

Spiritual Victory in a Hostile World

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Well, the occasion of the holiday and knowing in advance that many people were going to be away gives me an opportunity to do something different and something important in the life of our church here this morning. I want to take just a moment to explain what I'm doing here today. We've been teaching through the book of Jonah as many if not most of you know, and we've come to a very critical text, sort of the whole purpose of the book of Jonah in Jonah 3 and there has been a lot of response, a lot of affirmation to the message from within our church and it's such a critical text that I didn't want to preach it while so many people were away, and so I'm going to postpone that until next week to pick that up next week so that everybody that's been with us throughout that series can benefit from one of the crucial texts in the whole book. I didn't want that opportunity to pass by and so I thought, "Well, what am I going to do, then, in light of that?" And you can see, by the way what I was saying earlier how all of these things tie together and just people communicating with their pastor how it impacts the ministry of the church. I knew in advance because people were lovingly communicating with me, I had an opportunity to know, "Oh, something's different here that now I can respond to." And some of you are back for the first time, it's good to see you back with us after being away for a few weeks. I want you to know that.

So I say, "What can I do here?" And I started to realize and started to think about another aspect of the life of our body and just recognizing that we have in the nature of things, we have a lot of new people to our church that have only been with us for a very few number of weeks. You are kind of parachuting in into the life of a church that's been going for several years and it's like trying to walk after somebody that's ahead of you on the track and you're trying to catch up and it's not always the easiest thing to do, and I would want people like you to know that you're an important part of what we do as well, even if you are new, that the needs of your soul are critical to us, of critical importance, of critical concern enough that we would alter the nature of what we're doing that we would pause and slow down and share some things with you that we have heard in the past in order to help you catch up with us, so to speak, and in the process as well, give a reminder to all of us of things that we have been basing the life of our church on. You know, over the life of our church without giving you a comprehensive review of it, if you ever want to see the spreadsheet, I could give it to you but I'm the only person that's really interested in that, I could give you a list of every message that we've preached at Truth Community Church and the books that we've gone through. We started in 1 John, we went on to

Titus, we went to Ephesians, we preached through the Sermon on the Mount, we've done a series in the Psalms and many other books of the Bible, and so all of those things kind of inform our life as a church, there are a lot of different streams flowing into the greater river, if you will, of the life of our church, and what we want to do, what I realize that sometimes these holiday occasions are, perhaps is to give us an occasion to recall, to go back to certain signature messages that mark and that would give us a review of all of those books over the course of time; one message instead of repeating an entire book that would refresh our memory for those of us that have been with us and for those of you that are new, to give you a sense that, "Okay, now I see some of the fundamentals that are driving the thinking and the ministry of this church." So there is broad application for all of this and we want to do that here this morning.

So with that in mind, I invite you to turn to the New Testament letter of 1 John. 1 John, after having preached in Jonah for several weeks, I needed to give you an explanation of why are we going to John. Yes, the book starts with J-o, but it is not Jonah, and so why are we here? You understand a little bit now of why. 1 John was the first complete New Testament book that we preached through when we started our church back in 2012, and early on right at the beginning of that, I preached an overview message called "Spiritual Victory in a Hostile World," and I want to go and return to those themes with the same title here this morning because what you find in the themes of 1 John is something that is very framing for your worldview as a Christian. You see things laid out in clear simple language even in the original Greek text, the original Greek text, the grammar is very simple, it is very straightforward. That's why it's often used in teaching Greek as the first introduction to the New Testament text because it's so clear and plain and straightforward and it's the same way in English as well, and what you find as you read, as you study the book of 1 John, is you find that which gives you a complete worldview in terms of how to understand how you relate to the world and also you find how the Father, the heavenly Father through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ, has provided for us to live in a victorious way, in an overcoming way in the midst of the world that is hostile to our spiritual existence. And what you find as you read in 1 John is an abundance of provision that is more than sufficient for you to live a joyful, holy, spiritual life even though the world in which you are walking is hostile to the very things that you hold most dear and that's what I want you to see here this morning. We can only deal with this once but we'll see it in an overview and hopefully prompt things for your mind that will refresh your heart and encourage you in Christ here this morning.

Now just a word about this letter. This looks to be a circular letter written to different churches. The apostle doesn't mention any churches, doesn't mention any individuals, and so it seems that he's writing something that was intended to have a broad circulation because of the general broad truths that would apply in every situation to those who would read it. It has a particularly broad scope and application and here's what I would remind you of and to keep in mind: John, of course, wrote in a different time 2,000 years ago and he wrote in a different place with a much different culture in many ways, but – and this drives, beloved, this drives the very heartbeat of the ministry of Truth Community Church, everything that we do flows from this foundational principle that I am about to state – the word of God has an enduring application, its truths are timeless,

its truths are absolute, its truths are what is necessary for the life of Christ today. We don't need to adapt to new methodology, we don't need to adapt to the spirit of the age, we just go back to God's word, we preach it and try to understand it in the context in which it was written and we believe that God through the power of his word and through the power of his Spirit gives us that which is necessary for us to grow as a result. We have complete absolute confidence in the authority and the power of God's word to convert the lost and to strengthen and build up the saints and that's why we do what we do. It's very simple but it is very profound because of the profound nature of God's word. Its enduring truth gives us what we need even 2,000 years later.

Now with that said, let me just state something really basic here by way of introduction. If you're a Christian and you've experienced opposition from your family, opposition in the workplace or simply just read opposition in literature and in the spirit of the age, you understand that there is something, maybe you haven't thought about it, especially if you're a new Christian it hasn't fully dawned on you just yet, but you start to grow in the realization that, "I'm trying to follow Christ in an environment that is hostile to that." We live in a hostile world and the Apostle John wrote this letter specifically to help Christians find spiritual success, live in the midst of spiritual victory despite that great hostility in the environment in which they live. And to grow spiritually, beloved, I love seeing you take notes and writing furiously as I talk a mile a minute, to grow spiritually, beloved, you need to understand something very fundamental, something just so completely basic, you need to understand your environment. You need to understand the environment in which you live, the world in which you walk because the world in which you walk, the environment in which we live, is opposed to your joy in Christ. It actively will undermine your confidence in Christ if given the opportunity to do so. And beloved, you know, I don't need to say this which is something that I always say and then I go ahead and say what I say I don't need to say, but the longer you go, the older you get, the more Christian experience you have, you start to realize that adversity and sometimes confusion and often sorrow are woven into the fabric of our lives in this world and that's just reality, and I think it is an insult for churches to pretend otherwise. I think it is a demonic lie and I think it is a complete disservice to people who look to churches for spiritual guidance to tell them that they can avoid all the problems of life and they can know nothing but health and prosperity as they go through life. That's just not true. We live in a fallen world and we are saved for a world to come. This is not our best life now, our best life is going to be when we are in heaven with Jesus around his throne, but that's yet to come. We're not there yet. We have a foretaste now, praise God for that, but in the meantime we are in the midst of a world system and in the midst of an environment that would undermine everything about our Christian life. Here's the thing, that's one fundamental thing to realize, we're in a hostile environment and that could be a little bit depressing and discouraging but it's not because in salvation God has made provision for our spiritual victory and he has given us the spiritual resources that we need to thrive, to prosper, to live with joy and holiness in a complete assurance of salvation that will ultimately be given to us. God has given us all that we need in order to prosper spiritually like that even though there are such supernatural forces at work against us.

So that's what we want to take a look at here in just such an overview survey fashion here this morning. Let's break it down into two parts this morning and, first of all, let's address the problem of this world. If you're taking notes, that's the first heading here: the problem of this world, and it's really a threefold problem as John lays it out for us, a threefold problem that comes as living as a Christian in this world. First of all, the first aspect of the problem of this world is, 1: the world hates us. The world hates us. I've heard people in the distant past who have a wrong perspective about the nature of living for Christ in this world and I've heard people say, "You know, if we could just be friendly and be cheerful around people, then everyone would like us as Christians." That's not true. That's fundamentally false. That's a contradiction of the word of God. Eventually there is going to be a conflict that comes from a singular commitment to Christ as Lord, that is going to conflict with the world that crucified Christ, that did not want him to reign over them. That conflict is unavoidable, beloved. It is important for us to understand that at root there is a fundamental hostility from the world against the people of Christ; the Bible tells us to expect opposition and John tells us that plainly in his letter that we know as 1 John. So I just want to point out a couple of things, a few verses here to help you see this theme because it will inform your worldview as you grow in Christ, especially those of you that are newer in Christ that have been despised now by your friends. You have been pushed away perhaps even by family. You say, "I just want to live for Christ. I love Christ. Why this hostility? Why this mocking?" Well, it helps to understand that this is exactly what we are to expect.

Look at chapter 3, verse 1 of 1 John. We'll come back to this for another point later, but in 1 John 3:1 he says,

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. [Then look at what he says] For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

The world does not understand us. The world does not identify with us. The world does not share our loves and affections for Christ because they don't know him and they can't understand people who do. They can't understand why someone would give their life for Christ. They can't understand why someone would leave behind a life of sin in order to follow after Christ and to identify with his people. That is total nonsense to them. They don't know that. They don't understand it. They can't see it. For us, we have to understand that that's the environment in which we live; that as we go out in the secular marketplace as we deal with friends in the neighborhood that are not Christians, we understand that we are an enigma that they don't get and when people don't understand something, when they don't understand someone, hostility often flows as a result of that.

Look at chapter 3, verse 13, and John tells us in the plainest of language he says,

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

Don't be surprised if hatred and vitriol come your way as you publicly identify, openly identify yourself as a disciple of Christ. Don't be surprised by that because the world

hates it. The world hates him and he says plainly, "Don't be surprised if the world hates you." So we recognize, "Okay, I'm going to face hostility as a Christian. I can account for that now in my worldview and not be surprised when it comes or not think that there is necessarily something wrong with me that I've necessarily done something wrong to that person who reacts badly against me." No, there are fundamental, invisible, unseen forces at work and your testimony for Christ brings that all out to the surface. Paul said elsewhere, I believe in 2 Corinthians 4 that to Christians, I'm paraphrasing here, to Christians we're an aroma of life to life. We find sympathy and we find identification with one another when we meet with fellow Christians but, Paul says, to those who are not in Christ, we are an aroma of death. We are a testimony that something is wrong in their lives, that there is a force at work against them, against their sin, against their hostility to Christ, and we are living reminders of that to them. Well beloved, don't be surprised when you bring an aroma, a stench of death to their nostrils that they try to push away that which produces it which would be you, which would be me, which would be Christ, which would be his word. So we understand that the world hates us.

Look at chapter 5, verse 19, and this explains the spiritual background of it in a way that would echo what's said in greater length in Ephesians 6. Chapter 5, verse 19,

19 We know that we are of God, and that [by contrast] the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

You see, we belong to a spiritual realm under the headship, the Lordship of Christ. The world is under the power of Satan, it's under the power of his host of demons, and the demonic philosophies that inform the way the world thinks. This is a fundamental clash of worldviews, beloved, and part of the way that that surfaces in your Christian experience is that there is conflict from the world that comes your way sometimes even from the people that you are closest to. So John tells us, "Don't be surprised when this happens. It's fundamental to the nature of living in the world, as part of the problem of this world, is that the world hates us."

Now, let's step back and find some comfort even in the midst of that. Let's remember something really important. Even in our Scripture reading from Luke 20 earlier, don't you find as you read the Gospel accounts, wasn't Christ himself opposed during his life and ministry in the world? I mean, they crucified him. They called for his death and they tried to trick him and they opposed him at every turn and expressed hostility to his teaching and accused him of being the illegitimate son of a fornicating union, among other things. Christ faced opponents to him, aggressively lying about him, hostile, physically hostile to him, wanting to kill him. Well beloved, Jesus said a slave, which is what we are, we are slaves of Christ if we belong to him, if he is our Lord we are his slave, Jesus said in John 15:20, "A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me," Jesus said, "they will also persecute you." You're on the receiving end of a greater hostility against your Master, it's just the overflow, the hatred that is directed to Christ splashes over on us as his disciples. Understand that as you walk through this life and you start to develop a maturity of perspective that helps you walk through that without losing your focus, without being disheartened.

It wasn't just Christ, all of the apostles save one were martyred, church history tells us, and the one that wasn't was exiled to a remote island. In the early church, you can read about this, we've taught on this in the past, there were 10 waves of persecution that came upon the followers of Christ in the first three centuries before Constantine, the Roman Emperor, put an end to it. Christians were on the receiving end of a hostile government that authorized their torture and their murder. This is our inheritance. This is what we come from. This is the soil in which the true church grew was in the midst of the world's hostility. Jesus told us later.

So what do we think when this hostility comes, when we are rejected for the sake of Christ? What do we think about that? Does it discourage us? Does it weigh us down? Do we complain that it is unfair? Do we litigate? Do we sue the people who do us wrong for the name of Christ? Well, in Matthew 5:11 Jesus said, here's your fundamental starting point when that happens, in Matthew 5:11 Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me." It says, "Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets before you." You see, the hostility of the world, the hostility of unbelievers against you is actually something to find great comfort in because it shows, it marks you out as belonging to a different realm and, beloved, have it clear in your mind, have it clear in your thinking that it is far better to endure rejection with Christ than belong to the world that rejects him. Better to be loved by Christ and belong to him than to belong to the world that is passing away and is headed for eternal judgment in hell.

So as you understand that this hostility from the enemies of Christ toward us marks us out as belonging to Christ then, yes, you can rejoice in the midst of it even though it is painful to find yourself separated from the people that used to be your closest friends, used to be your closest in family, used to be on the objects of your deepest affection. And those of you that perhaps are in marriage where your spouse is not sympathetic, I know that that's real even within our body, perhaps you're even married to a spouse that's not a Christian or a spouse that just doesn't share your enthusiasm for spiritual things, come back to this soil and say Christ accounted, before Christ saved me, before Christ saved me he had already accounted for all of that and he made provision in advance so that you could flourish spiritually even in the midst of the difficulty, and as you do that, as you look to Christ in the midst of it, you can love him all the more. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

So what do we take away from this? What's the problem with this world? The world hates us and we expect hostility even from those that are close to us, but beloved, beloved, beloved, you can still flourish in the midst of that. That does not condemn you to an unproductive discouraged spiritual life. Not at all. Not at all as we'll see as we continue on.

Let's see a second aspect of the problem with this world. We're talking about three aspects and we said the first part is that the world hates us and so we realize we're in a hostile environment, but there's a second aspect that we'll just touch on briefly. Secondly

it's this, it's that the world deceives us. The world deceives us. The Apostle John says in multiple places in this letter, he addresses the problem of false teachers. False teachers. The world is filled with false teachers who are either outside the church teaching false philosophies or that sometimes try to infiltrate the church to lead the brethren away. This is an ongoing problem that there are men and there are women trying to mislead you and to distract you from the simplicity and the purity of devotion to Christ. This is a real problem. This is a real threat and let's see where John makes that plain to us in 1 John 2, if you would look at verse 26 with me. He says,

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

He says, "I understand that there are teachers that are trying to deceive you and lead you away." In John's day, they were denying the true nature of Christ. In our day, there's that and a proliferation of many other things as well. All I want you to see today is that there are forces at work working through teachers, self-appointed teachers where deception is at work. This is a problem of living in the world. Beloved, it means this, it means this and I know that it's hard sometimes as a new Christian, it's hard sometimes as you are falling perhaps under the teaching of God's word for the first time to realize that you can't believe everything that you hear, and that you can't just naturally assume that someone is telling you the truth even though they've got a Bible and they're pointing to an occasional verse when they do. Or other matters, I guess, that you could say, there is a spirit of deception at work and John was addressing it in the first century and nothing has changed since then. So this is part of living in the midst of a hostile world that there are forces at work trying to create deception.

Look at chapter 3, verse 7 with me. Chapter 3, verse 7, and notice the tender, affectionate, sympathetic way that John writes to his readers. John was about 90 years old when he wrote this and so when you're 90 years old or you're approaching 90 years old, you get to call people by pretty much whatever terms you want because everybody is younger than you at that point, just about, and in verse 7 he says little children. It's an affectionate term. My dear little ones.

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you;

Do you see it there? Little children, my dear ones, make sure no one deceives you. Why do they need that exhortation except that there are people who are trying to do just that? There are people, he says, that are trying to deceive you. Guard against that. Be aware of what's going on so that you can avoid that kind of deception.

In chapter 4, verse 1, if you'll turn there for just a moment, chapter 4, verse 1, he says the same thing in a different way. 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.

It's the nature of false prophets to try to present themselves as those who are true. It's the nature of a wolf to dress up in the wool of a sheep and John says, he says this is one of the problems of living in the world, there is deception that is at work in the midst of it and he says, "My little ones, my beloved ones, be on guard against that deception."

Now, in one sense and I feel this way as I watch the different trends that go on in the broader realm of Christianity, it just gets so tiresome to see all of the different ways that the truth is assaulted, doesn't it? It gets so tiresome to see people talking about everything but the cross of Christ; elevating anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ; doing anything but upholding the authority of Scripture, instead undermining it and causing people, trying to cause people to doubt the authority and the purity of the word of God that he has given to us. It gets tiresome. I get tired of it. I deal with that as my life, you know? And I realize that it gets tiresome for you as well, perhaps. What I want you to see is that even if it seems a little wearying at time to step back, this is where these things are so helpful to say, "Ah yes, but this is the nature of the world in which we live. I'm not alone here. Christ said that he would be with us always, even to the end of the age. I have an infallible word of God to guide me in the truth. I have the Spirit of God dwelling within me." So you realize that there is this force of deception at work and you realize that that's just part of the territory that we live in. When you know that you're walking through a minefield, you know to look out for them so that you can avoid them and they won't blow you up, for those of you with a military background, which I don't have.

In this letter in 1 John, if you read through it a time or two, you'll notice that he calls these false teachers liars and deceivers and children of the devil, among other choice terms that he addresses them with, all of that to just help us realize that our spiritual battle is real, that there is an active force of deception empowered by the influence of the evil one who is over all of the world. This is reality. This is the environment in which we live. There is human hostility toward us, there is spiritual deception at work in the world in which we live and move, in one sense, the world in which we live and move and have our being. So that's a problem. That makes Christianity a call to battle. It's a call to soldiers who want to be courageous in the fight, not for the timid, not for those that are afraid. The spiritual battle is real and we must rely on our Captain. We must rely on our spiritual five-star General to lead us through, the person of Christ, and we look to Christ and we accept the fact that this is what he has appointed us for a time.

So there's the hostility, there's the deception, third and final aspect that we'll talk about here this morning is this: it's that the world tempts us. The world tempts us. The world hates us, the world deceives us, the world tempts us. When I say it deceives us, it tries to deceive us. The world tempts us. You know, if it was just the hostility and the deception, that would be more than enough to cause us to perhaps shrink back in concern, but there's a third aspect of it and it's that the world tempts us and there is not a one of us in here that won't somehow be able to identify and agree with the way that the world tempts us in our inner man.

Look at 1 John 2, beginning in verse 15 where it says,

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.

Why does John have to command us, "Don't love this world," except that we are tempted to do so? We're tempted by its sensualities, we are tempted by the spirit of the age, we are tempted by its philosophies that would flatter us with our self-worth and things of that kind of nature. This world appeals to our sinful desires. It is filled with arrogance and tries to make us of like spirit. One of the things that grieves me as I watch Christians interacting sometimes with the world, sometimes with each other on social media, it saddens me, it grieves me, it provokes me, is to see Christians arguing in the same kind of arrogant spirit that marks the spirit of the world and, brethren, these things ought not to be. The Apostle Paul said to correct those who were in opposition with the Spirit of gentleness if perhaps God would grant them repentance that leads to life, 2 Timothy 2.

So it's not simply the sensuality of the world but it's the appeal to pride, it's the appeal to greed, it's the appeal to boastful pride and to desiring more than God has given you with the lust of the eyes and on and on it goes. You see, beloved, why is that a problem with this world for us is that those enticements would draw us away from the pursuit of holiness. Those enticements if we pursued them would sully our testimony with sin, would pollute our nature, would pollute our lives with sinful matters, the very things which Christ died to deliver us from. And for some, the world just brings you into a spirit of apathy and indifference as if these things don't matter and aren't worth living for, aren't worth stepping forward and asserting yourself for, and leading your friends and leading your families and just shrinking back into a spirit of passivity in the face of it all as part of the world environment. That's not from Christ. That's not from the Holy Spirit that people fall into that. So we realize just how pervasive and how many places there are for us to trip and fall in the midst of this world. Its hatred could discourage us and make us downcast. The deception could lead us away to untruth. When God specifically commands that we are to worship him in spirit and truth, we can't offer God true worship when our minds are driven by falsehood and the temptations that would lead us away from holiness. Here's what I want you to see, beloved, just in that quick overview, this world is filled with real threats to your spiritual well-being. Every one of those things could be a spiritual missile on your heart to explode and drive you into discouragement, despair or sin. These threats are real, they are often subtle, and we know by sad experience, don't they, that sometimes they are successful in bringing us down.

How can we overcome them when it is so pervasive that we are walking through, we're like a mammal trying to live in the middle of the ocean, we are meant for dry land but here we are, we find ourselves in the middle of an ocean. We're not fish but we're in an environment that calls us to be fish, so to speak, how can we overcome that when it seems like so much is stacked against us spiritually? Ah, now let's get to the good stuff, shall we? Now that we've laid out the problem, let's go to the solution. Now that we've

seen what the world has arrayed against us, let's look at what our Father has done for us. Point 2, let's look at the provision of the Father. The provision of the Father. That's point 2 and we're going to approach this in a threefold parallel way to what we said before and I'm delighted to be able to share these things with you this morning.

As great as the hostility of the world is, as great as the problem in the world is, beloved, hey, mark this down, plan on underlining this in your notes, put a big star by it, those of you that are inclined in a feminine way, put a couple of little hearts by what I'm about to say. I really love this part. That's fine. Those of you that are more masculine and you work construction, you put a sword, draw a sword but it but get this. The fundamental point that we will unpack from John's letter: despite everything that the world has arrayed against us, God has provided for you everything that you need to overcome it all. You already have as a Christian, it has already been given to you everything that is necessary to defeat the world, to be victorious over the world at every point of its opposition. No question about it, and it is the birthright of every Christian to know and to live in the light of these things. It is the prerogative of every true born-again man or woman, boy or girl. It is their prerogative to go to these things, to go to Christ and find the provision that he has supplied. Not through a human mediator, through Christ himself, through the word that he has given. You have everything you need in Christ to overcome all of those massive obstacles that the world presents against your spiritual well-being and let's unpack that real quickly here.

First of all, we saw that the world hates us, right? Nobody likes to be hated, at least most of us don't. The world hates us. Do you know what? That's okay. That's okay. Do you know why that's okay? It's okay because, here's your first subpoint: our God loves us. Our God loves us. Go back to 1 John 3:1. I promised you we'd come back here. 1 John 3:1, he says,

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

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.

And how do we know he loves us? What is it that settles his love in our hearts and makes that a settled aspect of our spiritual experience? Verse 9,

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. 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.

Verse 19,

19 We love, because He first loved us.

Do you see it, beloved? Do you see it? This world is temporary and it is passing away. The God who reigns over the universe, the God who will judge the world, who will judge everyone who has ever lived, the God who is supreme, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, sovereign over all, that God has bestowed his love upon you and he did it in a way that shows the depth and the purity, the sincerity, the height and breadth and width of that love when God himself took on the form of a man and our Lord Jesus went to the cross to pay the debt of our sins to turn away the wrath of God, that's what propitiation means. All of the rightful judgment that God had rightly arrayed against you, Christ intervened so that you could be excused from it all, clothed in his righteousness and brought into, as 1 John 3:1 says, his family. His family. You find that your family rejects you, have your friends despised you and forsaken you, is life difficult within the four walls of your own home? My Christian friend, my Christian brother, my Christian sister, is it lonely and isolating for you to follow Christ? Oh, beloved, don't you see, don't you see the sweetness of belonging to a God like that, a holy God who set his love upon you? There is an ocean of blessing for you in which to swim. There is an ocean of encouragement, an inexhaustible source of wonder and glory to satisfy the deepest longings of your soul. Yes, my spouse may be hostile to me, yes, I may be alone, yes, my friends may have all walked away because of my testimony to Christ, because of my love and devotion to him, but do you know what? I say this reverently and I say it in sympathy to those of you that are experiencing that and the loneliness that that brings but hear me carefully in what I'm about to say: let them go as long as I have Jesus. Let them go as long as I have Christ because in Christ I have the greatest love of them all. In Christ I am loved by the one who ultimately and finally is the only one who matters and he has loved me and set his love on me. He loved my soul enough to go to Calvary to rescue and redeem it from its sin. I have in Christ all that I need to satisfy all of the longings that I have to be loved, to be cared for and to be accepted. That's what Christ is to us as believers and when you have the greatest love, you can start to accept and come to grips with the fact that perhaps you don't have the lesser loves on a human level that you might prefer because this love is greater than all. This love is a divine love. This love is an eternal love and the lonely human heart that is in Christ can go to his Father through the Lord Jesus Christ and find a complete acceptance, a complete love, a perfect love that will never go away. Heaven and earth will pass away, Jesus said, my words won't pass away. If he has called you his, if he has called you beloved, you're his forever. That can't change. There is your source of joy. This is the provision that overcomes the hatred of the world. This is the love that compensates for all of the sorrow and rejection of your past. This is the love that makes up for human loss and death. This is the love that quenches the thirst of the Christian soul.

I ask you, beloved, isn't that wonderful? Isn't that precious? Isn't that good news? That's what our Father has done for us. He loves us and he loved us in Christ. When adversity comes, when sorrows weigh down your heart, and I've been there, especially in the past, "God, how is this your love?" Beloved, you run to the cross of Christ. You look at that loving Savior who left his glory above to come to earth to do exactly that for exactly you,

to give a sacrifice that is perfectly measured to all of your sins, to wipe them away so that God would never hold them against you again as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us. When you're struggling with feeling loved, you go to the cross and you see the issue of love settled for your soul for all time. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us in Christ.

So what about false teachers? What about this deception that the world brings to us? Do you know what? God has provided for that need as well because God gives us discernment. God gives us discernment. Yeah, the false teachers try to deceive us but God has made provision for that. First of all, look at 1 John 2:27. In a reference to the Holy Spirit, John says this,

27 ... the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Now there's a lot wrapped up in that verse and John is not saying that we have no need for human Bible teachers, he's not saying that, he's not saying every person can just go off by themselves and live the Christian life. If we didn't need teachers, don't you see that John wouldn't have needed to write this letter himself? So that's not what that means. What he's saying is that you have the Holy Spirit within you to give you illumination, to illuminate your mind to help you with understanding as you pursue truth. When he says that you have no need for anyone to teach you, what he's saying is you don't need someone to come to you and offer to you things outside of Scripture, to offer you promises of things that go beyond what God has already provided as if that is something that you needed in order to really live a successful Christian life. That's what he's saying. The main point for now for what we want to see is that God has put his Holy Spirit within us to help us. He abides in us. We have a supernatural resident within our soul to help us with discernment, with understanding to overcome the deception that is all about us.

Not only that, John points out the fact that God has given his word to us. 1 John 4:6, look at this.

6 We are from God;

When he says "we" he's referring to the apostles, the apostolic circle. If you want to explore that more, go back to the 1 John four messages that are archived on our website. For now, "We are from God," the apostles,

he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

What he is saying here is that we, the apostolic circle, we are from God and God has revealed his truth for the church in this New Testament era through us and he says the ones who are truly from God, they listen to us, they heed us, they believe us, they don't

cast us aside, they don't push us aside to promote other philosophies and teachings or other revelations.

This is part of the discernment that God has given, is that he has given us discernment by pointing us to his word and John points out, I'll just say this in a summary form for the sake of time, in addition to that source of truth in his word and in the Spirit, he has also given us the ability to detect false teachers and shown us how to detect them. You can know them by their lack of morality, the sinful lives that they live. You can know them by their fruits. You can know them in a social way by their lack of love for the brethren, for the lack of love of the people of Christ. And you can know them in doctrinal ways when they deny Christ or try to distort the doctrine of Christ, you can say, "False teacher. I know he may be smooth, I can't necessarily refute him in my own strength," the new Christian might say, but when you see a sinful man, when you see a man distorting the doctrine of Christ, when you see a man trying to introduce new revelation to the people of God, when you see him in a lack of love interacting among the body, you can say, "That's a false teacher. I can walk away from him." God's given us what's necessary for discernment so that we can avoid those deceivers. Jesus said in Matthew 7, "Beware of the false prophets." How did he say we'd know them? "You'll know them by their fruit." Their fruit.

So God has given us what we need for discernment as well, to counteract the deception that the world brings and finally, we said that the problem of the world was a problem of hatred, a problem of deception, and a problem of temptation, well beloved, let's cast this third and final aspect along these lines, that God gives the victory. God gives the victory. The provision of the Father is that he has already given us what is necessary for our spiritual victory and just three key verses from the book of 1 John. I know we've covered a lot of territory today. That's all right. 1 John 1:4, God gives us joy. 1 John 1:4,

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

Can the world cast us down, discourage us with all of the adversity that comes? Yeah, but do you know what? We find in Scripture in the written word of God it says the things that are necessary to make our joy complete. The adversity of the world is not the final story. It doesn't have the final say in the nature of your spiritual life when you go to God's word.

Secondly, the problem of temptation provided for in the atoning work of Christ, chapter 2, verse 1, he says,

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

Again, you see the written word of God, how it promotes holiness in your life in addition to joy. This is why we preach the word. This is why people change under the sound of the consistent preaching of the word of God, it's because the word has that sanctifying impact on them. When the word of God is received within the context of a believing body of believers, there will be spiritual change because that is the power of the word of God in

the life of his people. Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth." What? "Thy word is," what? Say it. "Truth. Sanctify them in the truth." Why do we preach the word of God at Truth Community Church? Because it gives joy. Because it sanctifies people who receive it with a believing receptive heart. John said, "We write these things." They are meant to be read. They are meant to be studied. He says in chapter 2, verse 1, "I'm writing these things," with an ultimate goal for Christians just like you, my brother and sister in Christ, for Christians just like you to have a sense of confidence about where you stand with God, a sense of confidence that it is truly well with your soul.

Look at verse 13 of chapter 5, 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.

Assurance. Joy. Holiness. Giving victory over the temptation that this world brings.

So what does all of this mean and what are the implications of this for your salvation, my Christian friends? It means that you can flourish even in the midst of a hostile environment, even in the midst of isolation, even in the midst of discouragement, even in the midst of adversity of all the different forms that it brings. You can flourish with joy, with holiness and assurance even as the gale force winds of this world blow against your life. That is the provision, the completeness, the sufficiency of the provision that Christ made for your salvation when he offered up his life on the cross; when the Spirit drew you to Christ, when you put your faith in him and the Spirit indwelt you, every one of you that are in Christ, not waiting for a second blessing where he might come later if you knock hard enough on the door. No, it's not like that. Jesus Christ has brought and given to us a complete salvation that enables you to have spiritual victory over a hostile world.

So in light of these things, beloved, be strong. Be courageous. Be comforted. Be encouraged. If need be, let the world pass away. Let goods and kindred go. This mortal life I'll sow. The body they may kill. God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever and ever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray together.

My friend, have you been saved from this evil world? Have you seen the glory of Christ and fled to him in repentance and faith for the salvation of your soul? The Bible says there is salvation in no one else. If you know that you are outside of Christ, ask God to have mercy on you and to lead you to him that you might be saved. Father, for the rest of us, thank you for saving us from this world. Thank you for your love, the discernment you give, and for the victory that we have in Christ. Oh, thank you for those blessed beams of wood upon which he died. Nay more, Father, thank you for the one who willingly offered his life on that tree, that all of these blessings of which we have spoken today would be poured into our lives as a magnanimous gift from a loving and gracious Father. Help each of us today to live in light of the joy, the holiness and the assurance that Christ purchased for us and that is promised to us in your inerrant word. Father, we pray these

things and ask for them with an expectant spirit that you will respond to the prayers of your children in all these things, and with that humble spirit, we commit ourselves to thee in Jesus' name. Amen.

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