

# TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

## **Toward Assurance and Holiness**

1 John 2:12-17

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Now we are going to continue our worship by turning to God's word. What better way to worship than to allow God speak to us through His holy, inerrant, inspired word. It is really a great privilege to have the very word of God in our hands in our own language to be able to read and see what He would say to us.

This morning we are going back to the book of 1 John where we were at last week. Last time we looked at chapter 2, verses 3-11 where John said:

*By this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments. 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.*

*The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.*

Those themes of obedience and love being marks of a true believer, the absence of those traits in a life indicating someone who is not a Christian no matter what else they may say to the contrary.

We asked in the context of that message five questions to help you assess whether your salvation is real, whether you are a true believer or whether you are self-deceived, whether you are simply an imposter or whether you truly belong to the kingdom of heaven. If you missed that message, I would encourage you to get the CD or download it from our web site at "[gracelifepulpit.com](http://gracelifepulpit.com)" Because I think it would be a real encouragement to you if you have the message.

So now we are going to move in to verses 12 and some of the verses that follow here. So, turn to 1 John, chapter 2 if you haven't already.

I am very eager to explain of scripture in the overall context in which it appears. We are going to kind of speed up through 1 John in some of these future messages in order to take a bigger picture view rather than examining everything under the microscope. And we are going to get the flow of thought and see what it is, sometimes passing over an occasional detail for the sake of the big picture.

By the time we come to chapter 2:12, the apostle John has spoken very strongly against false teachers and he has labeled them with labels that are almost sound scorching to the modern ear. I want you to see this, no less than six times he said very strong words that would expose these false teachers and leave no doubt in anyone's mind that they were truly false prophets who were leading people to hell with their teaching. And by exposing them, protecting the true Christians so that they would know not to follow them—that's the sense in which he is trying to communicate here. And I want you to see this because it leads up to the reason that he speaks as he does in chapter 2:12.

Chapter 1:6: Look at these words that he uses to describe the false teachers. 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. (Verse 8) If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. (Verse 9) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

Lies, lies, lies, he says, deceivers. Look at chapter 2:4 where he uses this term again:

*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.*

*(Chapter 2: 9) The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.*

*(Chapter 2:11) ...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.*

He is like a blind man, looking for a black cat in a dark room that is not there—he has no idea where he is going. He is stumbling in the darkness and anyone who follows him is stumbling in the darkness as well. These men are liars and deceivers and deny the truth of the word of God with their false teaching that we have examined in the past. Those are strong, demanding words that he has set forth in a very short period of time in the opening of his letter.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of a soft, tender-hearted believer who is receiving this letter, as there were people like that who received the letter as you are going to see. Soft, tender-hearted people who were prone to self-examination, prone to question themselves, not to assert themselves and to examine themselves to make sure that they were walking close with God like so many of you. How do those kinds of words about liars and deceivers and so forth hit them? If they thought that John was addressing them with those demanding, scorching words, it was going to be devastating to them. They were going to think that John was talking about them because they were so tender and receptive to the word of God, they would say that the apostle speaking these words, he must be speaking to me.

Well, as we move in to chapter 2:12, the apostle John does not want those true believers to misinterpret his strong language. He does not want them to think that he is questioning their

salvation. There are two groups that he is addressing in this letter, he is addressing those false teachers who are promulgating their false doctrine and leading people in to destruction and then they are true believers who are part of his apostolic flock that he is looking to protect and encourage, to build them up so that they might achieve spiritual victory in a hostile world—two separate groups that are involved here. And as we go to verse 12 of chapter 2, you are going to see in general (and I'll explain this in greater detail) John is calling a time-out as it were in the flow of the thought of his letter to address these true believers, to give them a word of encouragement, a word of clarification about what his intent is as he writes and a word of exhortation to them that is instructive to us here today as well—and so that's the idea. He has been speaking so strongly against false teachers, and yet he realizes that there are true believers that are going to read this as well. And now he steps back and gives a word of pastoral assurance and encouragement to these believers as I trust would be an encouragement to you as well.

This morning's message is structured around two points, two words you could say that John gives to his readers that by extension apply to us as well:

### **1. He Gives Them a Word of Encouragement**

Look at chapter 2:12—I'll read through verse 14 at this point:

*I am writing to you little children because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 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. 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.*

It is very clear from reading those three verses that he now has in mind that he is addressing true believers whose salvation he is eager to affirm. And so not everything about this letter is designed to question the salvation of every one who ever reads it. He is writing now to encourage these true believers who are part of the mix of people who will receive the letter and he wants them to know that he believes in their salvation. He believes that they truly belong to the living God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I have to tell you that as I preach to you and to a room of this size, that is the way that I feel about the vast majority of you. You manifest the reality of true salvation in the way that you live in your day to day lives, you are a blessing to my heart. And that is the kind of spirit that John has as he writes to these people that he loves and wants to encourage.

Now, look at this, he says in verse 12: "I am writing to you little children..." It is a term that he uses frequently to address the totality of everyone that he regards as a true believer here. He uses this term repeatedly to address all of these readers collectively. Look at chapter 2:1, I want you to see this, that this is the manner of address that he uses as I also refer to you as beloved collectively, he refers to his readers collectively as little children. He says in chapter 2:1:

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

We saw it in verse 12 just a moment ago:

*I am writing to you because your sins have been forgiven you.*

*(Verse 28) Now little children, abide in Him so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*

It is the term of affection, it is the term that inherent in it is a note of authority as a parent speaks to a child, so the apostle is speaking to those under his care, but it is just dripping with compassion and affection and a sense of paternal love that he has for his readers. Elsewhere he refers to them as beloved and addresses them by other terms of affection. Look at chapter 3:7, I want you to see that this is throughout the letter. Chapter 3:7:

*Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous.*

*(Chapter 3:18) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

*(Chapter 4:4) You are from God little children and have overcome them because greater is He who is in you that is he who is in the world.*

And he ends the letter with that phrase, chapter 5:21:

*Little children, guard yourselves from idols.*

Seven times he uses that phrase “little children” to communicate love and to communicate instruction that he intends all of them to receive to their hearts and to apply to their lives, words that motivate them to holiness, away from idols toward obedience and righteousness, toward loving one another--this is something that he intends for the entire audience of his letter to take in to account. In using this term of affection (this is what I really want you to see) opening with that term of affection to all of his readers, he assures them that he regards them as true Christians. Based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ which he had alluded to in verse 7 of chapter 1: “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” God had erased their guilt, the guilt of their sin, God had erased that from their account, put the guilt on Christ as it were and took the righteousness of Christ and imputed it to their account.

And knowing that that was true of them, that they had received Christ by faith, he could assure them and affirm them that yes, your sins are forgiven. What he is saying is when I call these false teachers out, when I call them liars and deceivers and men who walk in darkness, understand that I am talking about them and not addressing you in the same way—that’s the idea. Because these readers that he calls little children were reconciled to God and they were at peace with Him objectively. God no longer was pursuing them as an enemy that was under

His wrath; God had received them in to His family and had accepted them based on the righteousness and the shed blood of Christ—and that’s true of you too, God has accepted you. If you turn from sin and receive Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, understand that God no longer deals with you according to your sins. If you have trusted Christ, God is no longer pursuing you in hot anger because you have violated His law. The violation, the penalty of your sins has already paid in full at the cross of Calvary and therefore you are at peace with Him. Your sins are forgiven just like what John says here, look at verse 12 again:

*I am writing to you little children because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.*

Your sins are forgiven. God no longer deals with you according to your transgressions, but instead, oh true Christian, hear these words of the Balm of Gilead here this morning. Instead of dealing with you according to your sins, God deals with you, God’s attitude towards you, God’s disposition towards you as a believer in Christ is one of fatherly, faithful love that is irreversible and will most certainly receive you in to heaven when you die.

Look at Psalm 103, beginning in verse 1 speaks of the response of the believing heart to these truths and David opens up by saying:

*Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget none of His benefits, who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with loving kindness and compassion, who satisfies your years with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.*

He calls his soul to account and says remember the manifold spiritual blessings that come from the forgiving hand of God, and in recognition of those things, return thanks to Him, give blessing and honor to His holy name for the wonderful way with which He has dealt with you. He hasn’t dealt with you according to your sins, He hasn’t punished you as your iniquities deserve. And if you are a believer in Christ here this morning, your heart ought to just be racing to Him and say “Oh God, that’s so true, thank you. Because if the truth were known about the depth of my iniquity, the reality of punishment that should have come down on mine is too awful to think about—Lord I know that’s true. And to think that Christ interceded on my behalf, took the punishment of my sins and now my sins are forgiven and you deal with me and bless me according to your love, oh my soul, bless the name of the living God.” Bless the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who has been so good to you.

Look at Psalm 103:10, David says:

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving kindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

He uses a picture to indicate that as far as the east is from the west, that is how much God has separated your sins from you in His mind so that He will never deal with you according to your sins as a true believer. Verse 13:

*Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.*

God can treat you that way dear Christian because at His initiative not yours, at God's initiative, the demands of justice were satisfied when Christ stood as your substitute at the cross. The death and resurrection of Christ secured your eternal forgiveness—eternal forgiveness, not conditional forgiveness as though you could lose this and sin your way out of it once you were truly saved—eternal forgiveness for everyone who believes in Him—eternal forgiveness for every one who believes in Him.

Now, those spiritual realities of forgiveness, of divine pardon, of divine blessing being extended to people who otherwise deserve divine judgment, those are spiritual themes, the doctrinal themes that are animating the apostle John as he writes in 1 John 2:12-14, turn back there with me now if you haven't done so already. By reminding these dear Christians of God's forgiveness and by putting his own stamp of approval on their faith, writing as an inspired apostle, and saying I know that this is true of you, he is writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he is writing words of absolute truth, he is writing the word of God, God Himself is communicating to these readers, "Your sins are forgiven for His name's sake." This is the divine testimony to the reality of their salvation. And by emphasizing that now, John intends to feed them their spiritual confidence and strengthen them against the false teachers who would try to shake them away from their place of confidence in Christ—that's the flow of thought that is going on here.

*I am writing to you little children because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.*

Now look at verses 13 and 14 with me again:

*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.*

And he says is again:

*I have written to you fathers because you know Him who has been from the beginning. ...young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.*

And so he addresses these fathers, those older men who have a permanent knowledge and experience with God, their life testimony has been proven through the trials of life and through the vicissitudes of spiritual life that come and go. Their faith was a tested and proven reality by

experience and he affirms them in that. He addresses the young men who are victors, he calls them “you have overcome the evil one” at the end of verse 14. These men are established in truth, they are triumphant over Satan, they are established in doctrine.

But here is what I want you to see and contemplate as we look at this passage. He addresses these people twice—fathers, in verse 13:

*I am writing to you fathers because you know Him who has been from the beginning.*

And then he says virtually the same thing in verse 14:

*I have written to you fathers because you know Him who has been from the beginning.*

Middle of verse 13:

*I am writing to you young men because you have overcome the evil one.*

End of verse 14:

*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.*

The thing with the children: “Your sins are forgiven.” “You know the Father.” He is just repeating these things over and over again. Why is he saying these things repeatedly? This is very important for you to understand as you go through this book and for the sake of your own stability in Christ. Twice he tells 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 addresses children with an assurance of forgiveness and that they know the Father. Why the repetition? Get this, he is repeating himself because he is making a point of emphasis. It is very important for his readers to get what he is saying at this juncture in the letter.

Now, there are different ways that today we can provide emphasis as we are writing or saying something. I can raise my voice (as I sometimes do) to make emphasis. I could speak more softly to draw your attention and with that emphasize with the softness of voice. If you were writing something in text, you could use italics or bold font or bigger print, all caps to emphasize what you are saying, you could use an exclamation point. Here in this passage, John is using repetition to emphasize his point. He says in effect, he says, little children, I am confident of your spiritual state. Did you hear me? Let me say it again because I want you to know that I mean what I am saying, I am confident of your spiritual state.

He wants to drive that point home so that they understand clearly as true genuine believers in Christ that he as an apostle of Christ, as the one who put his head on Jesus’s chest, he explains in the opening four verses, saw Jesus with his own eyes, heard Him with his own ears, touched Him with his own hands, I was with Jesus, I know His teaching, I speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God and I am telling you from that position of divine authority that I affirm

your faith, you are the real deal, you are genuine Christians that I am writing to. And by giving them that note of pastoral loving assurance, he makes it clear in their minds that when he talks about liars and deceivers he is not talking about them, but rather he is writing to protect them from those people that he also has in mind as he writes this letter.

Now, he affirms them elsewhere. I want you to see this because sometimes I fear that new Christians that come to 1 John, they either try to bludgeon people with it and make everyone question their salvation based on these words or deal with it in a way that does not take in to account this very sensitive balance that the apostle John writes—you need to see this. Chapter 2:21, this note of encouragement, this word of encouragement, this word of affirmation, he emphasizes this again and again and he trusts the Holy Spirit to take it in to and to apply it to his readers who need the assurance and are entitled to assurance. Look at chapter 2:21, he says:

*I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie is of the truth.*

He says the very reason I am writing to you is because you are true Christians. Look at chapter 4:4, he says:

*You are from God little children and have overcome them because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

Chapter 5:13:

*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.*

He is writing to affirm them, to assure them that the very reason I am writing to you is because we share a like precious faith—that's the idea, encouraging them.

Now, stay with me here. (not that I feel like I am losing you anyway) But John's approach here gives us insight in to the nature of spiritual leadership in to what those who hold positions of spiritual authority in the church should do, what you who are parents should be looking to do with your children, and other areas where people are responsive and responsible to your authority. When you are dealing with true Christians, you must affirm people and encourage them as they are walking with Christ, you encourage them because from your position of spiritual leadership. You have confidence in them, they draw confidence themselves when you express confidence in them. When you affirm them, they sense that and they draw courage to continue on and to grow to greater heights themselves. Spiritual leaders cannot be scolders and those who wag their finger repeatedly over and over again. You cannot simply beat people down with questions and harsh doubts. If that's all that a man has to offer in a position of spiritual authority, he should step down because they need to be encouraged, they need to be affirmed where you can affirm them.



And so, let me say this, for you here today and were here last week and kind of have thought through those five questions that we asked, understand that if you have examined yourselves in light of those questions that came from the text of 1 John, understand that if you have asked yourselves those questions and those truths resonate in your hearts and say, “Yes, I’m not all that I should be, but you know, those things are true of my life, I believe in Christ, I think I’m truly saved.” Understand that these words of assurance that John wrote to his original readers 2000 years ago are your birthright as well. These tests that John gives to examine our hearts and to look at them and to say are these the marks of true salvation and hold your life up to them and say, “Yes, I do fear God, I do confess my sin, I am trusting in Christ alone, I do want my life to reflect the pattern of obedience to Christ, I do love other Christians, that is the core of my heart, that is what is really there even though sometimes I betray that with individual things from time to time, that’s the core of who I am.”

If that is you, then take heart and rejoice, rejoice because your names are written in heaven, rejoice because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. Rejoice because the word of God has made you strong and you have overcome the evil one, you have escaped his snares, you are no longer under his domination like you used to be before you came to Christ. John is writing to encourage true believers not cause needless doubt.

And so we look at these words and we see the heart of God being expressed through the pen of John. God wants us to know, He wants us to be settled and assured in our faith. He is not playing peek-a-boo with true salvation. He is laying it out there for true believers to see with the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit affirming those examinations that you make of yourself so that you would say, “I know whom I have believe in and I am convinced that He will keep what I have entrusted to Him until that day when I see Him face to face.” The Christian life is meant to be lived from that position of strength, that sense of assurance.

Now, one of the great blessings of being a Christian is going through life with the confidence that you truly know Christ—that’s the point, that’s the word of encouragement that John gives in these three verses. But understand this, that confident assurance of knowing Christ is not supposed to make you lazy, it is not meant to put you in to a state of spiritual lethargy where you say, “Well, if I truly know Christ, then the way I live doesn’t matter. I’m not going to worry about pursuing holiness.” That’s wrong, you need to understand the vital connection between true assurance, true assurance that a believing heart is entitled to and what the implication is for the way that you live flowing out of that assurance, what is intended to grow out of that assurance. Okay, I’m a Christian, now what?

This next section in verses 15-17 lay this out for you. John not only is giving them a word of encouragement:

## **2. He Gives Them a Word of Exhortation**

The assurance of salvation that John is giving to his readers is designed to motivate them and motivate us to greater holiness. It should never diminish our walk with Christ, it should encourage us to greater heights and a greater sense of commitment to being obedient to Christ in

response to the great gift of salvation that God has given us. It is a word of exhortation because having just affirmed them in their faith, John knows that they are also in a battle. They are in a battle not just with the false teachers, he has addressed that earlier, and he is going to address it again. But now he is addressing the battle that they have with their own flesh that you have with your own remnants of sinful desires and sinful attitudes and the sinful habits that you have carried with you from your past life. John says I affirm you in your faith, now understand that that means you pursue holiness with a greater vigor and zeal that you had before. Look at chapter 2:15 as we look at this word of exhortation now, John says:

*Do not love the world nor the things in the world.*

Remember, he had just affirmed them in their faith. Now what flows from that affirmation:

*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.*

John has confidence in their spiritual condition, but he knows that they are subject to temptation and so he tells them do not love the world. He needs to do this because the visual effects of temptation, worldly temptations and worldly attitudes may at first appeal to a believer who has gotten careless. What he is saying here is that you have to understand that those worldly temptations and those worldly attitudes that seem superficially appealing, actually flow from an organized system of evil that is at war with true faith, recognize where these temptations flow from, he says. Recognize that this does not come from the Father who has so blessed you and saved you and is preserving you. Recognize that those things that seem outwardly appealing are actually coming from a system of evil, headed by the devil himself that is appointed for the destruction of everything that you say you hold dear, recognize where the battle line is drawn, he says.

The verb tense here “do not love the world” has the idea of stop loving the world or perhaps even better, make it your habit not to love the world, set your mind in this direction, set your mind on the reality that true Christians must separate themselves from worldliness—they must, you must. This is part of what you were called on to was to live a holy separated life that was increasingly separated from the kinds of things that John talks about here in this passage. What is he talking about when he talks about the world? Look at verse 16, he explains it for us, he says “for all that is in the world, here is what I mean by that”:

*...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.*

Here is why I tell you not to love the world, it is because these things that are in the world are not from the Father who saved you, but from the world. And so he explains these wicked desires and calls them to avoid them. He mentions the lust of the flesh, those strong sinful desires that come from within you, that bubble up from within your own heart. The lust of the eyes, what we see on the outside that tempts us to sin.

You can think about this in terms of a couple of biblical examples. Just before Eve ate the forbidden fruit in Genesis chapter 3 "...she saw that it was good for food and a delight to the eyes..." Moses tells us in Genesis 3. Before she had sinned, she saw the attractiveness of it and she was drawn to it.

King David fell in to adultery, even murder when he saw with his eyes Bathsheba from a distance and began lusting for her and then acted upon those lusts in order to fulfill them.

The lust of the flesh—inside, the lust of the eyes—what you see from outside, the boastful pride of life that he mentions there in verse 16, that sense of arrogance that boasts in your external circumstances, your wealth, your position, your appearance, those friends that are tied to your status in the world. A man filled with the pride of life, seeking to impress people with his own supposed importance. I'm sweeping through these quickly, I realize that, but John says, little children, understand that these animating desires that are inherently living in this fallen world, these lusts, this pride, understand that these things are diametrically opposed to everything about the true nature of your salvation. Recognize them, call this to mind and recognize that this is in opposition to what we just said was true about you.

You are exposed to all three of those areas of sin every time you walk through a supermarket check-up counter and you know this. But just think through it, step back from it and just think about what is going on there as it appeals in the entertainment and the discourse of the sordid stories, understand that that is one mechanism among thousands by which the devil appeals to our flesh and surrounds us with sinful attitude, sinful conduct, appeals to fame and popularity, all designed to suck you in. Whatever other thousands of ways that you see this and see these temptations appealing themselves to you in the course of your life.

What I am about to say is so fundamentally important that I may expand on it next week. Beloved you must settle in your mind, you must drive stakes in to your mind and establish firm, settled convictions in your mind, the way that you think about those temptations is going to set the course for the way that you respond to those temptations. And when you are not under the pressure of those temptations, not under the appeal, but you are aware of them, when you are thinking rightly, you have to meditate on these things and settle certain things in your mind that will shape the way that you respond to them.

And fundamentally what John is saying here is that you must settle in your mind that part of the reason that God saved you was to deliver you from all of that. The purpose of your salvation in part was for you to be separate from that junk. And so when those temptations come, when the appeal and the desire presents itself to your flesh, you immediately respond and say "But wait, this is not the purpose of my life, I was saved to be away from this stuff, to be separate from this stuff and therefore, I can't pursue that, I don't want to pursue that because God saved me on to obedience." Not just external obedience, not just the hypocrisy that says as long as no one sees me, I'll indulge. No, from the core of your heart, at the very start of the desire you say "No, I reject even the desire, not just the participation in that fleshly stuff, but I'd reject and condemn the desire for it."

That worldly environment, hostile to your spiritual life is not for you as a Christian—that is not for you, that is not like I had saved you so that you can indulge in that junk, that spiritual filth, that spiritual garbage, that spiritual trash. You are not a spiritual garbage man designed to ride around in it. Better stated, you are not spiritual rats, looking around to see what kind of rotted, sordid piece of junk that you can get in to your mind and heart and act upon. No beloved, remember the word of encouragement that John gave: “...your sins are forgiven” “...you are strong” “...you have overcome the evil one” “...the word of God abides in you” Remember that and view the worldly stuff from that perspective and let the spirit of God that dwells within you strengthen you against those kinds of temptations so that you would live out the purpose for which God saved you.

Listen, I understand that the attraction of those things is strong, I battle against them myself and I know that you do too. But you must understand that you are responsible to resist that. When you sin, when you get in to that kind of temptation, you alone are responsible for it. You are not free to say “Oh, the devil made me do it.” You are not free to say “It was just the satanic pressure on me, I couldn’t help myself.” No, that is not true. Don’t deceive yourself and don’t let yourself slide in to that kind of spiritual mediocrity that excuses your own sinfulness—don’t live that way, don’t be mediocre Christians. Aim your life high and say “My life is going to be noble because I am going to separate myself from this worldliness and honor with my heart and with my life the God who saved me, the Lord Jesus Christ who spilled His blood on behalf of my soul.” Make that the fundamental conviction of the way that you view life—you must, this is what John says, this is what God commands us.

And as you are settled in to that mindset, understand that God has given you the resources to live a holy life. And if you fail, you can’t blame the world and say the devil made you do it. You are responsible when you sin. The temptation is never so great that you are compelled to give in without as though you are being carried along by something that was greater than yourself. When you sin my Christian friend, it is because you have chosen to participate and cooperate in that sinful worldly environment, you must have that settled in your mind because it takes away all of the excuses. 1 Corinthians 10:13:

*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man and God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also.*

James 1:13, James gives the God word’s side of this, he says:

*Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone, but each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*

What is within you, that which you are responsible to subdue.

*Then when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

As you follow the apostle John's thought in this passage, he gives you a mindset that helps you resist the world. Why should you resist the world? What is it that helps you? John gives you two reasons in the remainder of this passage that we will go through quickly, two reasons which are designed to frame your Christian life, designed to frame your response to temptation.

Understand first of all, in this word of exhortation that he gives, as he says don't love the world, he gives reasons why his exhortation is true. He communicates truth to your heart that helps you understand and which will frame your response as you settle these convictions in your heart.

First of all, understand that worldliness comes from the devil. Look at verse 16, he says:

*All that is in the world is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

Later John emphasizes that the world's system is under the domination of the devil himself. Look at chapter 5:19:

*We know that we are from God and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

Understand that the temptations of this world that you are attracted to, that hourly seem alluring, are simply bait on Satan's hook, designed to lead you in to sin, dishonor Christ and diminish your eternal reward—they are tools in the hands of the devil. Look passed the outward appeal of it and see what is at the core of it, what is behind it, what it leads to (we will talk about that more next week) and resist it. Peter says:

*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

Not too long ago, I ran in to a friend from my seminary years, who sad to say, disqualified himself from ministry, his life was shattered. He loved the world and now in response, the world has devoured him. The initial attraction has turned in to devastation. You as a Christian, have to look beyond the bait and see the hook that is in it, and that's what John is saying. Understand, this is not from the Father, these things that look attractive, they are not from the father, they are from the devil and the devil is bent on your destruction, so spare yourself the heartache of it because you cannot love the world and get away with it, recognize where it comes from. If the devil somehow was incarnate and before you and was showing you the wickedness of his plans, you would run from him. He knows that and so he disguises what he would draw you in with; look past that.

The second reason you should resist worldliness is that worldliness is temporary. Look at verse 17:

*The world is passing away and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

These worldly things are transitory, they are passing away. Therefore, don't invest your life, don't invest your eternal soul in to the pursuit of things that are passing away. John says invest

yourself in obedience to the word of God which abides forever. Use this window of time that you have on this earth, whether it is 70 years, give or take a couple of decades, whatever the time is, invest yourself in that which brings eternal reward. Don't fritter away the opportunity that life has given you in the pursuit of the stuff that is transitory and sinful and is going to burn away anyway. He says be smart about how you use the one life God has given you.

True Christian, walk away from this passage encouraged because John wrote to affirm you in the reality of your salvation. Walk away encouraged knowing the truth of scripture has been applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, walk away with a greater commitment to holiness, recognizing that the world threatens your spiritual well-being, resist it in the power of Christ as you look beyond this life, looking toward your heavenly reward.

Let's pray. *Our Father, we thank you that not only that you have saved us, but that you have made it so that we could know that we truly are saved and that we could walk in the peace and the strength that that assurance brings. You are no longer our enemy, you have been reconciled to you and we advisably and with understanding call you Abba Father and we love you for it. In response to that, dear Father, our desire is to walk in holiness, to recognize that the sinful attractions of this world come from the devil himself, they come from that system of evil that the devil has orchestrated, it is designed for our destruction, that will hurt us and these things are temporary and passing away. Oh God, help each one of us to devote our lives to the obedience that abides forever, that you will reward and that will be our joy to leave behind as we step in to heaven and hear you say those blessed words "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter in to the joy of your Master." Father, May that be the possession of each one that hears these words. In Jesus' name. Amen.*