

1 John 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Analysis

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. John defines what constitutes "the world" by identifying three categories of worldly desire. "All that is in the world" (pan to en tō kosmō) encompasses the totality of fallen existence's attractions. The threefold description echoes Eve's temptation (Genesis 3:6): "good for food" (lust of flesh), "pleasant to the eyes" (lust of eyes), "desired to make one wise" (pride of life). These categories comprehensively describe fallen human desires apart from God.

"The lust of the flesh" (hē epithymia tēs sarkos)—epithymia means strong desire or craving; sarx (flesh) denotes fallen human nature's passions—sensual appetites, physical indulgence, bodily pleasures pursued apart from God. "The lust of the eyes" (hē epithymia tōn ophthalmōn) encompasses covetousness—desiring what we see, materialism, acquisition for possession's sake. "The pride of life" (hē alazoneia tou biou)—alazoneia means arrogant boasting or vainglory; bios means life's resources or lifestyle. This is pride in possessions, status, achievements—finding identity and worth in worldly success rather than God.

"Is not of the Father, but is of the world" (ouk estin ek tou patros all' ek tou kosmou estin)—these desires don't originate from God but from the fallen world-system. Their source reveals their character—worldly, temporary, opposed to God. Believers must recognize that pursuing these desires contradicts their identity as

God's children. What the world values and pursues stands in opposition to the Father's will and character.

Historical Context

This threefold categorization became foundational for Christian moral theology. Augustine used it to analyze sin's roots. Medieval theology developed detailed taxonomies of sins rooted in these three categories—lust of flesh (gluttony, sexual sin), lust of eyes (greed, covetousness), pride of life (vainglory, ambition). The Puritans extensively analyzed worldliness using these categories, helping believers discern subtle forms of worldly affection.

In John's context, Roman culture epitomized these three lusts. Sexual immorality was rampant and accepted. Material acquisition and display of wealth defined social status. Personal glory and honor were pursued through political advancement, military conquest, and public acclaim. Christians faced constant pressure to conform to these values. Jewish readers would recognize that God's law addressed all three—prohibiting adultery, coveting, and pride.

The Gnostic teachers paradoxically embraced worldliness while claiming spiritual superiority. Some practiced libertinism, arguing physical indulgence didn't affect spiritual purity (lust of flesh). Others pursued esoteric knowledge as status symbol (pride of life). John exposes that such worldliness, regardless of spiritual pretensions, reveals one is "not of the Father."

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Which of the three categories (lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life) most frequently tempts you toward worldliness?
2. How can you recognize when legitimate desires (food, possessions, achievement) cross into worldly lusts?
3. In what specific areas is your life shaped more by these worldly values than by the Father's will?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς
For all that is in the world the lust G3588 G3588 G3588 G3588
G3754 G3956 G1722 G2889 G1939 G3588

σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὄφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ
of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and G3588 G3588 G3788 G3588
G4561 G2532 G1939 G3788 G2532 G3588

ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου οὐκ ἐστίν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ'
the pride of life not is of the Father but G3588 G3588 G3962 G235
G212 G979 G3756 G2076 G1537 G3588

ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν
of the world is G3588 G2889 G2076

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:14 (Parallel theme): But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Galatians 5:17 (Parallel theme): For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Genesis 3:6 (Parallel theme): And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one

wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Proverbs 27:20 (Parallel theme): Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Ephesians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

James 3:15 (Parallel theme): This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

1 Peter 2:11 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

2 Peter 2:10 (Parallel theme): But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

Joshua 7:21 (Parallel theme): When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

Titus 2:12 (Parallel theme): Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;