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"LOVE NOT THE WORLD"

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." – James 4:4.

THIS text brings to mind another one somewhat similar – "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (I John 2:5.) From these Scriptures we should not get the thought that we are to have no worldly people as our friends, nor to have them consider us as their friends; otherwise it would imply that we were their enemies and they our enemies. But we are to be the enemies of none, and are, therefore, to be the friends of all.

One can, however, scarcely read the above advice from two of the Lord's Apostles without having another Scripture suggested to his mind – and this, too, from the lips of our dear Lord himself – which at first sight may seem contradictory, viz., "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) The two, however, are not antagonistic, but are in full harmony when rightly understood.

How, then, shall we understand that we are not to have friendship with the world, and yet are to love the world? The key is found in the word "world." As, for instance, if one should go into politics, he would find that politics is so interlaced with evil things that it would be practically impossible for him to engage in it without compromising his relationship with God. In former times no one could associate very much with any one in the world unless he were, more or less, in politics. Therefore, it would mean being in accord with sinful practices – not, perhaps, directly, but indirectly.

Very few people know how political affairs are carried [R4766 : page 56] on. A man in politics forgets his conscience; he is almost

compelled to "give and take" with others. Otherwise, the district or ward or state that he represents would proportionately lack representation, because he would be ignored; and anything that he would be inclined to say, would result in driving him out of politics, which would cause his ward or district or state to suffer injury. So, then, the broad thought connected with this text would be that God's people will recognize the things of the world in general, as being in opposition to the service of God, and that they are not in sympathy with the chicanery and methods of the Prince of this world.

There is a worldly side to every question, every business; and for us to conform ourselves to these arrangements and to co-operate with them, would be sin on our part. Nevertheless, as the Apostle says, we cannot go out of the world, and must, more or less, have contact with worldly people. The proper course is, therefore, as indicated in the Scriptures, that the Lord's people walk circumspectly, seeking to keep themselves loyal to God and to all of his principles; seeking to separate themselves from the world and to be burning and shining lights that the world may see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven.

WE ARE TO DO GOOD TO ALL MEN AS WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY

If God so loved the world, even while they were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), as to sacrifice the dearest treasure of his heart in order to redeem and save them, then such love and such benevolence toward the world on our part cannot be out of harmony with his will. Indeed, such is the direct teaching of the Word – "As you have therefore opportunity, do good to all men; love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." – Gal. 6:10; Matt. 5:44-48.

To love the world as God loves it, is not the sentiment against which the Apostles warn the Church. That is a grand and ennobling love which, without having the least fellowship with the impure, pities

the fallen and longs for the time when they may be rescued from their degradation. The love which is worthy of our emulation is that which benevolently ignores personal antagonisms and animosities, and overleaping all selfish considerations and vengeful feelings, considers only the possibilities and the ways and means for peace and reformation and salvation.

But the love of the world, the friendship of the world to which the Apostle refers, is the love of fellowship, which implies the partaking of its spirit – its aims, ambitions and hopes, and its methods of pursuing them. If any man love the world in this sense, surely the love of the Father is not in him.

As children of God we have been called to a position of great favor and advantage. Our Heavenly Father has revealed to us his plans and purposes and has condescended to take us into his fellowship and active co-operation; and so grand and glorious and extensive is the outlook of the future that we are able to view the things of the present life in a vastly different light from that in which the world views them.

So we are not to love the present order or arrangement, **[R4766 : page 57]** nor the things that are part and parcel of it, identified with it; but rather we are to love the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth." We are to love the world only in the sense of having sympathy with it, as our Heavenly Father has, while we are unsympathetic with its arrangements.

According to God's arrangement, we must take our choice between the Divine friendship and fellowship, and worldly friendship and fellowship. The things which the Lord loves are distasteful to the world; and the things which the worldly love – evil deeds and evil thoughts – are an abomination to the Lord, and those who love and practice such things must lose the fellowship of the Lord and his spirit, must go into the outer darkness of the world.

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