

john 15:4
A b i d e in **ME**



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 4 - Number 7
The week of December 2, 2018

Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*
The Expulsive Power of a New Affection
1 John 2:15-17

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

Love - a sincere affection for others 1 John 4:10-12

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Expelling Worldliness with a New Affection¹
by Sinclair Ferguson

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) was one of the most remarkable men of his time—a mathematician, evangelical theologian, economist, ecclesiastical, political, and social reformer all in one. His most famous sermon was published under the unlikely title: “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.” In it he expounded an insight of permanent importance for Christian living: you cannot destroy love for the world merely by showing its emptiness. Even if we could do so, that would lead only to despair. The first world-centered love of our hearts can be expelled only by a new love and affection—for God and from God. The love of the world and the love of the Father cannot dwell together in the same heart. But the love of the world can be driven out only by the love of the Father. Hence Chalmers’ sermon title.

True Christian living, holy and right living, requires a new affection for the Father as its dynamic. Such new affection is part of what William Cowper called “the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord”—a love for the holy that seems to deal our carnal affections a deadly blow at the beginning of the Christian life. Soon, however, we discover that for all that we have died to sin in Christ, sin has by no means died in us. Sometimes its continued influence surprises us, even appears to overwhelm us in one or other of its manifestations. We discover that our “new affections” for spiritual things must be renewed constantly throughout the whole of our pilgrimage. If we lose the first love we will find ourselves in serious spiritual peril.

Sometimes we make the mistake of substituting other things for it. Favorites here are activity and learning. We become active in the service of God ecclesiastically (we gain the positions once held by those we admired and we measure our spiritual growth in terms of position achieved); we become active evangelistically, and in the process measure spiritual strength in terms of increasing influence; or we become active socially, in moral and political campaigning, and measure growth in terms of involvement. Alternatively, we recognize the intellectual fascination and challenge of the gospel and devote ourselves to understanding it, perhaps for its own sake, perhaps to communicate it to others. We measure our spiritual vitality in terms of understanding, or in terms of the influence it gives us over others. But no position, influence, or involvement can expel love for the world from our hearts. Indeed, they may be expressions of that very love.

Others of us make the mistake of substituting the rules of piety for loving affection for the Father: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” Such disciplines have an air of sanctity about them, but in fact they have no power to restrain the love of the world. The root of the matter is not on my table, or in my neighborhood, but in my heart. Worldliness has still not been expelled.

It is all too possible, in these different ways, to have the form of genuine godliness (how subtle our hearts are!) without its power. Love for the world will not have been expunged, but merely diverted. Only a new love is adequate to expel the old one. Only love for Christ, with all that it implies, can squeeze out the love of this world. Only those who long for Christ’s appearing will be delivered from Demas-like desertion caused by being in love with this world.

How can we recover the new affection for Christ and his kingdom that so powerfully impacted our life-long worldliness, and in which we crucified the flesh with its lusts?

What was it that created that first love in any case? Do you remember? It was our discovery of Christ's grace in the realization of our own sin. We are not naturally capable of loving God for himself, indeed we hate him. But in discovering this about ourselves, and in learning of the Lord's supernatural love for us, love for the Father was born. Forgiven much, we loved much. We rejoiced in the hope of glory, in suffering, even in God himself.

This new affection seemed first to overtake our worldliness, then to master it. Spiritual realities—Christ, grace, Scripture, prayer, fellowship, service, living for the glory of God—filled our vision and seemed so large, so desirable that other things by comparison seemed to shrink in size and become bland to the taste.

The way in which we maintain “the expulsive power of a new affection” is the same as the way we first discovered it. Only when grace is still “amazing” to us does it retain its power in us. Only as we retain a sense of our own profound sinfulness can we retain a sense of the graciousness of grace.

Many of us share Cowper's sad questions: “Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and his word?” Let us remember the height from which we have fallen, repent and return to those first works. It would be sad if the deepest analysis of our Christianity was that it lacked a sense of sin and of grace. That would suggest that we knew little of the expulsive power of a new affection. But there is no right living that lasts without it.

¹This article was previously published in *Eternity Magazine*, December 1987.

²For those who would like to read Chalmer's entire article, please go to:
<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/Chalmers,%20Thomas%20-%20The%20Expulsive%20Power%20of%20a%20New%20Af.pdf>

STEP ONE . . .

OBSERVATION

What does the text say?

1 John 2:15-17

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.

- Underline the word *world* all six times that it occurs.
- Circle the command in verse 15. Write above it: *a strong negative imperative*.
- Bracket the three phrases that describe worldly desires.
- Draw an arrow from the word *things* (v. 15) to the hyphenated phrases in verse 16b.
- In the margin of verse 16 write: *the world = anything contrary to God*.
- Above the words the love of the Father (v. 15) write: *love for God*.
- Circle the phrase: *whoever does the will of God abides forever* (v. 17).
- Draw a connecting line between the two circled phrases and write the words: *For Christians*.

STEP TWO . . .

Understanding the Text

What does the text mean?

The commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

The love of the world is a concept that is not reconcilable with the Gospel, there is a critical moment in a believer's life where we must decide what to do with the world. Will you develop a pattern of love for the world and the things of the world; or, a lifestyle and pattern of love for God? We need to ask ourselves regularly which is better.

15 Do not love the world. The word **world** [*kosmos*] occurs six times in this passage. This phrase uses a present imperative with a strong negative; it can literally be expressed, "Stop loving." The world has three different uses in Scripture: 1) Creation (see Acts 17:24); 2) Humanity (see John 3:16); or 3) the Satanic system opposed to God (see John 16:11). This third use is the way John employs it in this passage. In this case, context is key. "The world is godlessness itself" and it produces "a worldly state of mind" (Luther). The cosmos in this context is a sinister sphere. It is an outlook that ignores God or is hostile toward Him. **Do not love.** A prohibitive command. **Love** [*agape*]: can be translated affection: *Do not set your affection on the world.*

or the things in the world. **Or:** can also be translated *not even*. The expression **the things in the world** is cataphoric, indicating that the fuller meaning is found later in the text (see verse 16b). Not all things are worldly, but some things become the potential idols we make out of creation. John is referring to the underlying structure of the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Love for God and love for the world are not compatible (see James 4:4). You cannot love God and mammon (see Matthew 6:24). Worldliness is the condition when one's prevailing desire (i.e. your heart) is not satisfied with God. The one effective antidote to worldliness is to have one's heart so filled with the Father's love that it has no room for any love that is incompatible with it. **The love of the Father is not in him:** this is the only time this actual phrase appears in the NT. "Authentic love for God exists only when it has no essential rivals" (Robert Yarborough). To set one's heart on the world is effectively to expel God from the heart. The opposite is also true: to set one's heart on God is to expel worldliness from the heart.

16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh. John identifies three types of desire that explains what he means by loving the world. **Desires** [*epithymia*]: cravings, strong desires. Though the word alone is neutral, among its 38 occurrences in the NT, only three have a positive connotation. The object of desire determines whether it's good or bad. Luther put it bluntly, "The way of the whoremonger and of spouses is not identical." **Flesh** [*sarx*]: In many cases this word refers to the whole person, but in this case, it refers to the human bent to fulfill desires in any way contrary to God's will (see Romans 8:14). The desires of the flesh refer to whatever appeals to our appetites.

And the desires of the eyes. The world entices us by appearances and a distortion of beauty. Here, Luther thinks John is primarily talking about avarice or greed.

And the pride of life. This is what fuels our sinful ambitions. **Life** [*bios*]: the way or manner of living. Could be translated, "the pretentiousness or arrogance of life." It is equated with "pride in one's possessions" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich). The pretentiousness of life focuses more on the sins of the spirit than the sins of the flesh. "It is as you go up in the scale from the body to the spirit that the sin becomes more and more subtle and more and more harmful to the true Christian life" (Lloyd-Jones).

Is not from the Father but is from the world. The things of the world are not rooted and grounded in God. There are two wills: the will of the Father and the will of the world. The will of the world is fallen and wayward.

17 And the world is passing away. The world's system is passing away; it is a shadowy phantom. The world is disappearing.

Along with its desires. This is the third time John uses the word **desires**. If taken in a concrete way, it could read, "along with all the desirable things it contains." The opposite is true: the joys of God are eternal.

**THIS WEEK'S
COMPLEMENTARY PASSAGE**

James 4:1-10

- 4** What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?
Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?
2 You desire and do not have, so you murder.
You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.
You do not have, because you do not ask.
3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?
Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says,
“He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?”
6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says,
“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.
10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

STEP THREE . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

Questions

(*Optional Icebreaker*): What is something you looked forward to every year as a child? How does looking forward to something change your attitude and behavior in the present?

1. What does John mean by “the world” in these verses? How does his use of the word differ from its use in John 3:16?
2. John lists three ways we are tempted by worldly cravings? What are they, and why are they so incompatible with loving God?
3. In the past, Christians tended to define worldliness as participating in certain activities (i.e. worldly entertainments like smoking, dancing, watching a movie, etc.). How are mere prohibitions against such activities not necessarily wrong but an unwise reduction of what John actually meant?

- 4 How would you define worldliness based on this passage? How do you know if you love the world too much?
5. Is it wrong for a Christian to seek to succeed in business or in a career? Why or why not? How do we measure true success?
6. What is the result of loving the world in the way John is commanding us not to?
7. What are John's two essential appeals to the believer? (see verses 15 and 17)
8. What is the solution to love of the world? Specifically, what is meant by the phrase, "the expulsive power of a new affection?" How does understanding this phrase help us to expel worldliness?
9. What is the ultimate fate of the world and its desires? How should this truth cause us to respond to the temptations we face day in and day out?
10. Are there helpful disciplines that you need to build in your life to renew your mind, safeguard your heart, and protect your eyes?
11. Since it is the start of the Advent season, how should looking with hope to the return of Christ influence how we live today? (see 1 John 3:2-3)

STEP FOUR . . .

APPLYING

How is the text lived out?

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

A PRAYER

Holy Father,
Your love towards me is deeper than I can measure.
Your grace towards me is beyond anything I deserve.
You have made me for Yourself, that I may live for You alone.

Forgive the divisions of my heart
when another competitor contends for my affections.
When I crave for what pleases me;
When I rush for what delights my eyes;
When I long for what feeds my ego.
For Jesus' sake, remove such madness from me.

Unite my heart to love You without any rival.
Renew my mind to think Your thoughts.
Transform my spirit, so that self is dethroned,
And Your will, my king and law.
Expel what you forbid in me,
And expand what You love.
Give to me what You command,
And fill me with what You desire.
In Jesus' Name, I pray, Amen.

Sunday, December 2 thru Saturday, December 8, 2018
Nahum 1-3, Isaiah 43; 2 Peter 1-3, Isaiah 44; Habakkuk 1-3, Isaiah 45;
Zephaniah 1-3, Isaiah 46; Jude, Isaiah 47; Haggai 1-2, Isaiah 48

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalms 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control. Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Memory Verse

~1 John 2:15~

**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.**