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The Lord has presented Himself marvelously in recent days in my journey. The renewal of the experience of the Christian walk is affirmed by the fellowship of believers. And I found in the reading of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus the love relationship between the Apostle Paul and Timothy and also with Titus. And as we read the conclusions of each of those letters, we find there are many others in the Ebanda Fellowship. Here the beauty and the joy of Christian relationship as I read these first five verses of Titus. Paul, a servant of God, and then Apostle of Jesus Christ. According to the faith of God's elect, that's the group of believers God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness. In hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. But hath in due times manifested, made known his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior. What a three verse summary of Paul and his calling. And now we enter in in verse 4 to the beautiful relationship of Paul and Titus. To Titus, mine own son, after the common faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this cause left I.V. in Crete, that's the island of Crete, that thou shouldst or that you may set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. Here we have the beautiful Christian relationship and bond of a teacher and a young minister. And we have an assignment here that in the island of Crete there should be elders appointed. Because Paul says in that verse 5, there's some things out of order. He uses the word things that are wanting. And so as I stand here with you this morning beloved friends, you mean so much to me. Though the years have passed and the miles have been between, it's as if none of that happened. We are still one in Christ. Yes, there are wanting things. There's organization, planning, ministering that needs to go forward. And so there's work to be done, but let it be done out of this marvelous reality of our relationship with God and with one another. I encourage each of you this week to read 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Allow an hour. Sit quietly. Read. Meditate. Imagine the Apostle Paul is there with you. And Timothy and Titus and you listen to what it's being said. May the Lord bless us as we continue the building of His kingdom. My thoughts, my prayers are in Jesus' name. Heavenly Father, thank you for the great love that you've shown us. Thank you for the great love that you've put in our hearts towards one another. We say a special prayer for all those friends of ours who are recovering from injury. We ask that your spirit of healing would touch their bodies and click in that process that they would soon be back among us. And I ask now, God, that as we read and study from your holy scriptures that you would speak to us, speak directly to our hearts, to your Holy Spirit, to help us understand what it is you're saying, what it is, and what new ways you're hoping us to grow and to reflect your Son Jesus more and more. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, I know this is kind of a pastor's prerogative, but please give me a moment to talk about myself. Lately, I have been thinking about work. Even though I try and tell people that we've probably got at least three months before the government gets our visa for Keith, people still come to me and they say, "What are you going to do after he gets here?" And, you know, every time I try and start thinking along those lines, I just kind of overcome with this feeling of, "Don't worry about that right now. God's going to take care of me. Worry about what you're doing right now." And so I try to put it out of my mind and try not to think about it. But every now and then, I kind of wonder what industry I'll end up in. Because some of you know, I've been all over the map as far as jobs in my life. And, you know, I've done food preparation. I've done video games. I've done balloon twisting. Crazy stuff. And I like to work with kids. And I like, you can call what I'm doing right now, "the ministry." I can put some stuff in the ministry. So there's a lot of directions for me to go. And I really have no idea and no leading as to what is going to happen. But, praise God, there are no doors open for me yet because I don't want to have to worry and make that decision and pray about that. So I say, "Praise God that I don't have any decisions to make." But every time I think about video games, I get this kind of funny feeling. Now, I'm sure that you'll all agree that video games are not important to life. I don't save people's lives by making video games. I don't save people from starvation or anything like that. And it's quite possible that some of you know someone who spends too much time playing video games. Or maybe you've heard about one of those people who's been playing video games for so long that they fell over dead. That is unfortunately a true story. People sit there for hours and days and their heart just gives out. And when I think about this kind of stuff, it kind of scares me. And I think, "Wow, I don't know if I should be a part of something like that." Not only do they not seem to have much redeeming value, but they also have these negative aspects. And so I'm like, "Is it morally wrong for me to make video games?" And so that got me thinking about work and what a Christian should or shouldn't be doing professionally. Well, this week the lesson that I prepared for the youth group was on 1 John 2, 15-17. And it says, "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. For 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. And the world is passing away and the lust of it. But he who does the will of God abides forever." And so I read something like that, and this kind of reinforces my concerns, that that's the kind of verse someone is going to use if they want to tell me that I shouldn't be doing that. Video games are of the world, right? That must make them evil. Well, maybe not. As I started praying about it, I thought, there's nothing less holy about making video games than there is about fixing cars. Just as many people die driving cars, and someone could even use a car to kill someone, and that would be awful. But we don't think of people who make cars and repair cars as being bad people, and that's not evil. So that caused me some pause, and I said, "Well, hang on, maybe my assumptions about this verse are wrong." So what is it really saying about the world and "do not love the world"? And this is also a good place for me to stop and say, "Be real careful when someone says, 'Here's a verse, here's what it means, do this, don't do that.'" Make sure that you're listening to the Holy Spirit, even if you've got a teacher who you love and trust, every time they preach to you, just listen to the Holy Spirit and pray and make sure that what they're saying is from God. Because it's easy for someone to be right 90% of the time and then be wrong about something. So always go to God in prayer with every teaching you receive. And that applies to me. I remember I used to listen to this one teacher, and he was really good, he was very technical minded, but then occasionally he would jump to some crazy conclusion about history or science, and I just sort of took it on faith. He's a Bible teacher, I believe him, and one day I went and started checking up on some of his stuff and it was wrong. So do your homework, listen to the Holy Spirit. Let me say, back to my message. What is this verse talking about when it says, "Do not love the world?" Let's start with what this verse is not talking about. First of all, when it says, "The world," it's not talking about people. God loves people. He sent his Son to the cross to save people. So the world, when the Bible, when this verse says, "Do not love the world," it's not talking about people. God loves people. He wants us to love people. That is his mission for every one of us, love people. Secondly, I don't think that this verse is talking about material things. God made rocks and trees and metal, and we take that stuff and we turn it into other stuff. We built his holy temple out of the things of the earth. The disciples made tents for a living. God never condemns people for working and making stuff. In fact, he set the model, the very first six days of creation. He worked. He set that pattern for us. He never says, "Stuff is evil." Sometimes he says, "The love of stuff, the worship of stuff is evil." But the stuff itself is more of our heart towards that stuff is where the problem is. There's no poverty requirement for salvation. As far as we can tell, the disciples continued to make and sell and own things after they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began their ministries. I don't think when it says, "Do not love the world," it's saying, "Do not love stuff." It's not calling us to go be Amish or permits or living in poverty. What is it talking about? It says, "Do not love the world." There's a hint in there. It talks about all that is in the world and then it gives some examples. It says, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." When it's talking about the world, it's not talking about people or stuff or government or culture. It's talking about the things that come out of our hearts that are not of God. What is a thing if it is not God's way? You could say, "It's my way," or "His way," or "The wrong way," or "The American way." There are all kinds of ways that aren't God's way, but I think John is just wrapping up all of those things that are not God's way into this package that he's calling "the world." The more I thought about this, the more I realized this is what we spoke about last week, righteousness versus unrighteousness. Remember Psalm 37? God's way is righteousness. The world's way is unrighteousness. When John tells us not to love the world, he's telling us not to love the system that is contrary to God's way. He's telling us not to love unrighteousness. Let's look at his three examples. First, the lust of the flesh. When we hear that, we probably mostly think sexual immorality, but this can also include indulging in any desire we have in a manner forbidden by God. You should eat healthy and exercise, not junk food and TV. You should find love with your opposite-gendered spouse, not whatever other thing you're attracted to, and not outside of marriage. You should speak to others with love and grace and patience, not blurting out filthy jokes and coarse language. If it's a hot day, you still have to wear clothes when you go outside. There's a righteous way and an unrighteous way to satisfy all the desires and longings inside of us. Our passions are like a fire, and just like a fire, they must be controlled and contained and fed the proper fuel. Otherwise, you start burning up things that aren't supposed to be burned up, and you hurt people, and you destroy your life. But what is God's way? God's way is to be self-controlled. The Bible has a lot to say on the subject of self-control. In addition to being one of the fruits of the Spirit, we read in Titus 1.8, "Be hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, and self-controlled." In Proverbs 25.28, it says, "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." In 1 Corinthians 9.25, every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable reek, but we, an imperishable. In 2 Timothy 1.7, God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. God's way is to control our passions. The world's way is to unbridle them. Next, John gives us the example of the lust of the eyes. And I had to think about that for a minute. The first thing that popped into my head was pornography, because lust, eyes. But I don't think that that was probably as big a problem back then as it is today. So what is he actually talking about? Well, I think he's talking about things that sparkle in our eyes. I think this bit is about greed. Things that we look on and we crave and desire and we just have to have and we won't step on anyone to get them. It's the obsession with acquisition. The drive to add to your own coffers, not just because you have need, or not because you have need, but because there's something inside you that just screams "more, more." And you just want to feed that little voice. And you know as soon as you get something new, it quiets down for maybe like an hour. And then it goes back to saying "more, more." And it doesn't even have to apply to money. We have that TV show "Hortors" about people who just collect and collect and their houses are full of stuff. Or look at people who spend all their money on their collections. And we try and justify and say "oh, this is my collection and my kids are going to inherit it and it'll be worth a lot of money." But if we're honest, we don't really do it for our kids. We do it because there's that little voice inside us that says "more, more." God's way is to be generous. And I think it's best summarized in Luke 3.11. "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise." God wants us to take enough for ourselves, but then share out of our abundance with those less fortunate. These Christians believe the Bible. And the Bible says that God takes care of us and that our blessings are truly from Him. Well, if you've got all that money and that great job and the skills to keep the job, then why do you think God put you in that position? Not just to bless you, but to give you the opportunity to bless others. You probably all heard the analogy of the Dead Sea versus the Red Sea. The Dead Sea is filthy and gross and nothing can live in it because water runs into it and then doesn't flow back out. But the Red Sea is full of life because water flows in and water flows out. And that's fantastic analogy for how our lives are supposed to be. If all of our blessings come in but we never share those blessings out, we are going to be dead on the inside. The Dead Sea collects and hoards and keeps. And God's way is to give and share and pass on. John's final example for us is the pride of life. We talked about lust and then greed and now we've got pride. Pride is about thinking of yourself more highly than you ought, especially in relation to others. Pride is when we hear ourselves say or think phrases like, "How dare he? Doesn't he know who I am?" or "I can't believe the nerve of him." Or the really insidious one, "Not my problem." That's all pride. When your heart checks out from loving other people and when you get offended or indignant, this is where pride lives. But the pride of life is not only pride, it's also an unhealthy obsession with status and reputation and popularity. If you're constantly concerned about what other people think of you or do you need to be the most important person, do you need to be the hero or the star of the situation? Are you offended when people don't give you the recognition you deserve? Are you constantly checking Facebook to see what people say about you? Do you freak out if you're the last one that people come to with gossip? Our identity is to be found in Christ and any glory we receive we should pass on to Him. God's way is to be humble and to serve and to glorify the Father. A fantastic example of that is found in John 13 starting with verse 3. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I've done to you? You call Me teacher and Lord and you say well for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who has sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." This is so beautiful. All powerful, all mighty Creator of heaven and earth who created and sustains all things took the role of a servant and washed his disciples feet. Then He says, "Am I truly your Lord? If it's beneath you to get down here and serve others the way I've just served you, you have no right calling Me Lord. You can't call Me master unless you place yourself beneath Me." Here's what we should do from Philippians 2 verse 5 through 8. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God and did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." So these examples help us understand our very first verse when it talks about not loving the world. It doesn't mean don't love people. It doesn't mean your stuff is evil. It means that the system of unrighteousness and all which that system produces is evil. If the love of the Father is in us, we will want to separate ourselves as far from that worldly system as possible. And that's good because this verse finishes up by saying the world is passing away and the lust of it. The "He who does the will of God" abides forever. And this goes right along with what we read in Psalm 37 last week. "God came to save the righteous, not those who think they are good enough to save themselves, but those who fear God and live righteous lives out of that fear. Those who know that they were created by a good God could be good creatures and who obediently do so." You might read that part about the world passing away and think, "Well, that was written 2,000 years ago and the world is still around." But as we just spoke about, it's not talking about the physical world. It's talking about the kingdom of unrighteousness. And for the last 2,000 years, the kingdom of God has been advancing against the kingdom of unrighteousness. Whole nations, such as the Roman Empire, which were completely consumed by unrighteousness, have passed away. And those nations which were founded on morality and righteousness, such as ours, have continued and flourished. I'm not saying America is perfect, and I'm not saying we're God's chosen people or anything. But for a very long time, we've endeavored to be a good moral society, and I believe God has honored them. But 1 Peter 2.9 says that we Christians are a holy nation. We are the holy nation. We are God's chosen people. We are the ones who are growing and flourishing while the world passes away. So commit and conform yourself to God's way and forsake the world in its ways. And as the Bible promises, you will abide forever. It says so in this verse here today, and it says it in Psalm 37 last week, it says it in verses 11, 18 through 19, 23, 28, 34, 37, 39. It's all throughout that chapter, and I encourage you to go back and read it. "Commit yourself to the ways of righteousness and forsake the ways that are contrary to God, the ways of the world, the ways of unrighteousness." Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise and we thank You that even though our righteousness is imperfect, that You honor our attempts to be righteous, and that You love our desire to be good and holy in Your sight. And we praise You and we thank You that in the areas that we are weak, You help us. And that for those areas where we stumble and fail that You forgive us. And we ask for Your help now, God, this week as we examine our lives to try and find our unworldliness and our unrighteousness, help us to get those things out of our lives, help us to be righteous in everything we think, say, and do, help us to conform our lives to Your will and Your life for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.