

# Christians in a Hostile World

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Verse:** 1 John  
**Preached on:** Tuesday, May 5, 2020

**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, I am just very thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to be able to minister like this even though it's not what we would have chosen. I'm quite confident that the Lord is accomplishing purposes in our midst and in our individual lives and in our corporate life that go beyond anything that we could have asked or thought, and as we turn to God's word repeatedly, as we turn to God's word even more often than we would have been doing had there been no disruption, I'm confident that the Lord is going to use his word in a way that sanctifies us in the truth, that is actively at work in the hearts of unbelieving people to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ and to do a sanctifying work in us that we will look back on in the future and give great thanks to him for. The Lord does all things well, he does all things in wisdom, he does all things in love, and so it's with a great sense of confidence that we start a new series here this evening.

If you like to put titles on your messages, you can just put this title on your notes, "Christians in a Hostile World." Christians in a hostile world and what I want to do tonight is simply introduce the book. We're not going to go right into verse 1 of chapter 1, we're just going to kind of take a little bit of a survey to get oriented toward what the key themes in this book are, and what we need to understand and what we need to keep in mind is that there are a variety of lethal and supernatural forces that are at work against the souls of men. We can make that as a universal statement, every man that has ever lived and every man that is now living has supernatural forces arrayed against him. 1 John will help us see that, and even as Christians there are enemies, there is antagonism to our souls that we need help to be able to overcome. It is not easy to live as a Christian in this world. Forget coronavirus, forget all of the shutdowns, forget all of that stuff, that's really kind of secondary to the realities that Scripture says are arrayed against people who are trying to live for Christ in this world. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts takes place in the midst of an environment that both externally and internally is hostile to that work and so we need help, we need encouragement, we need strength to be able to do that. Part of defeating an enemy is knowing who your enemy is, knowing something of the strategies that are involved that would undermine your soul. Along with that it's important to know what Christ has given to us and the blessings of God that have been showered upon us in our salvation which are far greater than what the enemy is, but we need to appropriate those, we need to understand them, we need to believe them, we need to embrace them. And my friends, kind of building on some things that I said over my prior two or three messages, we need to understand and we need to make these the

most important things in our lives, to set our affections on them, to realize that this is the greatest treasure that we have. These are the richest blessings that we have, that nothing is more important than what has been given to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we can take that perspective and view everything else in life through that prism, through those glasses that we wear, so to speak, to help our vision, then we are in a position to become and to grow into the kinds of Christians that God intends us to be.

What a wonderful privilege to be able to open these things from the book of 1 John, but just before we go to 1 John I just want to point out a couple of other hostilities just by way of augmenting what I just said. We realize that when we were not Christians, when we were unbelievers, when we were unsaved, that we ourselves were hostile toward God. There was hostility in us against him and in Colossians, you don't need to turn there, I just want to highlight the hostilities and the adversaries and the enemy environment that is at work against God in the spiritual realm, and before you were a Christian, you were part of that hostility. In Colossians 1:21 it says, "you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds." Paul glances back to our pre-conversion days and describes us as being hostile in mind. That's language that's quite reminiscent of Titus 3:3 that I read to open our time together, Titus 3:3, we "were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Do you see the hostility, the hostility that was in you before Christ and the hostility that still exists in the hearts and minds of unbelievers everywhere against the true God, against the true Gospel? These are serious matters.

In Colossians 2:14 it talks about a different kind of hostility that was arrayed against us and that was the guilt that our sins had put on our account, and in chapter 2, verse 13 it says, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, [Christ] made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." And so we were hostile to God, God's decrees, God's law was hostile to us in our unsaved condition, we were deceived and enslaved to various lusts, and so we just see the depth of hostility that existed in us and against us before we became Christians and that gives us a sense of appreciation for the fact that we are Christians.

David just led us in the singing of "Victory in Jesus," and that joyful song celebrating what Christ has done for us in salvation. Well, I want you to see and I want you to appreciate the fact that this was no minor skirmish that he won for us, he overcame great hostility in our hearts, he overcame great hostility of the law of God against us and he did that at the cost of his own life. He did that at the cost of bearing the wrath of God in his own body, the holy wrath of God poured out on Christ as he interceded for sinners like you and me at the cross of Calvary some 2,000 years ago. So at the cross he took away that hostile law and the condemnation of the law that was against us. In salvation, the Holy Spirit took away that hostile heart of stone that was in you and replaced it with a compliant, soft heart of flesh toward God that is responsive to his word and is in love with Christ and responds to Christ by faith and has an attitude of obedience to God. Well,

you see, all of these things combined help us to see the great hostility that Christ overtook on our behalf.

Now having said that as we enter into salvation and as we start to grow in the Christian life, we find that there are still other hostilities that are arrayed against us as we seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and 1 John helps us to understand those things and to overcome them, as we'll see as we go throughout the remainder of the message here this evening. What I want to do tonight is take a helicopter survey of 1 John. We're going to have three points in our message and each point has three subpoints so there is a symmetry to the message tonight that I like and I want this to be a time that is edifying to you and is an encouragement to your soul. Tonight what I want to do is I want to highlight at the start for you the declared purposes of the Apostle John as he wrote this letter. So our first main point for tonight is the purpose of this letter. Why did John write the letter of 1 John to the Christians of the first century and why would God preserve it for our study and encouragement some 2,000 years later.

Well, 1 John is a wonderful book in that way because the Apostle John states with absolute clarity why he was writing this letter. It's a threefold purpose that he is looking to accomplish in what he wrote and the first purpose that he states that he wants to accomplish is he wants to bring joy to us. He writes to produce joy in the readers of this letter, gladness and contentment as Christians, and right away we're confronted with the fact that, you know, you and I often don't live in that spirit of contentment as Christians, do we? We get irritated with the people around us. We get irritated with the society around us. We get anxious about politics or we get anxious about physical difficulties that we're going through. We get discouraged by the fact that life is going by faster than we wanted it to, and as we look at the waves around us, instead of walking on the water as Peter did for a time, we start to sink when Peter started to doubt and those doubts start to pull us down. Well, the Apostle John writes in order to give us and to strengthen us in those Christian virtues of gladness and contentment.

Look at 1 John 1:4 as we set sail now on this seaward journey that we are going to have here in 1 John. In 1 John 1:4, the apostle says this,

4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

He says, "I am writing so that our joy may be made complete," and as we'll see next time when he talks about "our joy" he doesn't mean his joy exclusively or those who are with him, he means by the idea "our joy," he means your joy and mine, our joy collectively. He's writing to increase your joy, he was writing to increase his own joy as he would see his children walking in the truth. So the purpose of John is to promote joy in Christians by what he has to say as he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now I ask you, doesn't that make you want to study this book? Don't we both need better joy, more consistent joy in our lives? Aren't we all prone to get downcast in our adversity? Aren't we prone to look at the waves around us and to lose sight of what's truly important and get worked up over things that are simply passing and temporary in nature

and lose sight of the glories of our salvation? We're all like that which means that we all need this instruction from this book so that our joy might grow and become mature and be consistent and be enduring. You see, your Christian life was never meant to be an up and down roller coaster of emotions. No, there is to be an ever increasing growth that produces a steady mature joy in your heart that is sustaining you and becomes the environment of your entire life. Your joy needs to be made complete. That's one of the reasons that John wrote this letter.

Well, secondly, John wrote to promote not only joy in your life but also holiness. Holiness. John wrote to help us conform our lives to the likeness of Jesus Christ, Christ who is separate, Christ who is pure, saved us so that we would be separated unto his service and he saved us so that we would be conformed to be like him, that our lives would increasingly be a mirror that reflected what Jesus Christ himself is like, and one of the aspects of that is that we would grow in our purity of life, our holiness. John expresses that purpose in chapter 2, verse 1.

Look at it there with me. Chapter 2, verse 1, he speaks with words of deep affection. John was almost 90 years old when he wrote this letter and in 1 John 2:1, he says, "My little children." You know, when you're about 90, everyone's a child to you by comparison but it's not simply a chronological aspect, John is speaking to them as a spiritual father, as someone who loves them and has their best interests in heart as he writes to them. He is writing with paternal care and affection, wanting what is best for them and seeking to help them as a father helps the child that looks to him in the days of their young lives. So John writing to Christians, some of whom were 60, 70 years younger than he was, he says to them in chapter 2, verse 1, he says this, he says,

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

He says, "I'm writing to you so that you would turn away from sin, so that you would be strengthened in your heart and that you would be stronger against temptation than you are before I wrote the letter," speaking in the first person there as the Apostle John. John writing and understanding that his readers are subject to all kinds of confusion about the nature of sin in their lives, he's writing to them to strengthen them so that their lives going forward would not be marked by the same degree of sin that it was in the past, and so he's writing to help them live in the purity of holiness that is fitting for the people of God.

Now we glanced at Titus 3, let's go back to Titus 3 and just see that theme echoed in what the Apostle Paul said to Titus when he wrote, Titus 3. We see actually in chapter 2, verse 14, is a better place for us to go. I had a different verse in mind but for the sake of time let's just look at Titus 2:14, it says that, Paul says that Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Paul says Christ gave himself for the purpose of purifying us, of changing us, and one of the marks of a true Christian is this, is that somewhere in your heart there is a desire to obey God, somewhere in your heart there is a

desire for moral purity, somewhere in your inner man there is a hatred of the sin that marked your former life. You look at the way that you used to live and you look at it with a sense of sorrow and regret that such sin came out of your life; that you sinned with your body, that you sinned with your mouth, that you sinned with your polluted the mind in such unrestrained glee for some of us, and now that you've been converted you should have a new attitude toward sin. It's not simply that you're trying to do that, it's that God has given you a new heart that sees sin and holiness from completely different perspectives than what it used to do in the past. And so John writes to strengthen that work of the Spirit of God in your heart to incline you more toward holiness and to help you live in greater Christ-likeness as you go forward in life. A true Christian without exception hears that and something resonates within him and says, "Yes, that is why I live now is to be like Christ," and it elevates your perspective on life, it changes your whole perspective on what is important because you realize that holiness and conformity to the image of Christ is the reason that you exist, it is the reason that Christ saved you. Not to make your life easy, not to make everything go smoothly on a personal or on a political scale, nothing like that at all, the purpose of Christ in saving you was to make you like himself and sometimes he works out those purposes through adversity. Christ was a man of sorrows, it shouldn't surprise us that sometimes we are people of sorrows. Christ was a man who faced opposition in life, faced hostility from political leaders, it shouldn't surprise us if that's the way it is for us as well, joy and holiness at work conforming us to the purposes of our salvation.

Well, there's a third purpose that John expresses in his letter very plainly stating why he wrote, and we see this in chapter 5, verse 13, when he says this, he says,

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

They were Christians but somehow they were struggling with assurance, "Am I saved? Am I not saved? How can I know?" Well, John says, "I've written these things, I've written this letter so that you would have an assurance, you would have a settled confidence that you really belong to the Lord Jesus Christ." Do you know what? If you've got a settled confidence of that, all of a sudden you don't have to be afraid to die because to die is gain Scripture says, to die is to enter into the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be saved and to know it is to understand that all of your sins have been forgiven. To be saved and to know it is to know that God works all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

Well, if you've been saved and you know it, then you realize in some fashion or another God is bringing every circumstance of your life to bear upon you to bring good to you, to do good to you in the end, and that knowledge comes from Scripture and having an assurance of your salvation gives you a confidence that you are on the blessing side of the purposes of God, and to be on the blessing side of the purposes of God means that even the bad things in life – watch this, watch this – even the bad things in life are good things for you in the hand of God. I don't say that lightly. I say that with a few decades of Christian experience and, you know, I bear the bruises and the scars of past trials that

inform me saying that. Even the bad things of life are good things in the hand of God and that shapes your whole perspective on life and what lets you live with that confidence and perspective comes from having an assurance that you are really a Christian. To know that you are a Christian is to know that all of the purposes of God in all of the universe and in all of the circumstances of your life are going to work out to your good in the end and that changes the whole way that you live, and rather than being agitated over what's happening in the present circumstances, you grow in a sense of a settled perspective, "Do you know what? It's going to be okay. God is in control, God loves me, Christ has saved me, then what am I upset about? What am I worried about here? Christ has me in His hand. He said that no one can pluck me away from there so I can rest, I can be confident, I can be peaceful." Beloved, beloved, it means that I can be content if I have an assurance of my salvation.

So you see how all of these purposes work together, they tie together. John stated it, oh, so clearly, joy, assurance and holiness, and what I would encourage you to do if you're taking notes, if you haven't been with us in prior expositions of 1 John, here's what I would encourage you to do if you don't do anything else tonight: write down those three verse references, chapter 1, verse 4; chapter 2, verse 1; chapter 5, verse 13, because those verses are going to orient you on why John wrote this letter and it can help you get into the stream of the purposes of the Holy Spirit as you study with this.

The Spirit of God, my Christian friend, through the book of 1 John intends to bring you to greater joy, greater holiness and greater assurance. That is the explicit purpose stated for the writing of this book and it's not just the words of the Apostle John, this is the Holy Spirit expressing the precise word of God for us, this is why God put the book of 1 John into the Canon, it was to bless his people with joy, holiness and assurance of their salvation. What a good God, what a blessed God, that we who were hostile in mind toward him, we who were guilty, we who still have lots of, plenty of streaks of rebellion in our hearts and minds, you know, and indifference and coldness toward God, but even what we were like in our pre-conversion days and in our partially sanctified condition in our Christian days now, all of it falling so far short of the glory of God, to think that there is a loving heavenly Father whose purpose for you and me, my Christian friend, his purpose for you and me is that we would know greater joy, walk in greater holiness and have an assurance of salvation that settles us in his love for our souls. What a blessed Savior is Jesus our Lord. There's no denying that and so we see the purpose of the letter here today: joy, holiness and assurance.

But we started out saying there are problems and there are hostilities. The title of the message is "Christians in a Hostile World," Christians in a hostile world. These purposes of which we've been speaking are advanced in the midst of a hostile environment in which we live and we need to understand and take seriously the fact that we have hostilities arrayed against our soul. So point 2, we saw the purpose of this letter, point 2 we see the problem of this world. The problem of this world, and stated very simply, the problem for us as Christians in this world is this, is that we are living in a hostile environment. We are living in an environment that is arrayed against us in so many different ways. We'll see three sticking with the threefold structure of tonight's message.

What's one of the problems that we face in this world? Well, first of all, John speaks to us about persecution. Persecution. The world hates us like death hates life and we are to understand that and to expect it in our experience. Let's just look at a couple of verses from chapter 3 here. 1 John 3:1 says this, it's kind of a nice little bridge from what we were saying to this transition here.

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and we are.

See how great a love it is from our prior hostility we would be called children of God, that he would adopt us into his family and make us heirs of all of the riches of Christ? What kind of great love is that? But John goes on from there to point out the problem of the world and he says in verse 3,

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

You see, the world does not share in the privileges of salvation. The world does not understand us. The world looks at us as an enemy just like they looked on Jesus Christ as an enemy during his earthly ministry. Jesus said in John 15:20, he said, "'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." So we are in a world environment that hasn't changed in the past 2,000 years, not really, not in its spiritual reality, and the hostility that the world exercised against Christ is living and active and directed against his disciples here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The world does not know us.

John goes on to say in verse 13 of chapter 3, you can look at that with me, John 3:13, he said,

13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

Don't be surprised by this. Don't be surprised by the fact that the world does not congratulate you on your pursuit of holiness. Don't be surprised that the world seeks to restrict and make the proclamation of the Gospel difficult. Don't be surprised if the government removes the name of God from culture and from classrooms. Don't be surprised by that. If they tried to take Christ out of the world through executing him, what do you think is still going to be the attitude of the world toward the remnants of his work when he's not physically present? They persecute us because they can't get their hands on Christ himself and so we experience hostility from the world against us, generally speaking, we experience hostility from individuals who know us, Jesus even said that the enemies of his followers would be people of his own household, not the household of Christ, of your own household; that there will be times where the enemies of our soul, the enemies who oppose us the most are the ones who are in our own household, our own blood relation, the ones that we've given our lives and our love to. Jesus said, "Don't be surprised by that." This is the nature, this is one of the problems of the world is that the world is still in hostility toward God, and since we belong to the Christ of God, we are

going to receive the spillover, the splash effect of the world's hostility against God, it's going to splash onto us, and so it shouldn't surprise us that there are difficulties that come in personal relationships, and even hostilities from government against us as we seek to live for Christ.

Don't be surprised by this. Don't act like it's a strange thing. Don't take it so personally. I'll say that again, don't take it so personally, beloved. I know it hurts. I know it's hard when people reject you for the name of Christ but we need to grow through that, we need to have a more mature perspective on it and realize that this is to be expected, and that when people oppose us like that, that it actually becomes a motivation for us to pray for them. Jesus said, "Pray for those who persecute you." The world is going to hate you, there is going to be persecution, that's part of the problem of the world, beloved, it's part of the reason why John wrote this letter is to help us flourish and to overcome that in our Christian lives. So there is this outward hostility toward us.

Well, it's not just persecution, though, there's another aspect of the world that undermines our pursuit of Christ and it is this whole realm of deception. The whole realm of deception. The problem with the world, persecution. The problem of the world secondly, deception. This world is filled with false teachers who are trying to deceive you and behind those false teachers is the work of Satan himself promoting false philosophies, false religion, false ways of salvation that all sound so good at one level, that sound right to the carnal mind, that are attractive to the pride of man but all of which is soul-destroying, soul-damning error, and this deception is diffused throughout the world system in which we live and even within the so-called religious environment, even within the course of the professing Christian church there is deception at work that we need help with and that is a problem for us. It is so easy to be led astray if we are not sticking closely to the word of God.

Let me show you this from three different verses. Again, we're just doing a survey. These themes are found throughout the whole book as we will see as we study it together. 1 John 2:26 says,

26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

He writes to his readers, he addresses them as Christians but he's giving them warnings, he's helping them to discern the fact that there are false teachers trying to deceive them and lead them away from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. And why is that so dangerous? Why is it such a problem? Well, beloved, the purpose of the letter, joy, holiness and assurance, is built on a foundation of truth. If you take away the truth, if you take away the foundation, the structures of joy, holiness and assurance are going to correspondingly collapse because the foundation is no longer there.

So this will have a great harmful impact upon Christians, not only that, we find that those, and we'll study this later, I won't go to verses that support this from this letter, but we find that following after false teaching actually exposes people as never having been



true Christians to begin with, and so it has a destructive impact on Christian living, it deceives people and leads them into hell, and it also just has the effect of acting like a magnet that pulls people away from the truth. This deception is real and there are real false teachers teaching things that are really really false and really really deceiving real people into a real damnation. Do you know what that means? It's really important for us to understand the forces that are at work, to realize the problem of this world isn't just an outward persecution, a rejection for the cause of Christ, there is an even more insidious force at work. Deception is at work and we need help to overcome it.

Look at 1 John 3:7 where you see this theme repeated when John says, "Little children," there's that term of affection again,

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you

He says you're responsible to know the truth and to exercise discernment enough so that you are not misled by these false teachers that are trying to lead you astray. He says "make sure that no one deceives you," he commands them to protect themselves from deception.

Now we are able to do that because of the indwelling Spirit, because of the inerrant word of God that is given to us but, beloved, what you need to see is that this is a matter of high priority; that you and I need to recognize the threat of deception and guard ourselves against it. If you knew that there were roaming violent gangs that were coursing through your neighborhood on a particular evening, you would make provision to protect yourself. You would lock your doors. Those of you that carry would have your weapons at hand and protecting yourself in case someone bursts in upon you. You would bring your children in to the security of the home until the threat had passed. You all have the good common sense that if that physical danger was present in the neighborhood in which you live, you would gather your family in until the danger had passed and you would exercise whatever was necessary to protect them from the danger at hand. Well, you get that illustration. Let me tell you that the roaming threat of false teachers is far far greater than that. It's far greater than any violent gang because false teaching has the potential to destroy souls forever. In other words, it has the real potential to lead people into eternal destruction, into eternal damnation. Hell is real. Hell is painful. Hell is eternal as we've seen.

Well, if these things are true, and they are, then it behooves us to make sure that no one deceives us, to understand and to know the word of God. And I say this gently, I say this to encourage you and, yeah, just to admonish some of you maybe just a little bit: your consistency in God's word is lacking. You don't value God's word or the teaching of God's word nearly high enough. You can kind of take it or leave it and that should concern you because when you let your guard down and God's word starts to be a secondary priority in your life, then you've let your guard down and you might as well be saying to the false teachers, "Hey, come over here and hit me. Strike me a couple of times because my guard is down. You know, I'm in the boxing ring with you but my gloves are at my side. You can strike me at will." That's really what you're doing when you neglect

God's word and the teaching of God's word and the fellowship of his people. John tells us by contrast, "Don't be like that." He says, "You be diligent. You make sure that no one deceives you." You send your child out to do something, you say, "You make sure you get this done." Well, you know, this is the way that John addresses us, "You make sure that no one deceives you," and we see that in John 3:7.

Finally in 1 John 4:1 he addresses them with another term of affection. Chapter 4, verse 1, he says,

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

He says, "You test the spirits." As teaching comes to you, you test it by the word of God. You be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who heard the teaching of the Apostle Paul and they eagerly examined the Scriptures daily to see whether what he was telling them was so. And so we are to be students of the word of God not merely on Sunday morning or a midweek service but you in your personal life on a day to day basis reading Scripture to one extent or another, in one way or another, searching it out, listening to messages from reliable teachers. You know, if I could just put in a plug here, listening to messages by your own pastor. Let's do that too. I'm not opposed to that. But feeding yourself with the word of God so that you are able to improve your discernment abilities. Friends, it's one of the problems of this world that there is not only persecution but there's deception, soul-destroying deception. It's part of the problem of living in this world and the book of 1 John says you make sure it doesn't get to you. You test the spirits and it's necessary because there are many false teachers in the world.

So we see the problem of this world measured by the reality of persecution, the reality of deception in the world. False teaching, let me just say this by way of summary, and in our postmodern world where everybody has their own truth and every opinion is of equal value and, you know, that's a whole realm of lie itself, but what you must understand, beloved, is that false teaching is not simply a difference of opinion, false teaching is lethal poison from Satan himself, so much so that in Galatians 1 the Apostle Paul said that even if an angel from heaven comes and teaches you a different Gospel than what you had heard from Paul, let him be accursed, anathema, damnation upon him. He sets such a high fence around the true Gospel because it's not simply a difference of opinion, it's not another way to God. You abandon the true Gospel and you have embraced the broad way to destruction, you have embraced the broad gate that leads to eternal hell.

So beloved, we can't say this strongly enough, we can't emphasize this enough, that the problem of the world in its deception is a real threat to your soul and to those whom you love, and it means that you men who are leading families, you men who have young children, I'm grateful for you, I think highly of you, I'm confident of you, but at the same time you need this admonishment, you need to understand that you need to be the leading defense for your wife and for your children from this kind of deception that is pervasive in the world. What kind of man of God are you becoming, my friend? What kind of man

of God are you becoming in his word, in some manner, some manner imparting that to your family in one way or another? I don't try to structure it for you but somehow that the word of God is important to you, man of God, and that somehow you realize that the spiritual protection of your children is more important than your physical provision for their bodily needs. These things help set our priorities, don't they? It's pretty challenging.

So we see the persecution, we see the deception, thirdly, there is temptation. There is temptation. The threefold problem of this world at least as we're presenting it tonight from 1 John: persecution, deception and temptation. And the world threatens our spiritual health as we live for Christ by tempting us toward sin, by appealing to the remnants of our flesh that finding these things appealing, and in 1 John 2, beginning in verse 15, we see this. 1 John 2:15, John finds it necessary to tell his Christian readers these things. Verse 15,

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

The carnal lusts of the flesh, the appeals of worldly enticement to our eyes and your own pride in your heart all tempting you toward sin against Christ, all tempting you away from joy and holiness and assurance. So the Apostle John finds it necessary to say, "Don't go here. Stop this. Understand that the world is enticing you into its realm of rebellion and you need to recognize that and to reject that part that is within you that would otherwise love the world." He says and we'll talk about this in a few messages from now, but he says you have to have a perspective on it that the outwardly alluring things of the world are part of an evil demonic system and they are things that are passing away that have no eternal value whatsoever. So then you as a Christian, you recognize the passing nature of the world, you recognize its evil demeanor, its evil system, and you reject it and you turn away from that part of you that is attracted to it, you put that part of you to death in order to embrace the higher purposes of holiness for which Jesus Christ saved your soul.

So again, we're just doing a very brief overview here but we see that there is a multifaceted danger that comes from living in this world for a Christian: there's persecution, there's deception and there is temptation. So you and I, you and I, we shouldn't need to debate this point, you and I just need to be honest with ourselves that we are not immune to the appeal and the enticements of the world, are we? Sometimes we're drawn to it. Sometimes, you know, the allure of riches looks pretty good or the allure of carnal appetites seems appealing in a moment of weakness. We need to gird ourselves against that. We need to guard ourselves against that and John specifically commands us not do it. The world tempts you, the world deceives you, the world persecute you. Beloved, we should see by now that while we have this great purpose of the letter, it should sober us to recognize what a hostile environment that we live in and drawing upon things that we saw in our survey of systematic theology, recognizing that

there is a supernatural wicked foe, Satan himself and his legions of under-demons that are under his authority all working to undermine us. Why, it's enough to drive a person to humble dependence on Christ. It's enough to drive a person to humble prayer saying, "Father, protect me." And that's exactly what Jesus told us to do. As you recognize these things, you should be more sympathetic with the nature of what Jesus, how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6, "Lord, do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil." You see, the recognition of the problem of the world should bring you to a place of greater, conscious, prayerful dependence upon Christ and asking him to sustain you and keep you day by day lest you stumble along the way. And I'm sure for you as it is for me, it's convicting to hear that, how cavalier, how self-confident, how self-righteous we are, how preoccupied we are with all of the wrong things rather than humbly earnestly seeking out the protection of Christ as we go through this world as one of his disciples.

So we see the purpose of the letter, we see the problem of the world. That brings us to our third point, our third and final point with three subpoints here, we see along with the purpose of the letter and the problem of the world, I love this point, I love this reality about this book that I love, the promise of the Father. The promise of the Father. And we're kind of going full-circle here. We started with the positive dimensions of the purpose of the letter. We came down and we entered into the problems that the letter is addressing, and now we come back to the top where we finish with the high purposes of God and the good purposes of God for us in our salvation and in our Christian lives. So despite how vast the problems are and how lethal the threat is from the world, here's what you need to know: it is that God has provided in Christ everything you need to overcome the world. If you are in Christ, you have everything that you need. John MacArthur has a well-titled and very excellent book called "Our Sufficiency in Christ," that in Christ we have been given everything we need for life and godliness. We don't need secular psychology to help us find our way through the world. We have everything through the provision of the Spirit and the wonderful all-sufficient word of God that is given to us. We need to understand that. We need to appropriate these things.

Look, how foolish would it be for you or I to look to the world to help us overcome the problem of the world? Do you see the dilemma there? People turn to worldly philosophies, worldly counselors, worldly teaching designed to help them find their way and encouragement through life. Well, what kind of Christian thinks that way? What kind of foolish thought is that? The world is the problem. The world and its teaching and its lusts are the whole problem for us. Then why would we turn to philosophies not rooted in the word of God to help us overcome it? That's only multiplying the problem even further. You must consider, my friend, you must consider what it is that you are leaning on and what you are depending upon as your strength and your protection and your comfort as you walk through this hostile world as a Christian. People turn to all kinds of things that astonish me but, look, people turn to liquor to help them overcome their sorrows, people turn to other means of trying to check out of the world or to change the course of their problems, and do all kinds of things before they would ever come to the word of God, before they would ever pause for let's say 15 minutes and just humbly ask God to be merciful to them in the midst of their sorrow, to be merciful and to help them in their time of temptation. Well friend, you and I need to understand that in Christ God

has given us everything that we need. He has provided everything for life and godliness for us, that the Scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:16, are sufficient to make the man of God adequate, equipped for every good work.

So we come back to this promise of the Father. God has provided everything you need to overcome the obstacles and we're going to look at three things just very briefly and quickly here in this survey tonight. First of all, he has provided forgiveness for you. He has provided forgiveness for you. Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God through his death on the cross.

Look at 1 John 1:7 and we'll just look at the end of the verse for the sake of time. 1 John 1:7,

7 ... the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

All sin. Full forgiveness. Complete reconciliation. Nothing held against us. Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." As deep as the sea is, that is how deeply God has buried your sins in Christ so that he will never hold them against you ever again. You do not need to fear the judgment of God if you are a Christian. You need to understand instead that God is favorably disposed toward you; that when Christ saved you, it was an expression of eternal love that can never change because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. If he saved you once, he'll keep you forever. If he loved you once, he loves you now, he'll love you forever. That's the marvels of true complete forgiveness found in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Full forgiveness.

Look at verse 9 of chapter 1.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Chapter 2, verse 1, if anyone sins,

1 ... we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Propitiation meaning that Christ has satisfied the wrath of God on our behalf. We need not fear the judgment of God anymore. He has provided forgiveness for us in Christ.

One more verse on this passage, 1 John 4:10,

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

My Christian brother, my Christian sister, God the Father loved you in Christ. God the Father sent Christ to be the sacrifice for your sins. God the Father ordained you for salvation and God the Holy Spirit came into your life and applied that perfect redemption to your heart at the moment of your conversion. Well, don't you see the provision, the promise of the Father is a full forgiveness, full reconciliation with God so that you need not fear God in the sense of fearing his judgment eternally? Don't you see that he has reconciled you to himself? As we saw earlier from chapter 3, verse 1, he has made us his children. He has adopted us into his family. He brought us in love to himself and Christ secured all of that for us at the cost of his own blood at the cross of Calvary. Well, that gives you the sense of security, of comfort, of love and confidence that gives you the ability to overcome every problem that this world has to throw at you in a spiritual sense.

Well, secondly and I've already alluded to it. We talked about forgiveness, we see the love of God and let's just stay right there in chapter 4, verse 7,

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

Look at the repeated use of that word "love" in that three verse section. Let us love one another. Love is from God. He who loves is born of God. The one who does not love. God is love. The love of God. On and on it goes. Verse 10, in this is love. Verse 11, if God so loved us. Beloved, I ask you, those of you who question the goodness of God toward you in your trials, those of you who have a harsh severe view of God that thinks that the first misstep you have God's going to get you for that, don't you see? How many times does the Apostle John have to say it before it sinks in deeply to our heart that our God, the God of our salvation, he actually loves us. He is securing our best interests. He has acted in Christ for our best interests. He will protect us. He will carry us home. Every aspect of anything that concerns you, God is lovingly concerned and involved in even to the point that he numbers the very hairs on your head.

Now I ask you, I ask you: what, then, can be filtered into your life that doesn't first come through the hand of God, appointed for you for your good? Even in these difficulties in which we presently live, we should view these from the perspective that somehow God has appointed this to accomplish good in my life, good in my family's life, and me as a pastor and as a board of elders, we have to understand that even though it's difficult and this is not like anything that we've ever seen in decades of ministry, somehow this different thing that has come to us, somehow God has appointed it in love to accomplish good for us. You see, when you're rooted deeply in the love of God, you view life from a completely different perspective. You have a settled peace of contentment, a settled peace of confidence that no matter what is happening and even as the storm winds are howling around you and the sirens are going off warning you of danger, you realize that you're in the boat with Jesus, so to speak, and even if it seems that he's slumbering and not acting at the time, he's got the storm perfectly under control and when he awakens to act, he will

speaking peace to the winds and it will become calm and the danger will pass. The danger will pass, beloved. It could be no other way from a Father who has forgiven us and from a Father who loves us, and that answers, the promise of the Father answers the problem of the world.

Well, one final point, one final point that answers the question of deception and it is this and it is the whole matter of discernment. Discernment. Remember John said make sure no one deceives you. Well, right in this letter he gives us the content that points us in the direction of discernment and God's word gives us the discernment we need to recognize and turn away from false teachers.

So in 1 John 4 we saw that command to test the spirits, John gives a doctrinal test in verses 2 and 3 about the nature of Christ that helps us understand and discern false teachers, and look what he says in verses 4 through 6. He says,

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They [meaning the false teachers] They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

Now watch this in verse 6. In the context of testing the spirit he says this in verse 6, he says,

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us.

Now it's very important to understand who the "us" is here. He's not talking about 21<sup>st</sup> century pastors or teachers, even though that may be an instrument of discernment, that's not his primary reference here. John when he speaks of "us" here, he's talking about the circle of the apostles. He's speaking about those who spoke the word of God to you, those who gave us the word of God whose words are now recorded for us in the written pages of Scripture. What John is saying is that true Christians heed word of God, they heed the word of the apostles written in the Scriptures. There is this unique authority that is given to the apostles, the 12 apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is found nowhere else, and true Christians have planted within them a respect and an authority for the word of God, the written 66 and no more books of the Bible that provides the basis of discernment for us, and as the Spirit of God illumines our minds, the word of God helps us tell what's true from what's false as we rely especially on the teaching of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. A true Christian heeds the apostles of Christ. Not these phony apostles of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who claim the name to themselves but have never seen the resurrected Christ and are therefore immediately disqualified from apostleship. Not the false ones claiming it today, the ones described in Scripture, the 12 apostles plus the Apostle Paul who gave us the word of God. A true Christian listens to them. A true Christian submits to the authority of the word of God and that's where our discernment is found.

And look at the end of verse 6 in light of that, the Apostle John says,

6. ... By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

And so the Father in his forgiveness, in his love, and in discernment has given us the provision, the promise that is necessary for us to overcome the problem of the world and thereby enter into the spiritual blessings of joy, holiness and assurance as it's laid out for us in this wonderful epistle.

Well, we've just about come to the end of our time tonight but I don't know about you but in light of the things that we've seen from God's word, I'm standing on my tiptoes looking forward to being able to dive into this again, and to be able to expound and to learn and to mine more deeply the riches that are obviously here for us, a gift from God to his people, the teaching that is found in 1 John.

Now as we close, I just want to point you to the surpassing spiritual reality that culminates that everything that we've talked about here points to. Remember we've said that we are Christians in a hostile world. Well, 1 John 5:4 and 5.

4 ... whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

We sang it early, "Victory in Jesus." Victory in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So my Christian friend, life in this world may be filled with spiritual danger but our gracious God has given us everything that we need to overcome this world and to enter safely into heaven on the other side. Do you know what I suggest? I suggest that you and I, here's what you and I should do, you and I should get serious about victory in this study that lies just ahead.

Let's pray together. Well, as we close, I should ask a fundamental question here as you're listening in, as you're watching, I should just ask you whether you yourself have been saved from this evil generation. The Bible says that there is salvation in no one else, that there is no other name given to us under heaven by which we must be saved except through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

*Father, I pray that You would open hearts so that unsaved people would be able to turn to Christ even tonight there in the privacy of their own home, that Your Spirit would work to bring them to a saving knowledge of Your Son. For the rest of us, Father, thank You for Your promise to bring us victory over the world and we ask You, Father, to use Truth Community Church and all of its individual members for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Help each one of us to overcome the world with the joy, holiness and assurance that belong to every true disciple of Jesus Christ and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*



Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at [thetruthpulpit.com](http://thetruthpulpit.com). This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.