

Toward Assurance and Holiness

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It's our privilege to open the word of God and to hear it taught this morning and we're going back to the book of 1 John 2, verses 12 through 17, and I'm just going to read it here to set it in your mind before we start to explain it. We'll just hear the word of God in its purest form as we read from the Scriptures beginning in chapter 2, verse 12. The Apostle John says,

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 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 message this morning is titled "Toward Assurance and Holiness," two twin themes of the Christian heart: an assurance of our true salvation and the pursuit of holiness, the pursuit and growth in sanctification as the Lord increasingly separates us from sin and unto the likeness of Christ in our daily lives. There are two things that are going on there. As you first read that passage, you might not think that there is an evident connection between verses 12 through 14 and verses 15 and 17, but the fact of the matter is that they are very closely related and we'll see that as we go along. But just to orient your general thinking toward where we're going, it's toward the theme of assurance of salvation and then our personal pursuit of holiness. Both of those themes are wrapped up in what we are looking at here this morning and I'm very glad for the opportunity to do this. I love this text. There is so much there and things that are evident right on the surface but sometimes you just need someone to point it out and say, "See that? Do you see what he's saying there?" That's what we're hoping to do here this morning.

Now, last time we looked at verses 3 through 11 and we asked the question: so you call yourself a Christian? And as we kind of did some review from earlier passages and looked through verses 3 through 11, we asked five questions to help form a greater context for us to assess whether our salvation is real or not. Not everyone that says that they are a Christian truly is a Christian. Not everyone that names the name of Christ is actually going to heaven. So it's very important, very crucial for you for the examination of your own soul to see what the Bible says about being a true Christian. And we gave you five questions last time to kind of help walk through that. I'm not going to repeat any of it here. If you missed that message, you can download it from our website. All of our messages are there for free download at truthcommunitychurch.org. So that's a little bit of overview of where we've been.

Now, we are pivoting here. We're moving into the text for this morning. By the time you come to chapter 2, verse 12 in 1 John, there has been something very significant that has happened. In the background of this letter as you read through the letter you can see this, there are two groups that John has in mind simultaneously as he's writing this letter. On the one hand, there are the true believers that he is addressing in verses 12 through 17, but these believers as we've been saying for months now, these believers have been impacted in a negative spiritual way, they have been impacted by false teachers who were teaching a false Christ, living out a false morality, giving a totally perverted view of what it meant to be a Christian, who the true Christ was and these were arrogant boastful men as all false teachers are, ultimately any false teacher is an arrogant boastful man at heart who hasn't subjected himself to the word of God. But here in this book as you read through it, it's very important for you to understand that John has two audiences in mind. There are two groups that he has in mind: one the true believers and one he is addressing the problem of these false teachers and I want to show you the false teacher aspect of it that we've seen up until this point in the text.

Look at chapter 1, verse 6, and I just ask you and beg you to stay with me because this is going to bring enormous light into why he says what he says in verses 12 to 17. Chapter 1, verse 6, he says, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." Wow, that's pretty sharp. Verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 10 of chapter 1, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." People often read 1 John and say, "Boy, he speaks in such black and white terms," and there is a lot of truth to that. It's truth and error. It's light and darkness. It's black and white. And in these verses, he has in mind and he is targeting his arrows at these false teachers who were polluting the fellowship and who had made things so difficult.

Look at chapter 2, verse 4. He says, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Liar, liar, liar, he says. Verse 9, "The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now." Light and darkness, another one of those sharp contrasts. Verse 11, "But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." Now, that's a lot of potent polemic in a very short amount of time. These guys are in darkness. These men

are liars, he says. People like this are blinded. And there is this severe denunciation of false teachers that's going on.

And as you continue to read on, we're not going to get to this particular verse until next week, you can see what he has in mind in chapter 2, verse 19 as he has addressed the matter of these false teachers, he says, "They," notice the third person, not you, they. "They went out from us," these men who claim to know God but walked in darkness; these men who claimed to know God but hated the brethren; these men who claimed to know God but did not keep his commandments. Those men, he says, those kinds of men went out from us, "but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us." And all I'm saying for this particular point that I want you to understand is that John has identified the spiritual characteristics of the false teachers that he was addressing in that day. By way of extension, it also shows us the difference between true and false Christians today and throughout all of time, these are marks of true Christians and false professors, but here in the context of what we're looking at I want you to see that he is addressing these false teachers who had these devilish spiritual characteristics about them who had left the fellowship and he speaks harshly, strongly, clearly to make certain the clarity of difference between light and darkness and so we have looked at the negative thread of that,

Now stay with me here, if you're receiving that letter and you see these harsh words: liar, truth not in them, darkness, all of this, that could have a chilling impact on your own spiritual life. You say, "John, who are you talking to here? Is John talking to me that way?" And remember these believers are already unsettled. This is so very important: these believers are already very unsettled by the impact of the false teachers that had been in their midst and now had gone away. So they are unsettled to begin with and John comes and starts firing off these bullets against the false teachers and clarifying the issues and so you're reading that as a weakened believer and you say, "Wow, is he talking to me that way? I'm part of the problem, aren't I?" What John does here as we come to verse 12 is something profoundly wise in its pastoral application and it is profoundly insightful for us today as we think through our own Christian lives.

As you come to verse 12 and I'm going to show you this, as you come to verse 12, John is doing something very important. He is telling his readers that he is not questioning their salvation. He says, "I don't want you to think I'm talking about you when I speak in these very harsh terms. I have two audiences in my mind, beloved reader, and while I have dealt harshly with these false teachers, now let me talk to you." And notice the difference in tone that he adopts with them. John is writing this particular passage, verses 12 to 17, to encourage his readers, the true Christians that are left behind after the maggots, the false teachers went out. After the maggots left, you have the true believer struggling left behind and now John steps in as a skilled apostle, as a skilled pastor, as it were, to encourage and minister to them, and what he says to them in these five or six verses are the same things that you need to hear today in your own walk with Christ. There is a word of encouragement in verses 12 through 14, and there is a word of exhortation in verses 15 through 17. That's what we're going to see today. John pauses, as it were, he

hits the pause button on his denunciation of the false teachers and says, "For a short time, I'm done talking to them. Now let me talk to those of you that belong to the family of God." This is really beautiful.

This is really beautiful what he does and so our first point for this morning is to look at this word of encouragement to true Christians. This word of encouragement to true Christians. John is writing to give them a pastoral assurance about their spiritual state and this is consistent with what we have said throughout the course of this, that John is writing to help believers achieve spiritual victory in a hostile world. We are surrounded by spiritual issues, spiritual problems, we live in a hostile environment. John wrote this letter to give believers spiritual victory in a hostile world.

So that's his mind, that's his purpose, and now look at what he says in verse 12 with all of that background in mind. Think of yourself, put yourself in the first century sandals of these believers troubled by false teachers, John has been speaking sharply. Where does that leave me in the midst of all of this? And John completely changes his tone. He completely softens the message now as he speaks to the true believers and he says in verse 12, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake." He writes to them and he addresses them and he clarifies the change of direction as he calls them "little children." He says, "Now I'm talking to you, my beloved. Now I'm talking to you, those who truly belong to our Lord Jesus Christ." He addresses his readers collectively with this term of affection. He's writing as a man in his 90s so he's entitled to call anyone "child" that he wants to. You know, you're around some people like that and some people have that ability. They're at that position in life where they can address anyone as "child" that they well please and none of us are going to object to it.

John is writing to them from a chronological perspective but also from a spiritual perspective. "You are my beloved children in Christ. I love you. I care about you as a father cares about his children and so let me tell you why I'm writing to you," he says. So he has totally changed the tone as he speaks and he says to them, he says, "I want to assure you of my attitude toward you. I want you to know exactly where I'm coming from. I want you to understand exactly why I've written. Do you know why I've written to you?" he says. He says, "I have written to you because you're true Christians. I've written to you because your sins have been forgiven." And he immediately clarifies for his readers, "I'm not lumping you together with the false teachers. I'm not swinging a machete and cutting off everybody's head that's within reach of my spiritual arms. No, I'm being very discriminating in what I say. These men I have condemned but you, no. No. You are children. Your sins are forgiven. I know that you are reconciled to God. We all belong to the same family of God so understand that when I write, I'm writing to you with a confidence that you've been reconciled to God and you're at peace with him." That's what he says.

Now bring it into today. Bring it in right into this room. Bring it right into the chair in which you are sitting today if you're a true Christian. The attitude that John displayed to those readers back then is the attitude that God has toward you as one of his children.

You see, it's all a matter of belonging to the family of God. John is writing to these children because they were true Christians and remember that John is writing this letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What John is writing is an expression of God's attitude toward his own children. It's true back in the first century, it's true today. If you're a true Christian, look at verse 12 and see what God's disposition is towards you right now. Look at it. Look at it with me. Look at verse 12, turn your eyes toward the printed page and realize that the Scriptures were written to true Christians "because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake." All the guilt, all of the shame, all of the violations of God's law that are in your past and even lingering a bit in your life today, God is saying and reminding us through his word that the whole purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ coming was to reconcile you to God; was to wipe your slate clean, erase the guilt of the past and impute to you the very righteousness of Christ so that you could stand before God perfect in your legal condition before him with no fear of judgment ever to come upon your soul ever again. That's awesome. That should just warm your heart toward Christ and give you a sense of, "Oh yeah, do you know what? That's what the Christian life is about. Forget about my circumstances for a time, forget the circumstances in the world, this is all about me being reconciled to God, this is about Christ having saved his church and bringing them to the Father through his own shed blood."

So you read that and you realize, "Oh, that's true of me," and a sense of assurance, of confidence and of calm starts to come upon your soul as you realize the goodness of God in your salvation. Notice how plainly he states it. Some of you that come from Arminian backgrounds where you've been threatened with the possibility that you could lose your salvation if you drift away too far, listen, look at that verse and see the assurance that God would have you live in. God is not trying to hide the reality of salvation from you. He's not playing peekaboo with you. It's meant to be out there in the open. It's meant for you to be known, it's meant for you to be enjoyed, it's meant for you to live in an assurance, "I am reconciled with God and I can go forward in peace because my sins have been forgiven me for the sake of Christ."

Look at it again, verse 12. I don't get tired of pointing this out to you. "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake." God simply does not deal with you according to your sins. Yeah, your sins deserve a lot of judgment, your sins deserve the harsh hand of God upon you, but in Christ, in our Lord Jesus Christ, God has brought you to himself. He has reconciled you and forgiven your sins in a way that lets you stand before him fully assured with a clear conscience that your guilt has been paid for. Bless his name. Bless his name.

Turn back just because it's such a beautifully graphic expression of this, turn back to Psalm 103 just to get a sense of the way that God deals with his children. By the way, when I speak to those of you that have come from those backgrounds where you've been taught that you could lose your salvation, I speak not to be condemning about that but to free you up from that bondage that, "I could lose my salvation." That is a terrible way to live. It's like God is still a threat to you. Well, if God is still a threat, in what sense has

Christ reconciled us? No, that's not the teaching of the Scripture of God's attitude toward his children at all.

Look at Psalm 103:10. David says, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Yeah, we deserve judgment but God hasn't dealt with us that way. God has dealt with us according to his grace. Verse 11, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him." Have you ever looked up at the sky, looked at the galaxies? Somehow look beyond them and get a measure of the faithfulness and love of God toward your soul. Verse 12, "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." That's a measure of the greatness of the goodness of God toward us in Christ. That is a word of encouragement.

Now, God can do that because Christ died in your place. Christ rose again. It's not because of anything you've done; it's not according to the works of your hands, it's according to the grace and righteousness and shed blood of Christ that he can do this. Here's the point for this portion of 1 John though as we turn back there, if you would, turn back to chapter 2 there. Here's the point: by reminding his readers of the forgiveness of God in Christ, John is writing to deepen their confidence in Christ. The false teachers have undermined the foundation. They were using a theological jackhammer to chip away at it to bring the whole edifice down. John has cast them aside and now he is restoring the foundation so that people can go forward in confidence. So he's writing to encourage them. This is a word of encouragement, a word of clarification.

Now, look at verses 13 and 14 as he just expands on it further. He could have stopped in verse 12 and said, "I am writing to you, children, because your names have been forgiven for His name's sake," and then moved on to another topic. But do you know what he does here? He puts it in park. He stops the car and he puts it in park and says, "We're going to park it here right now. I want to emphasize to you so that you can't miss it exactly why I am writing to you and what my purpose is." So he says in verse 13, look at verses 13 and 14 with me, he says, "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father." Verse 14, this is starting to get repetitious, "I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." He addresses the fathers, those older men who have a permanent knowledge of God. He addresses young men who have overcome Satan and are established in truth. Now, watch this, watch this, I mean, really, I want you to watch this: notice that he addresses them twice. He says, "fathers," verse 13. "Fathers," verse 14. "Young men," verse 13. "Young men," verse 14. "Little children, children." Repeating it time and again. Why does he do that? Why the repetition? Twice he has told the fathers that they know him who has been from the beginning. Twice he tells the young men that they have overcome the evil one. Twice he assures the children they know the father. Twice. Twice. Twice. Why all of this repetition? Can't we just get on with the point? Well, what he's doing with the repetition is that he is giving them emphasis. He is emphasizing his point with the repetition.

Now, there are multiple ways that we can bring emphasis to something, right? The human language calls for times to bring emphasis to set something out by contrast. Some goofy speakers think that they can do it just geographically and step up and make emphasis through where they're standing. I don't get that but, you know, whatever. You can raise your voice, "THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT!" You can use the hand signs to emphasize it. You can show emphasis in writing. You can put it in italics. You can underline it. You can put exclamation points in the margins. Multiple, multiple ways to use emphasis. One way that you can make something really emphatic is to repeat it and that's what John is doing here. He's saying, "I'm confident." Listen to me, he's saying to these readers, he's saying, "I'm confident of your spiritual state. Did you hear what I just said? I am confident of your spiritual state." That's what he's saying. He's repeating it so that they don't miss the point. In the midst of the harsh condemnation of the false teachers, he lifts them out from the realm of that area of thought, sets them in a different place and says, "I am addressing you in a completely different manner. I know that your sins are forgiven. I know that you belong to the Father and that's the sense in which I'm addressing you. I am confident of where you are." He is affirming their faith. He says, "I'm writing to you precisely because I know that you're a Christian." John didn't write this letter to try to undermine the assurance of everyone who ever named the name of Christ. He wants to undermine the false teachers, the false professors, but not the true ones. That's why he gives this emphasis. He couldn't state it any more clearly.

Look at chapter 2, verse 21. He does this throughout the letter. He keeps going back to this theme. Chapter 2, verse 21, he says, "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it." Do you see the point? Do you see how clear that is as you just read through the Scriptures? Now, he is fighting the false teachers with strong words but not his readers, for them he's trying to strengthen their spiritual confidence.

Now, for you here today if you're a Christian and these words of assurance resonate in your heart, there is an inner affirmation going on saying, "Yeah, do you know what? This is where my affections lie. I understand Christ. I understand he's my only hope of heaven. I have trusted in him completely." Well, understand that when that assurance starts to well up in your heart, God is not there to try to put a fire extinguisher to it and dampen that down before you get too big for your spiritual britches, God is writing to build that up and to gently blow that little flickering flame into a full-fledged fire. He wants us to know. He wants us to be confident and that is expressed by the way that John continually repeats it. "Understand, I'm writing to encourage you, not cause needless doubt."

So what do we walk away from that with, from that word of encouragement? God wants us to know, John said in chapter 5, verse 13, "I have written to you so that you may know that you have eternal life." Out with the idea that God is trying to hide it from us. Out with the idea that you can never know. You know, the Roman Catholic church condemns people with anathema saying, "Anyone who says I'm assured of my salvation, let them be anathema." They condemn people for the very assurance that the Bible says is meant to be known and enjoyed. So I'll take the Bible over false teaching of men, won't you?

Now, we're meant to know. John writes to encourage us and that's what he's done in verses 12 through 14. Now, one of the great challenges of being a pastor, one of the great challenges of being a Bible teacher is to maintain balance because the tendency that permeates the human race even within the church is a tendency to want to take one principle and take it way too far. Say, "Okay, well, if that's true, then this, this, this, this is true," and not keeping it in balance with other aspects of biblical truth. Now, nothing that we are about to say is designed to undermine that encouragement that John has just given us but you need to recognize that when you have that assurance, it's meant to accomplish an additional spiritual purpose in your life and that brings us to our second point in today's message, today's passage. John has given us a word of encouragement, now secondly, he's turning to a word of exhortation. A word of exhortation to call people from the spiritual ground that they're at to a higher ground. Out of one level of obedience and sanctification to a more mature level of obedience and sanctification.

So what's happening here in verses 15 to 17? Even though these believers are in the faith and John wants them to be fully assured of that, he knows that they are also in a battle against their own flesh. Look at chapter 2, verse 15. Coming out of that great word of encouragement, he says in verse 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." Listen, he's pivoting now, he has given them this encouragement but the fact that he writes to encourage his readers, the fact that God would have you be assured and confident in your salvation, does not mean that you have reached perfection. It does not mean that there are not realms in which you need to grow. You see, you have this assurance but you simultaneously recognize that your life is not perfectly sanctified; that there are areas of lingering sin that you need to deal with; there are areas of spiritual growth that you need to pursue and attain. This is so very important. Assurance of salvation is not meant to put you in a position where you sit down and put your leg across and say, "Okay, it's done. I'm good." Assurance is never meant to make you spiritually passive. It's never meant to make you indifferent to spiritual growth. Quite to the contrary. Quite to the contrary. Assurance is designed to make you have the energy to say, "Now I can really pursue Christ and grow in the grace and knowledge of him." That is the point of assurance, to lay the foundation for further spiritual growth, not to sit down in the muck and stay there.

God gives you assurance in order that you would grow. He gives you assurance in order to move you along the path of holiness and that's what John is doing here in verse 15. He's still addressing the believers. He's still addressing the readers. He said, "I've just written to you because I know your sins are forgiven, now here's what I've got to say to you. Do you understand that? Do you understand I'm affirming you? Now I exhort you, stop loving the world. Make it the pattern of your life not to love the world that is around you." You see, John has confidence in their spiritual condition but he knows that they are living and God understands that we are living in a spiritually hostile environment while we're on this sod. He understands that there are temptations outside us and there are temptations inside us and the whole world system is designed to oppose our efforts to grow in Christ. So he's giving us here a means of understanding that and exhorting us not to be content with our current spiritual condition but to pursue greater growth, to excel

still more, in the language of the Apostle Paul in one of the Thessalonian epistles. You have received grace, you are doing well, I'm confident of your salvation, he says, and then he goes and he says, "Okay, now excel still more. You haven't reached perfection, have you?" None of you would claim that, I know that. I certainly don't. I don't even make the pretense of that claim. So we say, "Okay, I need to grow. I need to continue growing. It's amazing. After 30 years of being a Christian, I still have some of the most basic elements of spiritual growth to pursue in my life. Wow." Well, you see, John understands that and that's why he says in verse 15, he gives them this exhortation, "Do not love the world."

Now, let's consider this verse and these next two verses after it for just a moment. As a new Christian, worldly temptations might seem to have a lingering appeal, a lingering desire. You kind of cast a longing look back to the old way of life sometimes, you know, and you cultivated habits and different things that are hard to shake. You're new in Christ and yet there is still this lingering pull, this beckoning back and though your old man is dead in the grave, it's like his bony fingers are trying to pull you back anyway. Well, what John is doing here is he's giving us a mindset to help us think about that, to perceive the reality of it so that it would be easier to escape the lures of our inner temptations and pursue growth with a more undivided heart. True faith, he says, must separate from worldliness. Don't love the world. If you love the world so much then the love of the Father isn't in you, he says in verse 15.

Now, look at verses 16 and 17. He says, "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. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." What he's doing here is he is analyzing, he's explaining the fleshly desires that wage war against our soul. He's explaining the wicked desires to avoid. He's helping us recognize them. It's not enough to simply say, "Don't love the world," because you're left saying, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, here he explains what he means. He says, "When I say don't love the world, let me clarify, let me amplify." In verse 16, he says, "all that is in the world," okay, here's the expansion of his thought. He says, "The lust of the flesh," those sinful desires that well up from within us. "The lust of the eyes," those things that we see outside in the world around us that stimulate us and tempt us toward sin. You know what I'm talking about if you've ever been to a supermarket, right? You know exactly what I'm talking about, that whole boastful pride of life, the sensual way that it presents the world to you and tempts you to think only in terms of this life and this moment and the pursuit of whatever would gratify your flesh right now. Whatever it is that's outside us that tempts us to sin. Eve, that literal historical woman in Genesis 3, Eve saw the forbidden fruit and was attracted to it. It appealed to her eyes. David in 2 Samuel saw Bathsheba and lusted after her and was drawn into adultery as a result. The entrance of sin was through their eyes and that's the way it so often happens that what we see stimulates us to desires and the pursuit of sin. "And the boastful pride of life," this refers to that arrogance that boasts in your external circumstances: your wealth, your position, your appearance. A man filled with the pride of life is someone who is seeking to impress people with his own supposed importance. I don't know where you fall into all of that, where you see yourself in the matrix of that but this is the spiritual environment in

which we are trying to pursue a holy life for Christ. We've got temptations within, temptations outside, and the temptations to boast in our lives, to boast in who we are and to elevate ourselves while we simultaneously silently put Christ down as if we were boasting in us rather than in him.

Now, it's simply the sinful attitudes and conduct that survey our entire life. Here's the point, beloved: what John is saying here, I always try to extract the bigger principle so that you can see the bigger principle that's at stake here. In light of that, in light of the fact that you are living in a spiritually hostile environment that tempts you to sin, tempts you awake from this glorious life in Christ, what you see when John says do not love the world, what he's saying is that you – oh, please listen to me – you cannot be passive in response to your spiritual environment. You have to have an active mindset that is actively pursuing holiness. Actively. Actively rejecting sin. Turning away from it. Spurning it in all of its manifestations so that you can pursue and live the life that God called you to live during your time on earth. You must resist it, this love of the world, and positively pursue holiness instead.

You say, "What are you doing right now? Why aren't you talking?" Well, I'm giving people time to finish their notes on that thought. It's an important thought. Beloved, here's the point: there are certain things that you have to drive down deep into your thought patterns, you have to drive deep into your heart affections. You have to settle these things once and for all and even after they're settled, you have to go back and review them and renew your commitment to them over and over again. Here's what John is saying to you. Here's what this passage means for you in your life today: you must if you are a Christian, you must settle it in your mind that God saved you in order to deliver you from the world, not to facilitate your participation in it. He saved you to deliver you from the world, to deliver you from that ungodly mindset, to deliver you from pursuing the temptations that once enslaved your soul. The whole thing was to deliver you from that, not simply to put you in heaven instead of hell and then just go about pursuing life however you want until that day arrives. The whole nature of Christian salvation is a deliverance from sin. A deliverance from its future punishment, yes, but also a deliverance from its present power in your life. You must understand that. This is inherent to true salvation.

So as you're thinking about the environment in which you live, as you reflect on the still defective nature of your own heart and the increasingly hostile nature of the world around us, you have to settle in your mind, "Oh, God saved me to deliver me from this and therefore that's what I'm going to pursue in my life." It's all about settling foundational, directional principles in your mind that can never be shaken, that can never be challenged. That worldly environment is hostile to your spiritual life and – listen – it is not for you as a Christian. That is forbidden fruit, not to pursue, not to engage, not to play with, not to toy with. You've got to hate it enough to resist it because if you just passively go by without thinking about these issues, the spiritual drift of the river of life is going to pull you away from what you say is your first love and so you've got to realize, "Hey, I'm swimming upstream. Let's get on with it. Salmon do it all the time, why can't I as a

Christian? With the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit helping me to resist, how could I go wrong?"

Now, what are we saying? What does this mean? Listen, when you're tempted and in the times past where you have given into sin, I want you to understand something really essential: when you sin, you are responsible. When you sin, you can't blame the world or say that the devil made you do it. The call on your life is to come out of that. To come out of that in dependence on the indwelling Holy Spirit. To come out of that in your heart affections and say, "I hate that stuff. Yeah, I understand that it allures me but I hate it. I don't want that in my soul. I don't want my mind occupied with all of these boastful, sinful, sensual things. My mind is meant to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind, a pure undivided devotion, undistracted devotion to Christ." That's why God has given you a mind, is to love him with it. So when things come to pull you away from that, you've got to realize, "Hey, there's an enemy in the camp. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to kill him. I'm going to assassinate it. I'm going to squish it under my foot. I'm going to put they heel of my boot on its neck and put pressure down." That's your mindset toward sin. It's utter resistance in response to the work of God. You say, "Can you really do that?" Yeah, 1 Corinthians 10:13, "no temptation has overtaking you but such as is common to man. God is faithful and provides the way of escape."

Now, what John does here in verses 16 to 17, is he continues on. He has given the command, "Don't love the world." What I really want you to see as we are about to wrap this up here, you could ask this question, let's frame the issue this way. You say, "Okay, I see that but tell me again why should I resist the world? Tell me again why I should make the spiritual effort?" Because if you've made a serious pursuit at sanctification of spiritual growth, you know that it's difficult. It's hard spiritual work to do it and there is this constant attention that you're giving to it. Why bother? Well, John answers that question in this word of exhortation. He gives us in verses 16 and 17, he gives us two reasons which are designed to frame your Christian life and help you respond to temptation. You see, part of the success, part of the secret of success in pursuing sanctification is to see through sin, to see through temptation, to see it for what it really is and that's what he does here in these last two verses. He gives you reasons to feed your mind that help you see through the attraction so that you would more easily resist it.

Look at what he says in verse 16, for example. He says, "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life," he's expanding, it's exegetical, they say. Just look at it this way, "for all that is in the world," skip the explanation, "all that is in the world is not from the Father, but is from the world." A pretty simple statement. What he's saying here is part of the way that you see through it is to recognize that worldliness comes from the devil. That's a sub point here. It's a word of exhortation, "Don't love the world." Why not? Why not? Because, I'll tell you why not, because worldliness comes from the devil. Look at verse 16 again. He says, "all that is in the world is not from the Father, but is from the world." Okay, look at verse 19 of chapter 5. That would help, chapter 5, verse 19. He says, "We know that we are of God," there's that word of assurance and confidence again. We know this, we're from God, "and the

whole world lies in the power of the evil one." He says, "These things are not from God but they are from the devil. Recognize," in other words, "recognize their source of origin. Recognize where these things are coming from." This whole world system that tempts you to all manner of evil and pride is being driven by the devil himself. It's designed to make it so very distasteful to you that you don't want to go back there. You've probably had kids, I know that we had one in particular when they were really little, they lay their hand on a hot stove and burned their hand. Ouch! The point of the Scripture here is to recognize the danger source so that you don't go back to it. The temptations of this world, he says, are simply bait on Satan's hook designed to lead you into sin, to dishonor Christ, and to diminish your eternal reward. Recognize when you're tempted into that direction, step back, stop for just a moment and say, "This is devilish. This comes from the devil. Why would I as a child of God move into that?" The whole design is to free your mind to think rightly about it.

I had a friend in seminary many years ago who in subsequent course of events disqualified himself morally from ministry. His life is shattered now and he is bearing the consequences of a lot of rebellion in his life. He loved the world and now the world has devoured him. Recognize that when the Bible says that all that's in the world is from the devil, recognize what a stringent warning that is to you. God gives you this caution in order to help you. "The devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." It devoured my friend. He won't even talk to me because he doesn't want to deal with the consequences of it. Listen, it's sad but the thing that you have to understand in advance is that you cannot love the world and get away with it. You're going to reap what you sow and if you're sowing toward the devil in your Christian life, don't be surprised if it burns you. What John is saying here is, "I'm exhorting you to come away from that, settle it in your mind so that you can come away and obey your Father and enjoy the blessing of walking with him."

Now, there's a second reason. It's not just that worldliness is from the devil but worldliness is temporary. Look at verse 17. Worldliness is temporary. Verse 17, "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Look at it again, "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Psalm 90:12 says, "Lord, teach us to number our days, That we may apply our hearts to wisdom." At a very foundational level in your Christian life, you have to ask yourself, you have to deal with this question: in the natural course of things, I'm going to get 70 years, maybe 80, and a lot of those are already in the rearview mirror for me. I've got this short window of time left, what am I going to do with it? What am I going to devote myself to? Well, even apart from the utter sinfulness of the world, John is saying in verse 17, think about this, it's passing away. You have such a short window of time to yield your life to constructive things with eternal value. Why would you squander it? Why would you squander it in the pursuit of that which is by nature temporary and passing away? Why would you do that? It's transitory. It's undependable. This isn't what you were saved for and it's not going to last. You know, the beauty of youth is a pretty fleeting thing therefore, the point is, you think through this and say, "Now, this is passing. I'm not going to give my affection to that. I'm not going to love that. Why would I do that? Why would I give my life over to that which is passing

when," look at verse 17, the end of it, "the one who does the will of God lives forever." I can devote myself to those things that have eternal consequence and pour my life into those and not squander my time.

John says this is the way you need to think about worldliness and sin and temptation when it comes to you. You need to have a comprehensive mindset about it that says, "I'm assured that I'm a Christian. That has implications for the way that I live. One of the implications is that I'm going to separate myself from the world. Why am I going to do that? Well, you asked, I'll answer. Why would I do that when it so appealing, at least on the surface? Well, I'll tell you, first of all..." You are articulating why you live out a biblical life when you do this. This is the whole point, to be able to articulate these things and let them guide your life. "Why would I do that? Because this worldliness comes from a spiritual enemy of my soul. It comes from the very enemy who flung the world and tempted the world into sin and fell and the consequences were vast; this enemy who wants to devour my soul and ruin and mar my testimony for Christ; lead me away from that which would bring eternal reward and have me squander my days. Do you want to know why I want to be separate from the world? That's one reason, my friend," you say to whoever is listening even if it's just the man or woman in the mirror. "I realize this comes from a wicked spiritual source and I'm afraid of that. I don't want to yield myself over to that kind of master again." Then you say, "It's temporary. You know, even if I indulge the finest things of life and the pursuit and just flung aside and enjoyed it, it's going to be over." You know what that's like. You come to the end of a big day or a big vacation you've been looking to and then it's over and it's gone and it's done and you're reminded once again, "You know, that was a lot of fun." I'm not bashing vacations, don't misunderstand, it's just the temporary nature that I'm pointing out, reminding you of. "Man, that was great but it's over. It didn't last."

Now what? All the more even in those things that aren't intrinsically bad, then how much more the lusts of the world that would draw you away from Christ. It's a dead end and you have to think it all through in order to get the benefit of what John says here and you just clarify in your mind that this God who saved me, this God who has removed my sin as far as the east is from the west, this God who is bringing me to glory, if he gives me breath for another 5, 10, 15 years or 5, 10, 15 days, 5, 10, 15 minutes, whatever he gives me, I'm going to devote it back to him. That's the point and you've seen through, you've thought through the world, you've seen it for what it is, a waste of time, a threat to your soul, a dishonor to Christ. You say, "I settle it in my heart. My affections aren't going there. I'll give my affections and time and love to that which is eternal, found in Christ alone and in the Scriptures alone." And through that, John gives you what you need to pursue that life of holiness.

Turn back, if you're in 1 John, turn back a couple of pages just to the book of Hebrews 11. I just want to give you a couple of passages to reinforce these things in your mind and this is just so fundamental to the way that you think as a believer. Chapter 11, verse 13. This is about how you view the entirety of life and that shapes everything that flows from it. Chapter 11, verse 13 says, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance," look at this, "and having

confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." Your Christian life is not about today, it's not about this life, you're just a stranger. You are an exile here, passing through. Don't get distracted by the scenery as you go. You're a stranger. You're in exile. Don't expect too much from this life and you probably won't be disappointed.

Then he illustrates a with Moses down in verse 24. He says, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God." Wow, he had the riches of Egypt at his disposal and he said, "No, I'd rather be ill-treated with the people of God." "Than to enjoy," verse 25, "than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." Beloved, that's the point. You go through this life looking beyond what you see, looking beyond the chronology of your life and say, "I'm living for that reward that is certain to come for those who know Christ." And that changes your whole perspective. It changes the way you respond to temptations. It changes what you want to live for. It changes what you want this day to be about.

And so, to wrap it up, go back to 1 John 2 here. What should you walk away with from this message? You should walk away with a word of encouragement, verses 12 to 14. Walk away if you're in Christ knowing that your sins are forgiven. Confident and bold in him. Strong because the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one. Walk away with that word of encouragement and as you walk away with that encouragement, walk away with a greater spiritual resolve that says, "My life, my mind, my hands, my feet, my eyes, my ears, are devoted to the glory of Christ. I'm going to aim my affections at him rather than the things of the world that are around me." You can do that, beloved. You can resist the world in the power of the Holy Spirit and walk in a manner that glorifies your Father in heaven. That's the whole reason this was written and that is what the aim of every Christian should be, it can be, and by God's grace, it will be.

Bow with me in prayer as the musicians come.

Our Father, we just want to thank you for the vast clarity of this passage and yet what it sets forth for us. Father, we thank you for the forgiveness of our sins in our Lord Jesus Christ and if someone is here today outside of Christ, pierce them with these things from your word that they might repent and turn to Christ in faith, setting aside the world, coming out of the world, coming out of sin, Father, and embracing Christ and yielding themselves completely to him. Thank you for the forgiveness of our sins, our God. And Father, as we go forward in that encouragement, in that assurance, Father, let it be with a renewed zeal and passion and commitment to resist the world in all of its lusts, in all of its temptations, in all of its boastful pride. Father, help us to learn to hate those things even more so that we would look more fully into the face of our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, giving him all of the affections of our heart and honoring him as we go forth in the days that you have appointed for us on this earth. We love you and we honor you and in the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

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