

Colleyville Presbyterian Church

1 John 2:15-3:3

April 30, 2023

*15 Do not love the world or 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 desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

One of 1 John's most important themes is love. 1 John 2:5 - "But whoever keeps [Jesus'] word, in him truly the love of God is perfected." 1 John 2:7 — "Beloved" - 1 John 2:10 - "Whoever loves his brother abides in the light."

Being those who are loved by God means loving our brother. Also, being those who are loved by God means not loving (i.e. not setting our affections on) the world.

"The World" here does not mean physical, fleshly, created things. It means whatever is not of God (the desires of the flesh, the eyes, the pride of life). All of these things pass away — and in fact, this is a test of what is "in the world" — that which passes away, that which does not last.

In contrast those who refuse to love the world, those in whom God's love is perfected, abide forever. What we love shapes our being. You become what you love (see Psalm 115:8 - "Those who make [idols] become like them; so do all who trust in them." *What do we love?*)

Calvin: "By the world understand whatever concerns the present life when it is separated from God's kingdom and the hope of eternal life...All that is in the world is fading and momentary; and so John concludes that they who place their happiness in it make a bad and wretched provision for themselves, especially since God calls us to the blessed glory of eternal life."

*18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. 26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.*

What does "the last hour" refer to? Perhaps, for John it is simply the time that stands in for the period before Jesus' final return (Calvin: "The apostle, after the common manner which Scripture adopts, warns believers that no more remained but for Christ to appear for the redemption of the world.") Perhaps John is referring to the imminent fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies about the destruction of the temple.

For John, “antichrists” seems to be equivalent with false prophets, and particularly those who deny the divine sonship and/or the humanity of Jesus (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). John strongly warns his readers against such as these.

In contrast, John exhorts his readers to stick closely to “what you heard from the beginning” - i.e. the testimony of his gospel and the testimony of the apostles as a whole - “That which was from the beginning” (cf. 1 John 1:1).

What is the anointing (Gk: *chrisma*) that John refers to here in verses 20 and 27? Likely *the Holy Spirit* (cf. John 16:12-15, where Jesus teaches that the Spirit will “guide” his followers into all truth). Jesus is “anointed” with the Spirit in his baptism by John, and Jesus “anoints” the apostles with the Holy Spirit by breathing upon them in John 20. Notice also that in 1 John 4:1-6, the Spirit is the one who leads and protects believers from the spirit of the antichrist. In 2:27, the anointing has personal qualities - it “teaches” and believers are to abide in it.

What does it mean to abide in the Holy Spirit? To pay close attention to what the Spirit says. And where does the Spirit speak? In the Scriptures (which are breathed out by God) — the particular role of the Spirit is to guide us into a deeper understanding of Jesus through the Scriptural testimony about him.

*28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. 1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

God’s love for us, and his work in making us his children has a goal — it is something that we grow in, and in the end, God’s love *will* be perfected in us — we will be made like Jesus when we see him as he is (consider Revelation 1).

Verse 28 gives us a powerful picture of the Christian life — as the “little children” of God, we abide in Jesus, so that when Jesus appears we will be prepared to see him. All of our Christian life is meant to be a preparation for this experience, which will come on the Last Day. (Each Lord’s Day is a particular preparation for the final Day of the Lord).

One of John’s main themes is the close resemblance between ourselves and Jesus. If we abide in Jesus, we will become like him. If we abide in other things, we will no longer resemble Jesus. This, ultimately is the standard for our sanctification — Christlikeness.

We will never fully experience this reality here and now. But one day, we will. This, along with eternal life, is the great hope of the eschaton — to be made like Jesus in his glory and purity.

W. H. Auden: “The blessed will not care what angle they are regarded from / Having nothing to hide.”