

# 1 John 2:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

John issues an absolute prohibition against worldly affection. 'Love not the world' (μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον, *mē agapate ton kosmon*) uses present imperative with negative, commanding cessation of ongoing action: stop loving the world. Ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) indicates deliberate, volitional love—not mere liking but committed devotion. Κόσμος (*kosmos*, world) here means not the physical creation (which God loves, John 3:16) but the organized system opposed to God—its values, priorities, and pursuits disconnected from God. The parallel command follows: 'neither the things that are in the world' (μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, *mēde ta en tō kosmō*), specifying worldly things—possessions, pleasures, pursuits that embody worldly values. The consequence is stark: 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him' (ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ, *ean tis agapa ton kosmon, ouk estin hē agapē tou patros en autō*). This isn't saying worldly affection results in loss of salvation, but that love for the world and love for the Father are mutually exclusive—where one exists, the other doesn't. True children of God demonstrate their regeneration by loving God, not the world-system opposed to Him.

## Historical Context

John writes to late first-century believers facing dual temptations: Gnostic asceticism (despising material creation) and worldly compromise (accommodating pagan culture). The command not to love the world corrects both errors. Against Gnostics, John affirms creation is good (God made it); it's the fallen world-system

that's evil. Against compromisers, John demands separation from worldly values. In Roman society, Christians faced pressure to participate in pagan festivals, guild activities involving idol worship, immoral entertainment, and economic systems requiring ethical compromise. 'Not loving the world' meant costly separation: economic loss, social ostracism, family conflict. Yet John insists: love for God and love for the world cannot coexist. Early church fathers like Tertullian and Augustine developed 'two cities' theology: citizens of God's kingdom live in the world but maintain fundamental allegiance to God's values, not the world's.

## **Related Passages**

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## **Study Questions**

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1. How do you distinguish between enjoying God's good creation and loving 'the world' (the system opposed to God)?
2. What specific worldly values, priorities, or pursuits compete with your love for God?
3. How can you live 'in the world' (physically present, engaged) without loving the world (adopting its values)?

## Interlinear Text

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Μὴ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἔάν  
**not** **Love** G3588 **the world** **neither** G3588 **in** G3588 **the world** **If**  
G3361 G25 G2889 G3366 G1722 G2889 G1437

τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ  
**any man** **Love** G3588 **the world** **not** **is** G3588 **the love** G3588  
G5100 G25 G2889 G3756 G2076 G26

πατὴρ ἐν αὐτῷ.  
**of the Father** **in** **him**  
G3962 G1722 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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**James 4:4** (Parallel theme): Ye adulterers and adulteresses, 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.

**Romans 12:2** (Parallel theme): And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

**Matthew 6:24** (Love): No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**Luke 16:13** (Love): No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**John 15:19** (Love): If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

**1 John 3:17** (Love): But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

**1 Timothy 6:10** (Love): For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

**Galatians 1:10** (Parallel theme): For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

**Ephesians 2:2** (Parallel theme): Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

**1 John 4:5** (Parallel theme): They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

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