire’ Ga 6.8.”<sup>23</sup>; “the seat of sin in man {but this is not the same thing as in the body}”<sup>24</sup>; “the world includes carnal desire, the reference apparently being to sense impressions that stimulate desire.”<sup>25</sup>; “Subjective {gen. ed.}...lust of the flesh...{implying that ‘the flesh lusts’ after something}”<sup>26</sup>; “subjective genitive, lust felt by the flesh”<sup>27</sup>] καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία [“It may denote...a desire for...anything good {Phil. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:1}. But it usually denotes evil desire as indicated...by the instrument {...the eyes in 1 Jn. 2:16}...in John it arises out of the world, constitutes its nature, and perishes with it {1 Jn. 2:15ff.”}<sup>28</sup>] τῶν ὄφθαλμῶν [“the genitive with ἡ ἐπιθυμία των ὄφθαλμων...{the lust of the eyes} is subjective”<sup>29</sup>; “akin to *opsis*, sight, probably from a root signifying penetration, sharpness...{cp. Eng., ophthalmia, etc.}, is used...metaphorically, of ethical qualities, evil...as the instrument of evil

20Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

21Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

22Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989). 1:290.

23Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989). 1:321.

24Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

25Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

26Chapman, Benjamin and Shogren, Gary Steven, *Greek New Testament Insert*, (Quakertown, PA: Stylos Publishing) 1994.

27Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

28Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

29Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

desire, ‘the principal avenue of temptation,’<sup>30</sup>; “the eyes may entice to sin”<sup>31</sup>; “By metonymy for envy, malice Mk 7:22 {but the mng. stinginess, love for one’s own possessions is upheld for all the NT pass. w. ὄφ. πον. by CJ Cadoux...Envy, etc. is preferred by CRSmith...}”<sup>32</sup>] καὶ ἡ ἀλαζούεία [“pretension, arrogance in word and deed...pride in one’s possessions”<sup>33</sup>; “the practice of an *alazōn*, denotes quackery; hence, arrogant display, or boastings”<sup>34</sup>; “The *alazōn* is ‘one who makes more of himself than reality justifies,’ or ‘promises more than he can perform,’ often used of orators, philosophers, doctors, cooks, and officials. A link with pride is sometimes seen; hence in Hab. 2:5 the *alazōn* is one who does not trust in God. The term occurs in the lists in Rom. 1:30 and 2 Tim. 3:2 in its usual sense and with a religious nuance. This nuance is stronger in the case of *alazoneía* in 1 Jn. 2:16 {‘thinking one can shape one’s own life apart from God’}”<sup>35</sup>; “a state of pride or arrogance, but with the implication of complete lack of basis for such an attitude—‘false arrogance, pretentious pride, boastful haughtiness.’...‘but now you are boasting in your pretentious pride’ Jas 4.16. ‘Pretentious pride’ may be rendered as ‘constantly talking about how great oneself is.’”<sup>36</sup>] τοῦ βίου [“the resources which one has as a means of living - ‘possessions, property, livelihood.’...‘but she, as poor as she was, put in all she had - {she gave} all she had to live on’ Mk 12.44; ὁ δὲ διεῖλεν αὐτοῖς τὸν βίον ‘so he divided the property between them’ Lk 15.12...‘the pride in worldly possessions is not from the Father’”<sup>37</sup>; “life in its appearance and manifestations...means of subsistence...Specif. property”<sup>38</sup>; “of the manner of life, life in regard to its moral conduct”<sup>39</sup>] οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ [“marker denoting origin, cause, motive, reason, from, of...to denote

30Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

31Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

32Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

33Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

34Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

35Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

36Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:764.

37Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

38Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

39Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

derivation...come, derive from someone or someth.”<sup>40</sup>] τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλὰ ἐκ [“to denote origin, cause, motive, reason...to denote origin as to family, race, city, people, district, etc.”<sup>41</sup>] τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν].

John explained what he seemed to be referring in his expression, “the things in the world,” in vs. 15a; “For all that is in the world,” that is, “the totality of”<sup>42</sup> what is in the world follows. The statement by Robertson, “Three examples, not necessarily covering all sins,”<sup>43</sup> does not seem correct. Besides, John is referring to three overarching categories of sin, not specific sins, but these categories cover absolutely all sins.

The first category mentioned is “the lust (ἐπιθυμία) of the flesh (σαρκὸς).” The term translated “lust” “may denote...a desire for...anything good (Phil. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:1). But it usually denotes evil desire as indicated...by the instrument (here ‘flesh,’ ed.)...in John it arises out of the world, constitutes its nature, and perishes with it (1 Jn. 2:15ff.).”<sup>44</sup> “Flesh” is a fairly broad term in Scripture, but as with the lusts of the body in Rm. 6:12, lust here seems to have reference “to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity.”<sup>45</sup> A.T.R. adds that flesh is a “subjective genitive, lust felt by the flesh,”<sup>46</sup> the reference being “to such sensual bodily appetites as proceed from within our evil nature.”<sup>47</sup> Further “the lusts of the flesh...is a phrase which describes the emotions of the soul, the natural tendency towards things evil. Such lusts are not necessarily base and immoral, they may be refined in character, but are evil if inconsistent with the will of God.”<sup>48</sup> Hodges adds that the lust of the flesh “stands for those things that the flesh craves, such as illicit sexual pleasure or the gratification of addictive drugs.”<sup>49</sup> The

reference here is basically to the notice that the world sarcastically touts, “If it feels good, do it!”

The next category is, “the lust of the eyes (όφθαλμῶν),” A.T.R. says that the term “eyes” is also, “subjective, lust with the eyes as organs.”<sup>50</sup> One sees something, immediately one wants something. One desperately wants to acquire what one sees. This could easily overlap with the lust of the flesh (Mt. 5:28), but it opens up a whole new category of potential in sin, the acquisition of material possessions.

Finally, we have the “boastful (ἀλαζονεία) pride of life (βίου).” “Boastful” here is “a state of pride or arrogance, but with the implication of complete lack of basis for such an attitude.”<sup>51</sup> “The *alazón* is ‘one who makes more of himself than reality justifies,’ or ‘promises more than he can perform,’ often used of orators, philosophers, doctors, cooks, and officials. This nuance is stronger in the case of *alazoneía* in 1 Jn. 2:16 (“thinking one can shape one’s own life apart from God”).”<sup>52</sup> The term for life here has to do with life “in its outward features and manifestations.”<sup>53</sup> It can refer to “the resources which one has as a means of living - ‘possessions, property, livelihood’”<sup>54</sup> or, “*life* in its appearance and manifestations...means of subsistence...Specif. property.”<sup>55</sup> Boasting in one’s possessions obviously points straight to the heart of the matter, and that is self-sufficiency, the supposed power that one has over others and all circumstances to acquire what he wants. This kind of self-sufficiency and tyranny is what the world regards as freedom – a grand illusion indeed.

“These three elements of worldliness are illustrated in the sin of Eve. The tree was good for food; that is the lust of the flesh. The tree was pleasant to the eyes; that is the lust of the eyes. It was a tree to be desired to make one wise; this describes the pride of life.”<sup>56</sup> They are probably also demonstrated in the temptations of our Lord

<sup>40</sup>William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 296.

<sup>41</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>42</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989). 1:596.

<sup>43</sup>Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

<sup>44</sup>Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

<sup>45</sup>Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>46</sup>Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

<sup>47</sup>William MacDonald; edited with introductions by Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible commentary: Old and New Testaments [computer file]*, electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995 by William MacDonald.

<sup>48</sup>Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>49</sup>Hodges, Zane C., *The Epistles of John* (Grace Evangelical Society, Irving, Texas, 1999).

<sup>50</sup>Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

<sup>51</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:764.

<sup>52</sup>Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

<sup>53</sup>Hodges, Zane C., *The Epistles of John* (Grace Evangelical Society, Irving, Texas, 1999).

<sup>54</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

<sup>55</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>56</sup>William MacDonald; edited with introductions by Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible commentary: Old and New Testaments [computer file]*, electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995 by William MacDonald.

in Mt. 4 in which He, “has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hb. 4:15b).

Dr. Constable says, “The lust of the flesh is the desire to *do* something apart from the will of God. The lust of the eyes is the desire to *have* something apart from the will of God. The pride of life is the desire to *be* something apart from the will of God.”<sup>57</sup> He correctly adds, “Perhaps the most common manifestation of the lust of the flesh in modern western civilization is illicit sex (hedonism, idolizing pleasure). Perhaps the most common manifestation of the lust of the eyes is excessive buying (materialism, idolizing possessions). Perhaps the most common manifestation of the pride of life is trying to control (egoism, idolizing power).”<sup>58</sup>

Naturally, none of this is “from the Father, but is from the world.” The proto-Gnostics probably argued that since God created everything, one could indulge in all the above with impunity. This is a great myth that some still use today to excuse their reprehensible conduct. “It can be wrong if it feels so right.” Really? The world of iniquity is to be distinguished from the created world on which we live, as we noted above in the various meanings for the term world. The wayward believer who opts for the world’s system has chosen to be satisfied with the finite, everything he goes for begins and ends with the world. He cannot and he will not find satisfaction – in the creation. The godly believer has chosen to be satisfied with the infinite; only He will find satisfaction – in the Creator.

C. The world’s system is utterly temporary as opposed to the one who does the will of God (2:17).

1. (vs. 17) For those so inclined to go with the world and its system, they should hear this verse: “And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (*καὶ ὁ κόσμος* [“The *kόsmos* is of limited duration... The world passes away {1 Jn. 2:17}; it is thus ‘this world’ in contrast to the imperishable world to come {1 Cor. 3:19; cf. 2:6; Jn. 12:31; 16:11}”]<sup>59</sup>] *παράγεται* [“to go out of existence - ‘to cease to exist, to pass away, to

cease.’”<sup>60</sup>; “trans...pass. *be brought past, pass away, disappear*”<sup>61</sup>; “in 1 John 2:8, R.V., ‘is passing away’ {A.V., ‘is past’}, of the passing of spiritual darkness through the light of the Gospel, and in ver. 17 of the world.”<sup>62</sup>] *καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία* [“to denote someth. to which desire belongs gener.”<sup>63</sup>] *αὐτοῦ ὁ δὲ ποιῶν* [“active...do, make...do, keep, carry out, practice, commit...do, keep the will or law obediently”<sup>64</sup>] *τὸ θέλημα* [“that which is desired or wished for—‘wish, desire.’”<sup>65</sup>; “objective, what is willed, what one wishes to happen...what one wishes to bring about by the activity of others, to whom one assigns a task...predom. of God {or Christ}”<sup>66</sup>; “subjectively, the will being spoken of as the emotion of being desirous, rather than as the thing willed; of the will of God”<sup>67</sup>] *τοῦ θεοῦ μένει* [“to continue in an activity or state—‘to continue, to remain in, to keep on.’”<sup>68</sup>; “intr. remain, stay...remain, last, persist, continue to live...of pers.”<sup>69</sup>] *εἰς τὸν αἰώνα* [“time, age...very long time, eternity...of time to come which, if it has no end, is also known as *eternity...to eternity, eternally, in perpetuity...remain*”<sup>70</sup>]).

Logically most people have to acknowledge this that “the world is passing away, and also its lusts.” Even for those who do not, they cannot avoid the reality that *they* are passing away. The truth is that the world is passing away, just as we saw earlier that “the darkness is passing away” (1Jn. 2:7). God is going to put a stop to this evil world and its lusts, its evil desires, which are contrary to His nature and will and commands. This is all a part of the coming judgment of 2Pt. 3 and 1Cor. 6:2.

<sup>57</sup>Tom Constable, Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). 1 Jn 2:16.

<sup>58</sup>Tom Constable, Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). 1 Jn 2:16.

<sup>59</sup>Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

<sup>60</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

<sup>61</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>62</sup>Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>63</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>64</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>65</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition, New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:287.

<sup>66</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>67</sup>Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>68</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition, New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989. 1:655.

<sup>69</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>70</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

Contrarily, “the one who does the will of God abides forever.” This is not a simple reference to eternal security for having been obedient to the gospel, namely, to have believed in Jesus. There are contrasting lifestyles here, worldliness and godliness, each of which is possible for the believer. Nothing is said of the outcome for the worldly minded believer, but the system he followed is doomed. That this believer will be in heaven is clear from 1Cor. 3:15. But the believer in view here is the victorious believer “who does the will of God,” in this life and consequently “abides forever,” that is, as he abode in Christ in this life, so also will he in eternity. Someone will say Won’t all believers abide in Christ in eternity? No they will not in this sense. This believer will have a more full-orbed experience of intimacy and abiding fellowship beyond description as a result of faithfulness now.

### III Conc.

After this, my only prayer for each of us is that we will not love the world, but will do the will of God instead. Clearly, the eternal abiding experience will be reward enough for all who do, not that there are no further rewards for us besides that.