

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Cardiology of Worldliness

Scripture: 1 John 2:16

Code: 62-17

Continuing in our study of the wonderful epistle called 1 John, the first epistle written by the Apostle John, finding ourselves in chapter 2 and looking at a section from verses 15 to 17. This would be the third week that we've looked at this small section of Scripture, but it's very definitive and I trust that the message tonight will be as helpful as the last two have been. Let me just read these three verses again, 1 John 2:15 to 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."

We basically have sort of taken that passage apart and put it back together again in terms of its structure and its main message. But for tonight I want to just focus on verse 16 really. I want to focus a little bit on diagnosing the cardiology of worldliness, all that is in the world, the sum of it is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. None of that is from the Father, all of it is from the world.

When you're talking about the world, by that we don't mean the created physical world and we don't mean the world of men, we mean the system of sin or the system of evil, all that is in that anti-God, anti-Christ system is made up of a matrix of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. This is really diagnostic, this is getting down into the essence of sin and why we sin and what compels us to sin. Instruction that is very helpful for us. But I want to put it in a larger context because we're only dealing with just a brief portion of Scripture tonight, I can kind of broaden the big picture a little bit and maybe put together a message tonight that will give us a sense of the reality of sin.

Solomon was right when he wrote that there was not one person on earth who was righteous and good. There wasn't one person who did not sin. It is the universal problem. All have sinned. None are righteous, so says Romans chapter 3. Sin then is the universal problem. There is none good, no not one. Sin has essentially generated the cosmic chaos that exists in the heavens between God and Satan, between holy angels, between fallen angels, as well as between men and men, and men and

God. The chaos of the heaven has become the chaos of the earth. All of the realm of created beings has been devastated by the reality of sin. And we want to talk about its impact on human life. Sin attacks every baby at the moment of conception, and it waits, it lurks to embrace that baby fully when it leaves the protection of the mother's womb. Sin rules every heart, it intends to damn every soul to hell. Sin turns beauty into ugliness, wholeness into deformity, joy into sorrow, bliss into wretchedness. And that's why the Bible in Joshua 7:13 calls sin the accursed thing. It is compared in Scripture to the venom of snakes and the stench of rotting death. Understanding sin is critical so that we understand, as we heard tonight in the testimony, our need for salvation from sin.

Now just a few questions to sort of frame up the big picture. Let's ask the question, what is sin? And the answer is simple, 1 John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the Law." That is to say sin is any violation of God's Law...any violation of God's perfect holy Law. Sin is unrighteousness while the Law of God affirms what is righteous. Any act, any word, any thought, any motive that violates God's holy, just and perfect Law constitutes sin. It's not a narrow category, it's a sweeping and broad one. And God has the right as God, as holy God, to establish what pleases Him and what does not. He is the authority. He set the standards for man to live by. He established what is right and what is wrong and anything that God says is wrong constitutes sin.

Now what is sin's nature? Going beyond just a simple definition of what it is, what is its nature? That is to say what is its characterization or what are its essential components? What is it like? How is it described in the Bible? And obviously you could spend a lot of time on this, but let's just give you some insight into that. First of all, sin is defiling. It is not just an act of disobedience, it is an internal pollution. It is likened to filthy rags. Man even at his best is only doing what is essentially filthy rags.

You know, 1 Kings 8:38, sin is likened to sores that come from a deadly plague. In Zechariah 3:3 it is likened to filthy garments that cover someone. It stains the soul. It degrades man's nobility. It darkens his mind. It makes him worse than an animal, baser than a beast. It is so defiling that according to Zechariah 11:8 it causes God to loathe the sinner. And it even makes the sinner loathe himself. And you will remember, writes the prophet Ezekiel, your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done. So sin is defiling, that is to say it stains and it pollutes. That is why Paul calls it the filthiness of the flesh.

Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan, wrote, "Sin is called poison, sinners serpent. Sin is called vomit, sinners licking dogs. Sin is called the stench of graves, sinners, rotted sepulchers. Sin is called mire, sinners pigs." Graphic language to describe the pollution, corruption and defilement of sin. It has turned all of the human race into defiled beings.

Secondly, sin as to its nature is rebellious. It is rebellious. It isn't just that you slip up and break the Law of God. It is that there is in you a will to rebel. Psalm 12:4 says, "Our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us? So says the sinner." Jeremiah 2:31, "We are lords, we will come no more to you, says the sinners to God." Jeremiah 44:17, "We will certainly do whatever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, say the sinners."

Sin is so rebellious it is God's would-be murderer. Sin would dethrone God and ungod God and replace Him with the sinner. Sin is defiling but it is also blasphemously rebellious.

Thirdly, we could say about sin that it is ingratitude. It is in its own nature ingratitude. It is God, after all, who has given us all things. It is God who gave us life and breath and food and beauty and joy and love. It is God who has given us all the goodness of life, knowledge, wisdom, fun, laughter, skill, health, relationships. The sinner is literally engulfed with the goodness of God. But he abuses his privileges. He is like Absalom, remember the story of Absalom. As soon as David, his father, had kissed him and taken him to his heart, Absalom went out immediately after that and plotted a treason against his own father. And so it is that the sinner who is kissed by God in the realm of common grace, who indulges himself in God's graces and God's mercies, turns rapidly to betray God by being only the friend of Satan, God's avowed enemy. Sin is such gross ingratitude and Romans 1 says it is characteristic of the sinner that he is not thankful to God.

Further, sin is incurable...it is incurable. Man does not have in himself the capacity to do anything about his sin. He is sin to the bone. And he cannot alter that. In Isaiah chapter 1, "Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evil doers, sons who act corruptly, they have abandoned the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel. They have turned away from Him. Where will you be stricken again as you continue in your rebellion?" Then he says this, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint from the soul of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil."

In other words, sick...sin sick from head to toe and utterly incurable, like a leper. Jeremiah chapter 13 verse 23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, color? Or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to evil." Can't do anything about sin. John Flavel, another Puritan, said, "All the tears of a penitent sinner should he shed as many as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation cannot wash away one sin. The everlasting burnings in hell cannot purify the flaming conscience from the least sin. Not anything in this life and not anything in all eternal hell could expiate sin from the sinner." Hell is where men pay an unpayable debt. There is no human cure for sin, not good works, not reformation, not education.

And then we need to add that sin is deadly because the Bible says the soul that sins it shall die. The wages of sin is death. It's amazing knowing that how hard people work at sin. This defiling, rebellious, ungrateful, constant violation of God's Law which is incurable and deadly is still the choice of men. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They pursue sin gladly. Jeremiah 9:5 says, "They weary themselves committing iniquity." They wear themselves out sinning. Psalm 7:14 says, "In pain they bring forth evil." They literally bring forth evil with such commitment and devotion that they will pain themselves to achieve it. Proverbs 4:16 says they can't sleep unless they do evil. Isaiah 5:18 says they drag sin around like a beast pulling a wagon. Ezekiel 24:12 says, "Jerusalem's people weary themselves with lies." People go to hell sweating, make amazing effort to sin. This is all they know. This is all they're capable of. This is life. This is where they seek their pleasure and their fulfillment.

Sin then is to its nature is defiling, rebellious, ungrateful, incurable and deadly. The next question you might ask about sin is how many people are affected by sin? And the answer to that is everybody, all, Romans 3 says, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, no not one." No one escapes sin. No one. The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one, says 1 John chapter 5. In fact, in Romans 5:12 it says, "Just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned." The whole human race is infected with this virus. No one escapes.

We might then ask the question further in our little discussion, what are sin's results? What does it do to us? Well, these are pretty clear. First of all, let me just give you a handful of them. It causes evil to overpower man. It causes evil to overpower man. Man is utterly and totally dominated by evil. His mind is dominated by it. His will is dominated by it. His affections are dominated by it. All man can conceive in his mind is that which is sinful. He has a futile or an empty mind as regards righteousness. His will is polluted so that he will do whatever he wants to do. His affections are polluted so that he loves darkness more than light. It causes evil to literally dominate man.

Secondly, it holds all men under Satan's control. Because all men are sinners, they are therefore under the power of the general, you could say, or the monarch, or the king of the kingdom of darkness, Satan himself. They walk according to the prince of the power of the air, says Ephesians 2:2. The devil then rules the sinner because the devil rules the world system in which the sinner is held captive.

Thirdly, sin results in bringing man under God's wrath. And the Bible is clear about that, it even calls sinners, all men who are sinners, children of wrath. It says that God is going to bring about retribution on all sinners and they will spend eternity in hell if they die in their sins..

Fourthly, another result of sin, it subjects men to all the miseries of life. Because of sin we have misery. That's why Job 5:7 says, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." That's why

Romans 8:20 says, "The creature is subjected to futility." That's why Isaiah says there's no peace for the wicked. That's why Solomon who had everything the world had to offer could look at it and say, "Vanity of vanities, it's all nothing. It's all meaningless, it's all empty."

So sin overpowers man, brings him under Satan's control, brings him under God's wrath. Subjects him to all the miseries of life and ultimately, number five, it damns him to eternal hell. Jesus, frankly, is personally responsible for the precision and the clarity which the New Testament gives us to the doctrine of hell. It was Jesus Himself who described hell with clear, unmistakable language in Matthew 8, Matthew 13, and many other places. So that's what sin does.

Now let's get to our issue for this text. Where does sin originate? We're going to answer this question and then move into a couple of related questions. Where does sin originate?

Well, you remember years ago Flip Wilson said, "The devil made me do it." And that's a popular viewpoint. The devil made me do it. It's the devil who makes you sin. That is the pretty traditional viewpoint of many, many people who call themselves Christians. That is a dominating viewpoint in the Charismatic Movement. In fact, I've talked to people who have come out of Charismatic churches who tell me that they lived the time they were in those churches under the sovereignty of Satan. And the great liberating doctrine of the sovereignty of God set them free. There is a view that Satan is sovereign, Satan makes you sin, Satan brings all the trouble in your life. Satan is the problem, if you could just rebuke the devil, if you could just figure the formula out, sort of cancel out the devil and the demons, if you can find the right little prayers to pray to bind Satan, and bind the demons, you're going to eliminate the problems from your life.

There are other people who think that society makes you sin. That the problem is the world. The problem...the problem is the society around you. The problem is the television. The problem is the media around you. Or the problem is people that you have to work with and live with who exacerbate you and get you angry and that makes you sin. And it's really not your problem at all. You're a victim of society.

And there are some people who think that it's really God. It's God, after all, who allowed evil in the world. It's God who allowed sin in the world. And I'm just human and I was born human and since Adam sinned and we all fell, it's not my fault. God allowed it to happen and so it's really God's fault. And that's where Adam was, you know, when he said to God, "The woman YOU gave me, she made me do it." I went to sleep single and woke up married, You picked my wife, what do you expect out of me?

You can blame the devil, or you can blame society, or you can blame God. But not really successfully because that's not the problem. Turn to Mark chapter 7, there is a straightforward answer in the Scripture to where sin originates. Mark chapter 7, "He called a multitude...in verse 14...together, going to give them a little hamartiology, you know, the study of sin here. And he began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand." All those words indicate the importance of what He was going to say. "There is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him." Boy, what an interesting statement that is. There's nothing environmental. There's nothing outside of you natural or supernatural, no human being, no demon, not Satan, not the world around you, certainly not God, James says, who tempts no man, does not solicit anyone to do evil, there is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him. Nothing that comes from the outside constitutes the problem. But the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. The problem is not outside of you, the problem is inside of you. Verse 17, "When leaving the multitude, He entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also, do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and is eliminated?' Thus He declared all foods clean. And He was saying that which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within out of the heart of men." Now there is the problem. That is where sin originates. It is in you, in your heart. And from out of the heart, inside of you, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness, all these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

The problem is inside of you. We have met the problem and the problem is us. This is basic. Genesis 6:5 says, "All the imaginations of man's heart were only evil continually." Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Then as I noted earlier, the passage in James chapter 1 perhaps it's worth looking at, "Let no one say when he is tempted, verse 13, I'm tempted by God, God cannot be tempted by evil, He Himself does not tempt anyone." Here's the problem, verse 14, "Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." It's not about the outside, it's not about God and it's not about Satan and it's not about society. It's about you. And if you lived in a cave, you'd be living with sin. If you lived in a cave, like a monk, if you isolated yourself from every societal influence, if you hold yourself up in some assumed to be holy environment in a church monastery, away from the realm of Satan and demons, you would still be literally in the grip of sin because it's not outside, it's inside. It originates in man's sinful nature. It's really important to understand that.

Now that leads me to another question, as we move toward the text, what arouses sin? It's there, it comes out in evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride foolishness and other things. What arouses it? What incites

it? Doesn't it...isn't it capable of just sort of lying dormant? Wouldn't it be great if we could just create a Christian society? We'd have all Christian radio and Christian TV and Christian books and Christian...we'd have a Christian newspaper and we'd have a Christian insurance salesman and a Christian doctor and a Christian dentist and we'd just...we would just be apart from sin?

I remember a guy years ago who bought land in Lancaster. Of course, a lot of people bought land in Lancaster, but he was going to build a sinless city with a big wall around it. Wouldn't it be great? And we could just get all the people in the sinless city and we just read the Bible all the time.

May I tell you that wouldn't help. In fact, turn to Romans 7:5, you might be shocked. You might really be shocked to read this. Romans 7:5, "While we were in the flesh, that is while we were unconverted, the sinful passions...listen to this one...which were aroused by the Law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." Now there's an interesting twist. I thought if we all got together, got inside the cave and all we did was read the Bible, that would make sure we didn't sin. No, here he says man is so sinful in his flesh, his sinful passions are so strong that they are actually aroused by the Law of God. What an indictment that is.

Do you think it takes...you think it takes bad movies and bad literature and exposure to bad people and twisted representations in the society? No. Man is so corrupt down inside that even the pure, holy, just Law of God will arouse his sin. If you're in the condition of being in the flesh, there is down in the evil nature of the unconverted person, below the rational mind, as I've been saying to you, down below the rational mind there is this defiled, corrupt, wretched, polluted nature. And at the end of verse 5 it says, "And it works in the members of our body." It works its way out in every area of being human. The mind, as well as the physicality. And it produces, according to the end of verse 5, death. And I said that, one of the characteristics of sin is that it's deadly. So the sinful passions, these deadly things that are endemic to us, that are down in our nature polluting and corrupting all of our rational mind, these sinful passions, fascinatingly, are actually aroused by the Law.

How? How? Because if you tell such a person what God says is good, the pollution in their heart rebels against that and seeks to violate it. You say, "Well, I know how to fix America. We'll just get the Bible everywhere. We'll just get the Bible in the schools and we'll get the Bible in the courts. And we'll get the Bible in Congress. And we'll get the Bible in the White House. And we'll get the Bible in the Senate. And we'll get the Bible up in Sacramento. We'll have the Bible everywhere. That will fix America."

Oh no it won't. All that will do is arouse rebellion. It's already done it, that's why we are where we are. You understand that? We had the Bible everywhere. This is what it produces. You either embrace it or you rebel against it. That's like when you're trying to train your little kids to behave, and

you would say to your little kid, "Don't touch that." And he'd look at you and go.....right? You just incited something in him, he didn't know there was something forbidden about that, but the forbidding made it attractive. It's endemic to the human soul. Listen, I say it again, the nature of sin is that it is by its own essence rebellion, it is lawlessness. So you put the law down and it reacts. It actually, the Law of God, imposed upon the sinful passions of unregenerate people, literally generates a stronger compulsion to evil than they had known before they heard the Law of God.

Well, all of that to say the problem is not outside a man, the problem is inside. And it's so bad inside that you can put him in any environment, including an environment where the Law of God prevails and all that's going to do is incite greater rebellion. That is the sinfulness of sin.

Now that leaves a final question that finally gets us to our text. And that's okay, because we can do this quickly, since we've covered all that ground. Here's the final question. Given that this is our condition, we're talking here about humanity, not Christians, we're talking about the world.

Given that this is our condition and it's so systemic and it's so endemic and so deep, so profound, so incurable, what does the world do, what does the world appeal to to draw out our sin? That question is what's answered here. All that is in the world, now remember, the world is the system of evil overseen by Satan, energized by demons, what does that system appeal to in us? What is the matrix of fallenness? The pathology of fallenness? The cardiology of the unregenerate that the world appeals to?

It is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Those are the three gateways to which the world system finds its way into the fallen heart and generates sin. All that is in the world, the world is the anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Scripture, anti-righteous, deceptive order, controlled by Satan. The world is synonymous with the kingdom of darkness. It is dangerous. It is deadly. It is designed by Satan to appeal to these three avenues into the fallen heart.

Now I would agree, we would sin without the world's system because in the millennial kingdom when Jesus comes back, there won't be a world system. There will only be one King in the world, and that's Jesus. There will only be one kingdom and that will be His Kingdom. Righteousness will prevail. Wisdom will prevail. Knowledge will prevail. Unrighteousness and sin will be punished instantaneous with a rod of iron. There will be a perfect world in the millennial kingdom. But you know how that millennial kingdom ends? Even people who are physically alive in the millennial kingdom in a perfect world will finally come to a rebellion and they'll fight against Jesus Christ. They'll organize and fight against Christ which again indicates the fact that sin does not come from the outside, it comes from the inside, from what is in man. Sinners would sin in a perfect environment.

Sinners would sin in an environment where righteousness prevails and holiness dominates. Sinners would sin in an environment where there is swift, exacting and absolute justice. That still wouldn't prevent sinners from sinning because they can't stop sinning. Sinners would sin in an environment where every blessing imaginable and unimaginable was provided. Sinners would sin in an environment where disease was mitigated and life was long and happy and fulfilled because it's the nature of sin.

And our susceptibility which the world appeals to is the avenues that are here described as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And even in the millennial kingdom, those will still operate as the avenues of temptation, and there still will be though it will be much smaller because Satan will be bound for a thousand years and all his demons are going to be bound, there will still be enough left in the unregenerate humanity to develop a system of appeal. But even if there wasn't, we would still fall victim to these three areas. There is no way to conquer these humanly speaking, environmentally speaking. The only conquering of these comes through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at these three just briefly. The lust of the flesh. This is the craving of our sinful hearts, *epithumia*, desire, the craving of the sinful heart. It's a common word used in the New Testament, sometimes means good desires. The context is what you have to look at to see whether its meaning is positive or negative. This means the negative cravings of our sinful heart, our world impulses. The impulses that draw us toward the evil that is around us so that the evil in us is attracted to the evil around us. Or rather the evil outside of us solicits the evil that is in us. It doesn't mean...when you talk about the lust of the flesh, you immediately think of sexual sin. Well that's certainly included, but that's not any limit on this. It's any desire for anything outside of God's Law...any attitude, any thought, any word, any action that God forbids. It's the corruption of desires. It's selfish desires of any kind, sinful desires of any kind, the gamut. And God is not saying we can't have desires. There are normal, healthy desires. Nothing wrong with desiring a partner in marriage. Nothing wrong with desiring to eat. But it's sinful to desire a partner outside your marriage. It's sinful to become a glutton. Obviously. Nothing wrong with enjoying a good time and having fun, it's wicked to be consumed with pleasure and irresponsible regarding duty. Nothing wrong with being comfortable, it's sinful to become a slave to luxury.

Everything can be perverted. The lust of the flesh is a slavish kind of relentless gratification of all desires outside of God's limits, or exceeding God's limits, oblivious to what is good and reasonable and righteous. That's the lust of the flesh. It's wanting what you want and you could care less what God has to say.

And what are these lusts? Well, as I said they're not just acts of immorality. Galatians 5:19, "The deeds of the flesh are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these." Just fill in your own lists. Anything done to satisfy your yearning that violates the Law of God. The world is made up of these things, that's essentially what the world system is and the world on the outside, the world system on the outside that Satan rules is simply an external projection of the heart of man. The world really appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life because the world is made up of sinners who run on that basis, who function on that basis.

The second that he mentions is the lust of the eyes. It's not just what you feel, it's not just those impulses and compulsions that you feel down inside toward self-fulfillment against the will of God. It's also what you see. It's also what you see. "Eyes...Proverbs 20:12 says...are a gift from God." And what a blessing, what a wonderful, grace to be able to see the beauty of God's creation, to see all the people that you know and love and all the wonders of life. But the evil of the heart twists and perverts the eyes and Jesus says, "If you look on a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery in your heart." And what God gave you to appreciate His beauty can come a point of terrible sinful pursuit. Lot's wife misused her eyes and perished, killed by God. Achan saw with his eyes and coveted and took. Samson saw something he wanted with his eyes, and it cost him his eyes. David was walking on his balcony and with his eyes he saw a woman who was another man's wife and he paid profoundly for that iniquity the rest of his life. That's why the psalmist said, "Please, Lord, keep my eyes from beholding vanity." That's why Job said, Job 31, "I made a covenant with my eyes."

The lust of the flesh is the allurements that comes from the bodily impulses, the impulses of the mind and the body. The lust of the eyes is what is the lure of the outward appearance. It's a form of covetousness.

The third component in this matrix is the boastful pride of life. Boastful pride, *alazoneia*, it's not just pride, it's the braggart, it's the loudmouth boaster. In fact, the *alazon* was the braggart. This form of worldliness, this component of our fallenness, this piece of the matrix in which fallenness functions that gets projected into the world and then appealed to by the world, this is at the base of all sin. The boastful pride of life is the desire to be better than everybody else, to desire to tell everybody how much better you are. It is the desire to exceed everybody else. Boastful pride of life, to make your life more important than everybody else's life.

This form of worldliness, as I said, is at the base of everything. The longings of pride that seek to exceed everybody else, even in iniquity, although sometimes in the iniquity of self-righteousness.

There you have it, that's really the cardiology of the worldly heart. It is driven by sensuality, covetousness and pride. Sensuality, further defining a little bit, is the corruption from the lower part of man's nature, gratification of bodily desire in forbidden ways. Covetousness is the corruption of a nobler part of man's nature, unlawful abuse of God's creation. Pride is the corruption of the noblest part of man's being, the self-exaltation of his spirit made in God's image.

The lust of the flesh, that's just base desire, gratification. Covetousness, that's a little bit higher on the scale. You see something, you recognize the attractiveness of it and you want it for yourself. And so there comes envy, covetousness, jealousy. And sometimes leads to murder, James says. Pride is the corruption of the noblest part of man's life, that is his *emaguodei*????), his mind, his rationality. What exalts man above all the rest of the creation is that he is made in God's image. Instead of being humbled by that, he seeks to fulfill things that glorify himself and not God.

In sensuality he functions lower than an animal. In covetousness he seeks to have everything that his fellow man has. In pride, he defies God. Sensual, he's like an animal. Covetous, he's like all other men, desiring to have what they have. But in pride he defies God, he rears up to replace the sovereign God Himself, he like the devil who was lifted up with pride. Therein is the web of sinful impulse, provides the beachhead for the system's temptations to land and conquer the sinner's heart.

Now that's so far a bit of an abstraction. Let me give a concrete conclusion by having you turn to Genesis 3. This is not a passage we can fully explain tonight, but just a few minutes on this will, I think, be a help to you. Here is the first temptation, the first sin in the fall of the human race. Genesis 3:1 to 7.

Satan comes along. He finds the woman, Eve, in the garden. Verse 1, he approaches the woman. He says, "Indeed, has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" That's the first question in history, by the way. Designed to start Eve on the path to distrusting God. He wants Eve to doubt the character of God, wants Eve to disobey God. He wants Eve to believe that God is a liar and that God is restrictive needlessly and wants to put her in bondage. So here for the first time he offers Eve the option of subjecting God's Word to human judgment. This is a sad moment. This is the first time anything God said was subjected to human judgment. "Has God said ye shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" Satan in the way he poses the question turns the positive into the negative. God had originally said you can eat from anything in the garden, everything in the garden except that one tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan turned it into a negative, "Has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" emphasizing the negative, forcing Eve to contemplate the fact that God is restrictive. He turns what was a provision with only one small limitation into what is a prohibition, setting her up for the main assault on God. He is implying God is restrictive, God is narrow, God hampers freedom, God wants to rain on your parade, God doesn't want you to have something that's really good, He wants to limit your enjoyment. He wants to limit your pleasure. On the other hand, he implies, "I am devoted to your full fulfillment, I am in the

freedom business. God may even be cruel and uncaring if He restricted you from that tree. God's pro-bondage, I'm pro-freedom."

"Oh, the woman answered to the serpent and said, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said you shall not eat from it, or touch it.'" God didn't say that. God didn't say that. By adding those words, "or touch it," she's saying, "Yeah, you know, you might be right," and she's starting to add restriction to what God said, feeling the weight of Satan's approach.

There's no defense of God here. She doesn't say, "How dare you question the word of God. You didn't get it right. It was a provision with only a minor restriction, not a prohibition." She doesn't defend God at all. She says, "Yeah, you shall not eat from it, or touch it, lest you die." God didn't say that but she's beginning to buy into this idea that God is restrictive so she throws in a restriction of her own. Her heart has set its course. And she fell really at that moment, the moment she didn't defend God. Satan knew it so in verse 4 he went all the way. The serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die." He knew where she was. God said you'll die, Satan said, "No you won't." And by saying that Satan said God is a...what?...He's a liar. He's not only narrow, not only restrictive, He not only wants to rain on your parade, He not only wants you to keep from enjoying the pleasure of that tree, but He didn't tell you the truth, I'm telling you He lied to you, you won't die, that's a lie.

Well, why would God lie? Why would God say I'll die? Verse 5, "Because God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The reason He doesn't want you to eat is not because He loves you and you'll die, it's because if you eat you'll be like Him and He hates competition. He doesn't want anybody equal to Him. He's jealous and it's an evil jealousy and it's a narrow jealousy, and it's a restrictive jealousy.

She was gone in her mind. She had fallen but she hadn't yet sinned. She was in a fallen condition. She hadn't yet sinned. What is the matrix in her fallenness that's going to literally cause her to sin? Verse 6 tells you, follow this, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food," what's that? Stomach, bodily appetite, lust of the flesh, it isn't related to hunger, she had all kinds of things to eat. It was the idea that there was some satisfaction being withheld from her. It was good for food, the lust of the flesh, fulfill some desire, some appetite.

Secondly, she saw also that it was a delight to the eyes. That's the lust of the eyes. It not only excited her...her sort of basic desire for the sensual joy of food, it excited her otherwise noble appreciation of beauty so it went from her physicality, to her emotion. And she saw that it was a beautiful tree and that made it desirable. She could appreciate beauty. And so she was seduced by her hunger and she was seduced by her vision.

And then she also saw that the tree was desirable to make one...what?...wise. What was that? Pride of life. That's the matrix that sin works on, the baser desires and appetites of the body, the nobler visions of beauty and form and the highest of all, the ability to know wisdom because you're made in the image of God, comes the point of pride.

There was physical impulse. There was an emotional impulse. There was an intellectual impulse. That is the matrix of temptation, it comes in that way. It did that first time and it always has since. These are the avenues. That's why you have to beat your body and keep it in subjection. That's why you have to make a covenant with your eyes. That's why you have to humble yourself. Even when you're saved and you become a Christian, those are still the beachheads where the troops of temptation land.

One closing illustration, Luke 4. In Luke 4 Jesus full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Luke 4 verse 1. He was 40 days in the wilderness tempted by the devil. Boy, wouldn't you love to know how the devil tempted Jesus? You do, he's revealed it here. He ate nothing in those days, when they ended He became hungry. He was being tempted the whole time. And here we get an indication how the devil worked on Him.

"The devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'" Forty days of not eating, you can imagine He was hungry, right? Make some bread out of those stones, You have the power, turn those stones into bread. Fulfill that hunger.

Now Jesus did what He did because the Father willed that He do it. The Father willed that He do a fast for 40 days. When the time came, the Father would take care of Him. He was submitted completely to the will of the Father, He only did what the Father told Him to do. And He operated only in the power of the Holy Spirit and here He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. The Spirit was in charge of everything. Jesus had yielded to that. But here comes Satan and Satan comes at Him in that same matrix and he says to Him, "You have some physical needs, You have some physical impulses, You need some food, turn those stones into bread." "Jesus said, 'It is written man shall not live on bread alone.'" He didn't fall to that.

So, Satan led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world...take a look. All that your eyes can see. And he went at Him on the lust of the eyes. "And the devil said to Him, 'I'll give You all this domain and its glory. Look at it all. All the wonder of the created world. It's been handed over to me,' he said, 'and I give it to whomever I wish.'" He is prince of this world. "'And if You just worship me, it will be Yours, look at it all. Wouldn't You like to have that, You who have no where to lay Your head? You have only the clothes on Your back. You who are the Messiah of God, impoverished.'" "

"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is written you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" I can't serve you. I can't worship you. Temptation with the lust of the flesh, He met with Scripture from Deuteronomy. The temptation to the lust of the eyes He met with Scripture, again from Deuteronomy. There's only one last place to go and that's to the pride of life, so he led Him to Jerusalem, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, probably a 400-foot drop at least to the valley below on that southeast corner of the temple ground. "If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here." You want these people to recognize You as the Messiah, the Son of God, remember the Old Testament says in Psalm 91, "He'll give His angels charge concerning You to guard You, on their hands they'll bear You up lest You strike Your foot against a stone."

Can't You imagine, Jesus...he says...can't You imagine? You want acceptance, You want to be popular, You want to be somebody, You want the accolades of the world, just dive off this 400-foot precipice and the angels will all gather around You and You'll float down like a feather and You'll land and they'll all bow down. And You'll be preeminent.

Appealing to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, now the pride of life, Jesus said to him, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." And again He quotes from Deuteronomy. He just met every temptation with Scripture. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet...what?...without sin. This is how the world comes, beloved. This is how the world comes. It comes at the base level of bodily desires. It comes at the nobler level of the vision of beauty. And it comes at the highest of all, the intellectual level, the desire for knowledge and wisdom and to be significant. That is the matrix of temptation. Everything in the world works in that complex. This is the heart of man. This is how the world operates.

Since I said the world is nothing more than a system which Satan has accommodated to the corruption and corruptibility of the human heart, they work in perfect harmony. And as I said, even if you take the system out, the corrupting influences are still there. But marry the corruptive influences to the system, and you have the maximum impact for iniquity in the world. And it's not going to get better, it's going to get...what?...worse. Evil men, 2 Timothy 3:13, will grow worse and worse. As man gets more sophisticated in his ability to work the system that Satan concocts, he will appeal more to those elements of corruption.

That's not us. Let me close with this. Back to 1 John for a minute. That's not us. We're not a part of that anymore. Gratefully all that is in the world is not from the Father and the world is passing away and also its lust, but the one who does the will of God abides forever. That's not us. We are not driven by the world, we are driven by the will of the Father. We don't always do it the way we should, but that's always the longing in our hearts, always the longing in our hearts. We don't love the world.

We don't love the things in the world because the love of the Father is in us, we are not of the world. We still have the residual impact of sin in us. We still can be tempted that way. But it goes against the grain of who we are. We do not love that system. When we fall victim to it, we hate the system and we hate the sin. This is how we are distinguished as true believers.

Well, Father, thank You again for the Word. We always need to be reminded of what a treasure it is. We hear again the words of John, "You are from God, little children. 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, the world listens to them. We are from God and we know the Spirit of truth and can distinguish from the spirit of error." We thank You that we have overcome the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. We thank You, Father, that we have overcome the world. The world cannot triumph over us. We do not love the system. We hate the system. We resent our own sin. We look at ourselves like Paul did, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?" We don't believe the system is right. We long to do Your will and all of this not because there's anything good in us, but because You graciously rescued us from the world, from the kingdom of darkness and made us citizens of Your dear Son. We thank You for this truth and may it help us to be on guard so that we might truly live the triumphant life that You desire. We thank You in Your Son's name. Amen.

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