Session 3 - Attacks on our fellowship with God and others

I. First attack on fellowship: Worldliness 1 John 2:15-17

A. The problem with it–

B. "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. 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. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17)

C. This is not a call to not love the Earth God created nor humanity within it. We are not to love the world, its systems and its way of doing things.

D. The world is looking for the same thing God is: our love. It wants us to love it and to express our love to it and its systems. And the trap is this: it reduces our capacity to love God with our whole heart and diminishes true joy in full fellowship.

E. How is love for the world expressed? Time, attention, and expense instead of God.

F. "If you love the world, there are rewards to be gained. You may find a place of prestige, status, honor and comfort. The world's systems know how to reward its lovers." (Guziak)

G. Love for the world doesn't fit and never will with the love for the Father. We must check ourselves often to be sure our claim to love God matches our actions.

H. This does not mean we remove ourselves from every part of the world for Jesus prayed for us that 'we would be in the world but not of it.' John 17:14-18

I. Here's how we check ourselves to see if the love of the Father is in us. We measure it up against the world's expression: ***the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*** These lusts or cravings seek to draw our flesh away into sin and worldliness.

J. Lust of the flesh: human desire and physical appetites gone awry where a person seeks to gratify or meet their own desires in ways that violate God's moral law. In other words craving physical ease, bodily desires or self-gratification. These physical needs are not inherently wrong but only in *how we achieve them is what causes us to sin and be drawn away from God.* They become wrong when the needs are twisted into an obsession or satisfied outside of God's boundaries. These can include food, sex, rest and comfort. The reason these are wrong is motive–self is the center. A life driven by human impulses, emotions and physical comfort rather than submission to God's will. And while sexual sin is usually pegged at the top of the list the lust of the flesh includes many other areas : gluttony, drunkenness, laziness, envy, uncontrolled temper, and destructive habits.

K. Instead of receiving our needs through God and community, we look to fulfill them through our own means. *Ennegram*

L. Galatians 5:16, "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." The direct solution to overcoming the lust of the flesh is to walk (daily choices) in dependence with God.

M. Galatians 5:25, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." We follow the Holy Spirit's pace in step with what He shows us. We walk in the light as He is in the light. The light He illuminates on our path to fellowship with God and others.

N. Lust of the eyes: Is a sinful, worldly desire to covet, fixate on, or possess visually appealing things that belong to someone else or are morally forbidden. It is a greedy longing for wealth, luxury items, physical possessions or social status driven purely by sight–wanting something the moment you lay eyes on it. The eyes serve as the primary gateway for temptation. The lust of the eyes dwell on something forbidden inspiring deeper moral transgression. King David watching Bathsheba. The pitfall to a constant lust of the eyes today comes through continual exposure to advertisements, digital media consumption, social media scrolling, and a culture of hyper-consumerism where people are perpetually dissatisfied with what they have.

   Antidote: Job says it like this in 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully on a woman." (but you fill in the blank here)

   Shifting focus from physical, fading possessions to spiritual principles, thankfulness and devotion to God.

O. Pride of life: A person who lives for superiority over others, mostly through impressing others through outward appearances–even if by deception. It is characterized as arrogance and independence, a thirst for status, or boasting of their self-sufficiency or "self-made success." It's driven by believing you are better, smarter, or more important than others. King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30 walked around Babylon boasting that he built the great empire entirely by his own mighty power. The pitfall to cultivating a lifestyle is the constant need to be strong to keep it sustained and growing. Eventually God is forced out of the picture and fellowship with God and others is ignored to build self and ego.

P. We can tell who we belong to by the desires manifesting in our hearts and lives. It's easy to turn from these by repentance to God and others and walking in the light and letting God satisfy all of our needs. He created us in His image with these needs and they are to be met perfectly in Perfect Fellowship with the Father, Son,. Holy Spirit and others.

Q. Good questions for measuring ourselves–

   Think of your standard of success: is it worldly or godly?

   Think of your standard for what makes a person of the opposite sex appealing? Is it a worldly standard or a godly standard?

   Think of your standard for spirituality: is it worldly or godly? There is a worldly spirituality out there and many people embrace it.

R. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2

S. The world is passing away. This reveals the folly of worldliness. What we invest into the world cannot and will not last.

II. Second attack on fellowship: False Religion & The spirit of the Anti Christ 1 John 2:18-29

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the[a] Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which 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 they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you[e] know all things. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

A. John wrote it being the last hour because of his constant expectancy of Jesus' return. John warns the Believers of the Anti-Christ and those who participate in his like Spirit. The prefix **'Anti' means against, opposed to, or opposite of or instead of.'**

B. Many people are ignorant of the Anti-Christ deeming him only to be the opposite of Jesus in every way, which is partly true, but John warns the Ephesus Christians facing the upheaval of community and those who left foundational truths that Jesus taught and was challenging their thoughts about 'Anti-Christ' and giving them practical words on how to know if a person is walking in an ANTI-CHRIST spirit and ultimately what to look for as the Anti-Christ steps on the scene in the End Times.

C. "An opposite Jesus gives us the idea that the Anti Christ will appear as a supremely evil person. They think that as much as Jesus went around doing good, the Antichrist will go around doing bad. As much as Jesus' character and personality was beautiful and attractive, the AntiChrist's personality will be ugly and repulsive. As much as Jesus spoke only truth, the AntiChrist will speak only lies. This emphasizes the idea of 'the opposite Jesus' too much. The AntiChrist will be more of an 'instead of Jesus'. He will look wonderful, be charming and successful. He will be the ultimate winner and appear as an angel of light. Some have wondered if this AntiChrist will be an individual or political system. This is really a small distinction, because it will in a sense be both a person and a political person. To a large extent, a man does represent and personify an entire government or system; when we think of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the figures of Hitler as an individual and Nazi Germany as a state are virtually the same. The Antichrist is an individual, but he will also be associated with a powerful government."--David Guiziak

D. 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 they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

E. John makes the distinction that there will be 'many antichrists' those who walk in the same spirit as he will but there will one day be one Antichrist who will enter the scene in the end times and lead many into rebellion away from God.

F. John warned them of many antichrists that would come to offer a false christ but John calls them to remember that Jesus which they saw, were taught by, and heard his teachings. That was the Jesus they were called to return to. John made a strong declaration that those who went out from them, showed their true colors, and were not of them. Even if they identified with Christians communities, when they decided to leave it showed that they were not true.

G. "John wasn't talking about someone who leaves one church to begin attending another good church. He meant those who leave the community of God's people all together. This reveals that they were never really part of God's people to begin with."

H. "We can imagine the scene. There is some controversy among people at a church, and someone responds by saying, "I'm so sick of all this. This church and all churches, they're just a bunch of hypocrites. I don't need any of this. I can follow God my own way!" They leave; not just a church, but they leave any kind of church. We can fairly say that this person does not appear to be a Christian, and their appearance demonstrates that they never really were a Christian. Only God knows the heart for certain, but the appearance is that they trusted in the church, or trusted in themselves, but they weren't really trusting in Jesus Christ. If they were, then the common ground of trust in Jesus would be greater than any other difficulty they might be having with other Christians."

I. God gives the anointing for discernment which is common for all. This anointing isn't for some and isn't a miraculous gift but a common one. God wants us to know who is from Him and who is not.

J. He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. John points out plainly that those who deny the Father and the Son are antichrist. The component will have to be both in order to be true. John here repeated an idea that Jesus expressed often, as recorded in the Gospel of John. Jesus said, ***He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me (John 12:44-45). He who receives Me receives Him who sent Me (John 13:20).***

III. Abiding: preserving our relationship

A. ***[24] Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. [26] These things I have written to you concerning those who try to [ff]deceive you. [27] But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. [28] And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. [29] If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.***

B. "Therefore, in light of the danger of the spirit of antichrist, we protect ourselves against the spirit of antichrist by abiding in the original, core Christian message (that **which you heard from the beginning**). As we walk in the simplicity and power of that message, we will not be led astray. Humans, by nature, are almost always attracted to something just because it is *new*. We almost always think of *new* as *better*. But when it comes to *truth*, new is not better. That **which you heard from the beginning** is better." (Enduring word)

C. The apostle Paul communicated the same idea in Galatians 1:6-9, where he warns against going after a new gospel and emphasizes the importance of continuing on in the original gospel that Paul taught.

D. This is difficult because we are tempted to be *tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting* (Ephesians 4:14). We often itch for something "new" and "exciting" even if it departs from that **which you heard from the beginning**. **Which you heard from the beginning**: This does not describe whatever teaching any Christian might receive when he is newly following Jesus. **The beginning**, for these believers, describes the time when they were under the teaching of the apostles, which is now recorded for us in the New Testament. John writes to them to warn them of the deception coming into the communities of Believers. Yet, the anointing of the Holy spirit has been poured out on all to guide them into all truth. God confirms it to their hearts.

E. Living the teaching given at the beginning is to let Jesus abide in us, to live in God. There is a simplicity to the message taught to us through the apostles and the Word of God.

F. Yet, not only are we called to abide in Him; but we also know that He abides in us. It is a two-way relationship. "You are to take care that you abide in Christ as much as if all depended upon yourself; and yet you can look to the promise of the covenant, and see that the real reason for your abiding in Christ lies in the operation of his unchanging love and grace." (Spurgeon)

G. Jesus promises eternal life to all those who abide in Him, and hold fast to what they were taught in the beginning.

H. So, abiding is our grounds of confidence with God. We have the promise of eternal life as we abide. "You must be in a living, loving, lasting union with the Son of God, or else you are not in a state of salvation." (Spurgeon)

I. John exhorts Believers to remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns they would be filled with courage and not shrink back in shame. Many of these passages use the word 'we' to indicate that we do this abiding fellowship thing together with God and the saints.

J. There will be 3 responses at his return…1. They never knew Him and are afraid. (not saved) 2. They were saved but did not take time to abide in Him and were not afraid but ashamed at His coming. 3. Those who cultivated a vibrant heart, stored oil and abided in the vine; these will have confidence before Him when He returns.

K. Abide in him.' If you abide in the faith of him, holding his truth, following his example, and making him your dwelling-place, your Lord may come at any hour, and you will welcome him." (Spurgeon)

L. Many of these passages use the word 'we' to indicate that we do this abiding fellowship thing together with God and the saints.