

## Look Around: Looking Around

### 1 John 2:1 through 1 John 2:11 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup>My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup>And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

<sup>3</sup>Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup>He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup>But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. <sup>6</sup>He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

<sup>7</sup>Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. <sup>8</sup>Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

<sup>9</sup>He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. <sup>10</sup>He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. <sup>11</sup>But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

### 1 John 2:15 through 1 John 2:17 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

## Series Introduction

### 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup>But as it is written:

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

### 1 Corinthians 2:10 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup>But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

In the purest sense, we do not know what tomorrow holds for us. But God knows. Eyes have not seen and ears have not heard, but God has prepared some things to happen in our lives. He has prepared blessings and opportunities. He has prepared challenges and rewards.

God holds every day of this New Year in his hand. He already knows the ministry we will perform next month. He has already ordained and commissioned the blessings you will receive six months from now. He knows the lives he plans for us to touch in the fall. He knows who he plans to bring into our lives and he knows the people who will walk out of our lives this year.

Since our God has already prepared a course for our lives, I believe we must work to position ourselves to receive his blessings. It would be a shame for us to miss the blessings of God by being out of position to receive them. Why? It is because God has already ordained that he will reveal his plans for us by his Spirit.

To help us position ourselves to receive the fullness of God's blessings in this year, we are taking a look around. Last week, we began with Look back. We learned how to look back and the benefits of looking back. We also plan to look around to see life through God's eyes. We will look down to see the obstacles that may trip us up. We will look forward to see the opportunities set before us. We will look up to learn how to walk by faith. Today we will continue by taking a look around.

**The World and Eternity** – We need to see and discern the eternal condition of the world.

As believers in Jesus we know that we were lost and are now found. We also know that Jesus died for us. But Jesus didn't just die for us. He died for the entire world. The truth is the entire world is lost in darkness and needs to be found. The world is in an eternal crisis. In its fallen condition, both the physical and natural world have been subjected to the crisis.

**Romans 8:18 through Romans 8:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup>For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; <sup>21</sup>because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

The physical world, the social world, the economic world, the educational world, the entertainment world, and the political world are all in jeopardy. Here Paul teaches us that the physical world needed to be redeemed just as the spiritual world. The earth is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. That's because the sons of God have access to the power that transforms from eternal death to eternal life.

So God himself became flesh and accepted the equivalent of an ancient world "electric chair" to redeem the world. The condition of the world and the people in it is described as darkness and death. This darkness exists because those in the world do not keep the commandments of God.

### **John 3:16 through John 3:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

<sup>18</sup>“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Sometimes when we talk about the world verses the church we speak in terms of benefits and blessings. People in the world say they are having more fun. People in the church sometimes resist righteousness because they don't want to give up worldly activities.

John says those in the world, who have not accepted Jesus, are condemned already. The book of Revelations teaches us that this world is going to burn some day. When we look around us we should never forget that the world we live in, the people in it, and all the things they do are in danger of eternal death.

It's important to remember because our attitude towards the world has an affect on us as believers.

**The World and the Believers** – we need to see how the world impacts us as believers. The issue here is our relationship to the world. We are in it but not of it.

### **Matthew 6:22 through Matthew 6:23 (KJV)**

<sup>22</sup>The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

<sup>23</sup>But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The clear transparent receiver and filter for our body is the eye. If our eyes are single, meaning they are clear, unified, folded together or braided together, we can be filled with a reservoir of God's light. When we look at the world around us, we have to look at it through the clear lenses of our faith. Any other lens will cause us to miss the mark.

If we only look through the clouded lens of finance, we will be filled with greed. If we only look through the clouded lens of social status, we will be filled with pride. If we only look through the lens of lust, we will be filled with immorality. If we look through the lens of hatred, we will be filled with violence.

This is important because our faith requires us to take each area of life and fold them together into a single lens. Every piece of our world view needs to be braided together into a single strand based on the word of God. Alternatively, if our eyes are evil, meaning they are degenerative, callous towards godliness, lack character, and lack clarity, then we will allow the darkness we see to take root in our lives. The end result is we are full of obscurity and shadiness.

People do the evil things we see in the world because their eyes lack clarity. It's obvious in the world, but it can also happen in the lives of carnal Christians. A carnal Christian is one who has accepted salvation but still lives, acts, behaves, and thinks like the world. The world is influencing them more than they are impacting the world.

When God wants to shine in the life of a carnal Christian, it may not always come out right. When he wants us to manifest his love, it comes out cold. When God wants us to manifest his joy, it comes out as dirty humor. When God wants us to show his compassion through them, it comes out with meanness. When God wants them to manifest his forgiveness it's mingled with vengeance. When God wants them to give as he has he has given, the darkness causes them to give grudgingly. When God wants carnal Christians to serve, it happens with selfish motives.

This is why in our passage today John says the darkness can cause us to stumble. It blinds us to the light. Every believer in Jesus Christ is in the world but we don't have to be of the world. Being a believer means we are different. We are set apart. We are set aside. And it means we have a different destiny.

**The World and Our Destiny** – the issue here is the world is passing away but we are abiding forever.

The world has a destiny that ends with condemnation and destruction. The end result of all of the world systems is they will fall. The rich won't always be rich. Riches are a part of the world and we can't take them to eternity. It does no good for us to gain the whole world and lose our souls. The powerful will not always be powerful. No one stays on top of the hill of success forever because there are always others fighting their way to the top. The popular will not always be popular. Social standards are always in a state of decay. What was great ten years ago is considered weak today. If we subscribe to the world system, then we are joining ourselves to the same fate it has.

So when we look at the world and the things done in the world system, our eyes need to be able to discern between light and darkness. John teaches us by saying ...

**1 John 2:15 through 1 John 2:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

So here are the three filters that help us discern between light and darkness. They are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

**Genesis 3:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

*The lust of the flesh consists of all the things in the world my body craves that are contrary to God's will in my life.*

When our bodies need fuel it is natural for them to desire food. But there is a point where the desire turns to lust and becomes gluttony which violates the word of God.

When our bodies are challenged and stressed, we may have a natural need for relaxation but seeking that sensation in drunkenness is contrary to the will of God.

When our flesh longs for intimacy it is a natural response given to us by God. But seeking the benefits of intimacy outside of marriage leads to sin.

Even when our bodies yearn for rest it doesn't need to develop into laziness.

*The lust of the eyes consists of the things our eyes covet or seek to gather.*

In the Garden of Eden, Eve saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes. The world can paint pretty pictures. Some of us have seen dresses and suits that drew our attention away from God. We have seen cars that caused us to long for them or long to see them. We have seen houses that seem to have drawn us toward them. And honestly, we began to covet those things.

Here is an example.

Terrance is at school and sees that Sabrina has a really cool pencil. He can't eat the pencil so it's not the lust of the flesh. Having the pencil doesn't make him better than Sabrina, so he's not dealing with the pride of life. Terrance likes what he sees and he takes it when Sabrina isn't looking.

Basically we say in our hearts "I saw it, I liked it, I want it, so I'm going to get it." When we are bent on having what we see in a way that defies the word of God and brings us outside of the will of God, we are in trouble.

The world is full of nice things. Be careful about what you allow your eyes to see and long to covet.

*Lastly, John says we have to beware of the pride of life. The pride of life deals with what our inner man desires. It's what our souls long for.*

Psychologists tell us that all humans have a basic need to love and to be loved. We can express it also as a need to accept and be accepted. It is a need to praise and be praised. It is a need to like and be liked.

Let's be honest, everyone needs to feel special inside every now and then. But left unchecked, those desires can lead us to darkness.

Eve saw that the fruit could be used to make a person wise. She didn't see that with her physical eyes. She saw with her inner soul. The enemy painted an image of her being like God that she envisioned within herself.

She saw that she could be great like God. She saw that she could be special like God. She saw the tree as something that was desirable. Everybody should want what's on this tree. Everybody should want this car because it makes a person look cool.

Everybody should want this position because people who have it are special in the eyes of everyone else. Everybody should desire this name brand because wearing it means I'm better than people who wear other name brands.

I will be popular if I dress like him or her. I will be important if I get this title by my name. People will envy me if I move to this neighborhood. I will have a reputation if I am seen with those people.

The world is full of the pride of life. It is full of the lust of the eyes. It is full of the lust of the flesh and John says it is all darkness and it is all destined to pass away.

Why, because the true light has come into the world. That light is Jesus Christ.

The true light of Jesus Christ does two things to the darkness. It pierces the darkness and it condemns the darkness. Because of this the entire world is being confronted with eternal life and eternal death.

We are to shine the true light and pierce the darkness. The dark places in our lives are either passing away by **voluntary crucifixion** or **involuntary spiritual decay**.

Darkness chokes abundance. You are alive but not abundantly alive. The world can't even offer abundant life. It can only offer abundant experiences while Christ can administer a complete life transformation.

Pierce the darkness by living holy in the face of opposition.

Pierce the darkness by being righteous when others are being evil.

Pierce the darkness by resisting the proud and embracing the humble.

Pierce the darkness by striving to do good deeds in the world around you.

Pierce the darkness by speaking truth when others are telling lies.

Pierce the darkness by helping others out of a pure heart.

Pierce the darkness by praying in faith the God's will be done in your life.

Pierce the darkness by telling the story of how Jesus has changed your life.

Let your life shine because this world is lost.