

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key Verse: 1 John 2:15-17

“Separate from the World”

Good morning! We’re continuing our series on “Following Jesus”. Last week we looked at what it means to be a follower of Christ. We looked at the very basic and fundamental thing we must understand if we are to follow Jesus. And it is, there is a cost in following Jesus and sometimes the cost can be great. That’s why Jesus said to count the cost before following him. He’s looking for followers who will deny themselves, who will make a sacrifice or sacrifices, who will put him before anything or anyone else.

Today, in this second part, we’ll delve further into this notion of denying yourself or making a sacrifice. In 1 John 2:15-17, the apostle John says, *¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*”

John begins this passage with a clear command: “Do not love the world or anything in the world.” Why can’t we love the world? The Bible tells us in John 3:16 that God loved the world, so why can’t we? In order to answer that question one must understand that the word “world” is used with several different meanings in scripture. “World” is used in the Bible to refer to the created world, lost people, and the world system under the evil influence of

Satan. In John 3:16 “world” is used in the sense of lost people. However, in our text it is used in the latter sense. In 1 John 5:19 John writes: “*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*” This is the world that John commands us not to fall in love with.

The problem is, many people, even Christians, are loving the world because they love themselves first. This is a me-first society. No wonder that in the midst of disaster and chaos like the one that occurred recently in New York and New Jersey, there were reports of looting and stealing. Yes, there are good Samaritans but there are also the Pharisees and the Saducees, those who say “Am I my brother’s keeper?”.

Billy Graham is quoted as saying: “Our interests are in ourselves. We are preoccupied with material things. Our supreme god is technology. Our goddess is sex. Most of us are more interested in getting to the moon than getting to heaven. We are more dedicated to material security than to inward purity. We give much more thought to what we wear, what we eat, what we drink, and what we can do than what we are..”

He was right. We all have our worldly side or worldly desires that often capture our attention more than God or Christ.

You will notice that there is no middle ground with this issue. Either you love God or you love the world. You cannot love both as John says, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:24 that it is impossible for us to serve two masters. James said much the same thing: “*...friendship with the world is hatred toward God*” (James 4:4). This tells us that not loving the world is to be a way of life

for the believer in Christ. The problem is that sometimes Christians get too attached to the things of this world. Instead of separating from the world, they become part of the world. This is a problem that I call The Demas Syndrome. I have named this disease after Demas because he turned his back on Paul because he had fallen in love with the world. Paul had this to say about him: *“Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”* (2 Timothy 4:10).

How do you know if you have The Demas Syndrome? In verse sixteen John gives us the three symptoms of this spiritually deadly disease.

So, let us look at these symptoms.

SYMPTOMS OF THE DEMAS SYNDROME:

1) CARNALITY

Carnality or “the cravings of sinful man” is the first symptom of The Demas Syndrome. The KJV and the New American Standard Bible calls this “the lust of the flesh”. Another version, the ESV calls this “the desires of the flesh”. “Flesh” is another one of those words that can have multiple meanings. It can be used to refer to our physical body or the sinful nature that all of mankind is born with. I believe that we can see both of these meanings here. The most obvious meaning is the sinful nature. When we indulge our sinful natures we, like the world, fall under the influence of sin and Satan.

The less obvious meaning is that “flesh” refers to our physical body or its needs and appetites. Our bodies have many needs or desires (food, sex, love, shelter) that in and of themselves are perfectly fine. However, these same needs can become sins when they are taken to extremes or perverted.

For example, the extreme craving for food leads to the sin of gluttony. Have you heard about that 600-pound woman who is on a diet? Donna Simpson, who is 44, of Old Bridge, N.J., already tips the scales at more than 600 pounds but says she won't be satisfied until she's up to 1,000 pounds. So, she's on a diet to reach her goal of 1000 pounds. She eats 12,000 calories a day! Simpson claims she is normal and healthy, and she has a right to eat what she wants and weigh what she wants. "I love eating and people love watching me eat," she says. "It makes people happy, and I'm not harming anyone." Some kind of philosophy, huh?

Then, another craving that becomes sin when not used properly is the God-given desire for sex. It becomes adultery when it is directed toward someone who is not your spouse. I read the story of a man who narrated,

"While my wife and I were shopping at a mall kiosk, a shapely young woman in a short, form-fitting dress strolled by. My eyes followed her. Without looking up from the item she was examining, my wife asked, "Was it worth the trouble you're in?"

Maybe we should ask ourselves that question whenever we are indulging ourselves in the cravings of our sinful flesh, whatever it may be. "Is it worth the trouble I'm in?" So, if you are indulging these cravings then you are in danger of developing The Demas Syndrome.

The cravings of the flesh can be so strong that we feel like there is no hope of overcoming them. The good news is that Jesus set an example for us when he was tempted in this same way. His temptation came after he had been fasting in the wilderness for forty days. At that point Satan approached him and tempted him to turn stones into bread in order to satisfy his

hunger. Jesus responded, *“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’”* (Matthew 4:4).

We can turn to Jesus and ask for his help when temptations come and we are battling the enemy, Satan. You see, the enemy knows our weakness and he attacks us relentlessly. I remember in 1998 I went home to the Philippines to visit my siblings who I hadn't seen for a long time. One day, I gathered the three of them and shared Jesus with them and all of them received Jesus. That night, we were all sound asleep when suddenly my brother came out of his bedroom crying. We all woke up and gathered at the living room and saw that he really looked distressed. Then he narrated that he had a bad dream. He dreamt of obscene images and sexual acts. So, we prayed for him.

Then, he confessed that he kept obscene pictures in his room. So, we told him to take them all out and throw them away which he did. And we prayed for him some more. After that, he became a serious follower of Jesus and even became a deacon in his church.

The Bible says in Hebrews 2:18, *“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he (Jesus) is able to help those who are being tempted.”*

We must understand that our purpose in life is not to gratify our cravings but to do the will of our heavenly Father.

2) COVETOUSNESS

Covetousness or “the lust of his eyes” is the second symptom of The Demas Syndrome. This is the desire to have everything that you set your eyes on. This symptom Advertisers understand this concept all too well. They flash images on the TV screen of everything from cars to clothes to coke

especially designed to make you covet what they are selling. These advertisers take advantage of our most basic desire to acquire things or to act upon what we see. You see this at work when you're in a grocery store and you're hungry. Do you notice that you fill your shopping cart with lots of food when you're hungry more than when you're not? As you go down the grocery aisles, you pick up them up as you see them. Then when you reach home and after you've eaten, you wonder why you have all that junk food. So, don't go to the grocery store when you're hungry.

James speaks of the extremes that people will go to in order to get the things that they desire when he writes: *"You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight"* (James 4:2). People want something because they think the grass is greener on the other side. The problem is that when you get what's on the other side you are never satisfied. The object of your desires never lives up to its billing and you are left feeling empty and unsatisfied and so you covet all the more.

The burger on the TV ad is never as big and juicy at the pick-up window. The truth is that the grass isn't any greener on the other side of the fence. In fact, what's on the other side often isn't as good as what you already have.

I remember when I was a young boy and spent my vacation at our relatives in the province. They had a number of cows and these cows grazed at my cousins' nice green pasture with plenty of grass. But every now and then I would see them stretching their necks through a barbed wire fence in an effort to get a bite of short, brown grass in a neighbor's pasture. Too many

Christians in our world today are acting just like those cows. They want to get a taste of something that's not good because they just think it is.

Jesus also had to face down the temptation to covet and in doing so he showed us how to overcome it. In Matthew 4, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offered to give them to him if he would kneel before him and worship. Jesus responded, "*Away from me Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'*" (Matthew 4:10). Jesus recognized that to indulge in materialism was to actually worship these things. And to worship the things of the world is to worship the one to whom they belong. So the essence of materialism is Satan worship.

3) COCKINESS

Cockiness or "the boasting of what he has and does" is the third symptom of The Demas Syndrome. The KJV and the NASB call this "the pride of life". This "pride of life" essentially consists of two things: (1) Boasting about material possessions; and (2) Boasting about accomplishments. If you are proud of either your position in life or your possessions in life you are exhibiting symptoms and may be in danger of developing The Demas Syndrome. Such pride causes you to put your faith in yourself rather than in God.

Therefore, such pride will ultimately cut you off from the grace of God because his grace is received through faith alone. The Bible clearly teaches that pride will lead to our downfall. "*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18).

Cockiness is the arrogant attitude by which people think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. The word pride means the empty

display of life. It means the vain boasting of one's lifestyle. It means living in such a way as to impress other people. It means building bigger and better houses and having bigger and better cars, and buying clothes, shoes, bags, all for the sake of showing off. It means the display of a fancy lifestyle so people will think you are something.

Satan wants us to believe that we can trust our accomplishments, our talents, our education, and our possessions to satisfy the deepest longings of our heart. When Satan can get us to focus on ourselves it brings confusion. When we focus on God, it will bring eternal benefits.

During the days when Mohammed Ali was a great boxer, he would go around in his arrogance and say that he was the greatest. Humility was never his strong suit. One day, back in his prime, he was on an airplane and the plane was ready to take off and the flight attendant had repeatedly told him to put on his seat belt. He finally told her, "I'm Superman and Superman don't need no seatbelt." The flight attendant didn't hesitate a minute but shot back with, "Superman don't need no airplane either. Now, buckle up."

Folks, we need to buckle up too. We need to tighten our safety belts to prevent our selfish, self-centered, and prideful selves from getting out of control. In fact, what we need is not a safety belt but the belt of truth which is one piece of the armor of God. Because the truth is, God alone is God and all glory belongs to him. We cannot take credit for all the possessions and positions in life that we have.

We need to humble ourselves and give credit where credit is due. Then it is God who will lift us up according to his own time. 1 Peter 5:5-6 says,

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Jesus taught us how to be humble. In the desert after he fasted, Satan dared Jesus to show off. He tempted Jesus to prove that he was the Son of God by throwing himself down from the highest point of the city because God would rescue him. Jesus responded, *"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'"* (Matthew 4:7). Although he knew he was the Son of God, Jesus did not consider it something to be really proud of.

John warns us to be aware of these three symptoms, Carnality, Covetousness, and Cockiness. He tells us to be careful that we don't indulge ourselves in the world and everything in it because they will take away our focus from God. Besides, they will not last. And so in the last verse of our text, he says in v. 17, *"The world and its desires pass away..."*

The Bible teaches us that one day the world and all the things of the world will be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-11). If you have lived your life only for the things of this world, what will you have left on that day? Nothing! That is why Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." This verse is teaching us that we will share in the destiny of whatever we give our lives to. If we give our lives to the world we will burn in the lake of fire for all of eternity. If we give our lives to God we will enjoy paradise for all of eternity as the last part of verse 17 says, *"the man who does the will of God lives forever."*

Folks, that is the cure to the Demas Syndrome. Doing the will of God.

But what is God's will? We find that in John 6:40 where Jesus says, *"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall*

have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” What does it mean to look to the Son? A few verses before this Jesus says (John 6:35), *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

Jesus is saying he can satisfy your every desire, your every longing, your every craving. He is enough for you and that’s why he wants you to come to him. Only when you let him be your all in all that you can ignore the temptations of this world and truly be separate from it. He wants you to look to him only, to fix your eyes on him only.

Jesus died for you because he loves you so much. He doesn’t want you to be separated from him for eternity. He went to the cross to die for you, to forgive your sins. Then he rose on Easter Sunday to let you know that you too can rise and be with him in heaven.

Even if you’re already a Christian and you still find yourself indulging in the world, Jesus wants you to come back. He longs for you and wants to give you the best. What the world can offer is nothing compared to the riches and abundant blessings he can give you, in this life and beyond.

Let me now challenge you with these questions: Are you living for eternity or for the now? Are you more concerned about laying up treasure for retirement or for heaven? Are you more concerned about what people will think of you today or about what God will think of you on Judgment Day? Will you be a part of the world or separate from it? Will you ignore Jesus or follow him?

Let us Pray....