

Do Not Love the World

The Assault of the World Upon the Saints

Leviticus 18, Matthew 8:28-34

Stuart W. Bryan

I. The Whole World Lies in the Power of the Evil One (1 Jn 5:19; Mt 8:28-34)

The unholy triad of *the world*, *the flesh*, and *the devil* assaults the saints and endeavors to lead us away from love of God and love of neighbor. But hear the good news: Jesus died and rose again to deliver us from all three (Rom 8:2; Heb 2:14; Gal 1:4). Jesus “*gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father*” (Gal 1:4).

II. Do Not Love the World

¹⁵*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 Jn 2:15–17)*

We cannot be friends with the world and friends with God. As James also writes, “*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*” (Jas 4:4). So what does John mean by “*the world*”? In short, *the world* is “*the system of rebellion and pride that seeks to displace God and His rule*” (RSB). “*Worldliness is anything that makes righteousness look strange and sin look normal*” (David Wells).

Thus, Paul warns us: “*And do not be _____ to this world, but be _____ by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Rom 12:2). Every society has a _____ – a system of enculturation by which those who are part of that society are taught what is acceptable. Christian society also has a *paidea*. Thus, Paul instructs Christian parents, “*bring up your children in the training (paidea)... of the Lord*” (Eph 6:4).

⁴*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)*

III. Worldliness and Sexuality (Leviticus 18)

A. Introduction: By what standard? (1-5)

¹*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘I am the LORD your God. ³According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. ⁴You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. ⁵You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*

Notice that the critical issue regarding sexuality is authority: Who gets to say what is acceptable and praiseworthy in the arena of sex and marriage? Israel faced this question no less than we do. The *paidea of Egypt and Canaan* countenanced sexual defilement. But the _____ of *Yahweh our God* – our Redeemer and Creator – does not.

B. A Catalogue of Defilements (6-23)

So what are these *doings* and *ordinances* of the nations which we are to shun for our own good? First, God places clear limits on incestuous sexual relations: “None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness; I am the Lord” (18:6-18). After setting these boundaries, God delimits other types of sexual activity:

¹⁹‘Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness as long as she is in her customary impurity. ²⁰Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor’s wife, to defile yourself with her. ²¹And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. ²²You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. ²³Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion. (Lev 18:19-23)

Note the increasingly severe assessment of these sexual actions. Sexual activity during menstruation is *unclean* or *impure* (19). Adultery is *defilement* (20). The murder of one’s offspring is *profanation of God’s Name, Yahweh* (21). Homosexuality is *abomination* (22). Bestiality is *perversion* (23). “By all these things the nations are _____” (24b).

C. Sanctions (24-29; cf. Gen 19:1-29; Rom 1:26-27; 2 Pet 2:4-11)

In vv. 24-29, God admonishes Israel to obey His law and He adds further motivation:

²⁴Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. ²⁵For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. ²⁶You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you ²⁷(for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), ²⁸lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. ²⁹For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. (Lev 18:24–29)

God cast the seven Canaanite nations out of the land because they had *defiled the land* by their *iniquity*. These verses outline both God’s retribution (24,25,29) as well as natural law consequences (25,27,28). God is warning Israel: do not succumb to *worldliness*. The *paidea of the world* leads to _____. True prosperity and societal blessing will only come as we adhere to God’s moral order (cp. 18:5). Violating God’s moral law will bring His judgment. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:

⁸But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

The *law is good*, its restrictions on sexual sin are in harmony with the Gospel. *Fornication* and *sodomy* are *contrary to sound doctrine* (10). They invite the judgment of God and defile the land where they are practiced. Therefore, it is the duty of men and nations to harmonize their *paidea* with the *paidea of the Lord*.

D. Conclusion: Exhortation (30)

“Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am Yahweh your God” (18:30).