

DON'T BUY A TICKET ON THE TITANIC

1 John 2:15-17

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If I ask you to be honest with yourself this morning, will you? In your own heart and your own mind, would you dare answer this question with candor?

How are you different from your unbelieving neighbor? How is your lifestyle different? Your values? Your everyday decisions?

Well, that's easy, pastor. I faithfully attend church and my unbelieving neighbor does not. He fishes, golfs, attends sports venues which I have organized my life around a day of worship.

Okay. That is a real and significant difference and no one appreciates that about your life more than I do. Thank you for making God's day a priority in your life.

But let me, then, pose a more pointed question. How does your life, your lifestyle, your value system, differ from an unbeliever who happens to also attend church weekly? Put another way, if a nonbeliever attended church, would there still remain a fundamental difference between your lifestyle and his?

Think carefully. It's a hard question to be sure.

Perhaps we are afraid of the real answer. Does our checkbook register look the same as our neighbors? Or could someone see a difference? For most of us, tithing really does change our lifestyle. We could drive better cars, live in bigger houses, and wear garments of style if we simply spent more on ourselves and less on Christ's church.

Are our recreation activities the same? We watch the same movies, read the same book, indulge in the same affluent luxuries.

How about our conduct with others? Unbelievers must put self first. We are all born with the "me-first" mentality. Watch a group of toddlers with saltine crackers. Every baby wants a saltine

in each grimy fist – even if it means grabbing one from his little neighbor in the baby buggy, leaving his neighbor without.

Are we like our unbelieving neighbor, putting ourselves first even as we trample our co-workers underfoot to make it to the top of the hill?

Do we gossip, gabbing about our neighbor to those who will listen to us weave our fanciful fables out of one part truth and two parts creative imagination?

Is there a believer somewhere whose life you like – whose walk is so Christ-like that even his presence convicts you and makes you want to improve your walk and talk for Christ?

Do we treat those around us like the world treats its neighbor? Or do we obey His command to love even our enemies?

You understand the question. Unfortunately, you understand the question. Are we really different? Or have we become so compromised in our worldly walk that we don't even have points of difference anymore?

Let's look at John's first letter.

Look at 1 John 2:15-17.

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. 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. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

I. You cannot love both the Father and the world.

The world is at war with the Father. The world is evil, yet God is good. In John's writings, the word *kosmos*, or "world" signifies the evil unbelieving realm. All unsaved people are in the world; they, in fact, are children of the world while we are children of God. The actions of the world are selfish. The pleasures of the world are sinful. The politics of the world are corrupt. Its honors are empty. Its smiles are fake. Its love is fickle. The world is the evil empire dominated by Satan, set upon earth as the very antithesis of the kingdom of God.

Look at 1 John 4:3-5

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming and now it is already in the world. You are from God,

little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore, they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

And 1 John 5:19

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Are you in conflict with the world? God is.

If you don't find yourself constantly in conflict with the world, you'd better check your allegiance. You cannot love the Father without being in conflict with the world. If there is no conflict, you have compromised to the ways of the world.

We should not find ourselves debating our loyalty, our allegiance.

If you are born in the state of Alabama, there are two mutually exclusive choices. You must be either an Alabama Crimson Tide fan or an Auburn Tiger fan. Never the two shall meet! From the day a baby is born in Alabama, he is indoctrinated to one team or the other.

The rivalry between Alabama and Auburn is so intense that even Alabama fans can't get along after a loss to Auburn. One sports writer wrote a piece entitled, "People of Alabama, please stop shooting each other over football." After two of Alabama's three most recent losses, fans gathering together for the games have gotten into arguments that ended with someone being shot and killed. The most recent being in 2021 after the loss to Texas A&M. The sports writer made a public service announcement: "People of Alabama, stop shooting each other over footballs games. Consider this a public service announcement: Watch football games with your friends, but don't watch football games with friends who bring guns to the party." Put bluntly, he says, "When Alabama loses a football games, changes are pretty good that someone is going to get shot." (Joseph Goodman, Alabama Media Group)

Adrian Briskey was charged with murder after one of the Auburn-Alabama Iron Bowls. You remember the fluke event when Alabama missed a field goal attempt and Auburn's Chris Davis ran the ball back for 100 yards for a miraculous game-winning touchdown, defeating Alabama in the Iron Bowl in 2013. Briskey flew into a rage when she saw others were joking that the Crimson Tide's loss wasn't as bad as if the NBA's Miami Heat had lost a game. The murderer said to the deceased and her sister that we weren't real Alabama fans because it didn't bother us that they lost." And then she started shooting.)"Alabama loss to Auburn allegedly sparks fatal shooting between Crimson Tide fans," Associated Press, 12/2/2013.

And they are both Alabama fans – both the murderer and the murdered.

What if, heaven forbid, a family has one child attend the University of Alabama, while another child – the second one – attends Auburn. And what about in the fall, when the state is divided down clear lines. The Iron Bowl – it's been tearing the state in two for more than a century. These two teams hate each other. The fans hate each other. This football rivalry is truly a 365-day-a-year obsession. Sports Illustrated calls it the No. 1 rivalry.

Alabama and Auburn first met on the football field in 1893. The game was nasty, and the nastiness continued, leading to the suspension of the series after the game in 1907. Auburn and Alabama didn't meet again until 1948, and it literally took an act of the state government to make that happen. In December 1947, the Alabama House of Representatives passed a resolution encouraging the schools get over their differences and once again meet on the gridiron.

And woe to the mother of two with a child at each university. Her heart is pulled. Her allegiance is compromised, and her loyalty is in question.

While there might be a few moms in Alabama who feel the pull of dual allegiance, this is never to be for the children of God. You must love the Father and forsake the world.

To love the world is to be attracted to something that one wishes to enjoy, to indulge in some things that are not in the light. It is to want to participate in what is said in rebellion against God. In verse 16, when he says "all that is in the world" or "everything that is in the world," it doesn't refer to the physical makeup, like seas and mountains and crawling creatures, but to the moral and spiritual impulses that determine how people live.

II. The pleasures of this passing place have a satanic source.

The evil of this world finds its origin from dark forces. John gets quite specific.

- The lust of the flesh.

Any desire – a strong desire for satisfaction that is evil. Flesh is the part of man that is prone to sin.

Look at Galatians 5:16-25

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity,

sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

- The lust of the eyes.

The desire of the eyes refers to a short-sighted desire for only what the eyes see physically. We have a tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things without inquiring into the real values. Our writer, in John's gospel, uses the word "eyes" twelve times in the story of the healing of the blind man in John 9. The story makes the point that Jesus must heal our spiritual blindness, allowing us to see what is not merely physical, but the reality that has been revealed from above. Do not love the things of the world that you can see but that have no eternal value. Jesus has healed our spiritual blindness so we can see the significance and scope of salvation He has brought into the world.

Look at Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Or the story of Achan in Joshua 7:1-26. Achan saw the spoils of Jericho and buried them under his tent. Look at verse 21. "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

I saw the spoils...

I coveted...

I took...

Or Job 31:1

I have made a covenant with my eyes....

Look and want/look and seize. Sexual or material.

Look at Psalm 119:37

Turn my eyes away from looking at vanity, and revive me in Thy ways.

- The pride of life.

The word “pride” brings to mind images of arrogance and boastfulness, overconfidence in one’s resources and wealth. The pride of bios – you see the word biology – the pride of life. It refers to physical life. John is pointing to those who take security in worldly things, thinking their wealth frees them from a dependence upon God. They must realize that all they have that is not of God will pass away and be of no eternal value.

An attitude of pretentious arrogance or subtle elitism that comes from one’s view of wealth or rank.

We must be careful that we do not choose leadership in the church based on success by the world’s standards. Possessing wealth, having a successful business, having prestige – these things do not, in themselves, mean that one should have spiritual authority in church. When worldly power forms the basis for Christian leadership, demons have entered the church and in yet another way the church looks like the world.

In the early church, a slave might be the teacher of his master.

III. The folly of the world fades, but the will and way of God is forever.

Look at verse 17

And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

It’s present tense. It has already started. The world plagued by sin operates on a death principle. But we, the children of God, abide forever.

Look at 1 John 2:8

On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

Or 1 Corinthians 7:31

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.

Imagine that you have clairvoyant knowledge that the Titanic was doomed to sink. Would you buy a ticket for a cruise on a sinking ship? Probably not.

Or, what if after a leak was sprung, a gentleman started buying and selling, bartering and trading, to buy a bunch of luxuries. He shops in the ship's store, buying all the jewelry he can acquire. He bargains with the clerk and is making great deals on the deck of the sinking ship. We would question his sanity. Why wheel and deal when your destiny is in the depths of the sea. Those jewels and fur coats will be awash at sea.

Just so, the whole world is a sinking ship, a temporary kingdom. Nothing in this world lasts forever. Nothing. Nobody.

“Don't buy a ticket on the Titanic,” John is urging. The leak has already sprung. The days of this age are numbered. But the word and will of God and God's people lasts beyond even a lifetime.

Chase all the gold and glory of this world and you are just rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship. Pursue God, His kingdom, His righteousness, and find eternal reward.

Do you know Demas? I know you're familiar with Paul and Luke, or James and John. But do you know Demas? Pray your story is not the story of Demas.

Look at Colossians 4:14. “Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.” Demas was with Luke, he was in good company.

Or Philemon 24. “As do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.”

But look at 2 Timothy 4:10. “For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”

Paul is at the end of his ministry and life. Look at verse 6. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.”

Demas was in the best of company. He was in ministry with Paul for years. But Demas bought a ticket on the Titanic.

Paul saw the eternal rewards of life lived for the cause of Christ. Demas traded in the everlasting for the passing. He sacrificed the kingdom for the passing pleasures of this world.

What is the difference?

Well, all your unbelieving neighbors are buying tickets on the Titanic. But we, hopefully we, have our sights set on God's everlasting Kingdom.

This passage is about more than the desires of the flesh and the sins of promiscuity or pornography. John insists instead that we question the reigning value system of all of contemporary life at its roots. You see, whether it's sexual immorality or arrogant pride or coveting possessions, they are all symptoms of a much deeper problem of the world's alienation from God. All human values, ethics, and morality that are defined by fallen people are fatally flawed because they are built on the false premises of our reality.

Let me say it boldly: The church is not to adopt the standards of the world. The world is the enemy. They are operating in a different economy. God's sovereign prerogative is to define the standard of human values and morality. The human spirit at its heart is atheist, wanting each person to be his or her own god. The result, the Judges have told us a long time ago, is everyone "doing what is right in their own eyes." And there is no longer a uniform basis for law and morality.

So John's first imperative is foundational to all other imperatives, his first command is foundational to all other commands: "Do not love the world. Do not adopt the world's attitudes. For there is ultimately no love for God in the one who feels self-satisfied and secure in the life that he has built on this side of eternity.

We must, the church must, you must allow God to assume His rightful place in our lives as the sovereign Lord. And then the other things, – meeting physical needs and material blessings – can certainly come for God's people, and they often do.

But our everyday decisions must be directed toward God and God's eternity. If not, even our best amounts to polishing the brass on the sinking ship, the Titanic.