

## Session 6

February 17, 2019

### WHEN MATERIALISM CONSUMES

1 John 2:12-17; 3:16-18

Adrian Rogers once said, “We should love people and use things...but too many of us use people and love things!” God certainly provides material blessings to get things done in this material world. But we must all avoid the temptation of allowing that which we possess in turn possess us! In these texts, John goes about setting things in proper order. Three topics are addressed.

**Embracing Kingdom priorities (2:12-14).** The structure and style of these verses have always drawn attention. The categories of listeners are maturity related, with specific honors offered to each. The different word used for “little children” (also used in 2:1 and 3:18), makes the usage in verse 12 apply to all believers. After that, the specific groupings are addressed: fathers, young men, children; then fathers and young men again. These verses encourage believers at every level to embrace the most important blessings they have received, none of which are related to earthly benefits or material possessions! All believers are reminded of the tremendous blessing of forgiven sin. In Ephesians 1:7, Paul echoes this praise of Christ, the one “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Then the elder believers are reminded that they “have come to know Him,” who was from the beginning. This speaks of a deepened knowledge and intimacy borne over time. Young men are reminded that their vigorous pursuit of the faith gives them victory over the devil. Those youngest in the faith are reminded that they now have a relationship with their heavenly Father. Fathers are again told (in almost the same words as v. 13) about their walk with God, and younger men are lauded for their growing strong in the faith, with the added comment that “God’s word remains” in them. Overall, the passage acts as a prelude to the warnings that will follow. It’s much easier to forsake what you want to possess in this world when you understand what you already possess in Christ.

**Avoiding worldly pitfalls (2:15-17).** Six times the word “world” appears in these few verses. The term is *cosmos*, which does not refer to the physical world God created, or even material possessions, per se. Rather, the term refers to an *order*, or *mindset*; or what we sometimes call a *worldview*. Hence to love the world and the things of the world is to love the way the world sees things, does things, and possesses things. The distinction between Christ-followers and the worldly is highlighted as well through the words “love” and “lust” in these verses. The relationship between God and His children is that of mutual love, or *agape*; that selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love of the New Testament. But worldly love is better described as *lust*; a selfish desire for personal pleasure or personal gain. The lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and arrogant pride of life (v. 16) are self-explanatory. Such selfish desires reflect man’s fallen nature. As such, they are incompatible with the new nature that comes with knowing the Father and the kingdom mindset that goes with it. If loving others is the sure sign we are following Christ (John 13:35), then lusting after this world is the sure sign we are not!

**Acting with godly compassion (3:16-18).** With kingdom priorities established, and worldly lust prohibited, John puts the world’s goods in proper perspective. As Dr. Rogers said (above), those things are given to be put to use in kingdom work...or to help people in legitimate need. The

love we embrace through our kingdom priorities must be demonstrated by more than “word or speech.” And one way to do that is by using the material goods God has provided to meet the needs of others. That’s what John means by loving with “truth and action.”