

1 John 2:12-17

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[0 : 00] Lord, we ask that you would do both those things for us. That you would encourage us. That you would encourage us. That you would instruct us. And Father, as we approach it, may we have humble hearts.

Empower me, Lord, to speak your truth to your people for your name's sake. We pray that in Christ, who is our Redeemer and our King. Amen.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I'm writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world or the things in the world.

[1 : 20] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. This is God's holy, inspired, and inerrant word.

John makes a big deal. The first half of this passage, you can see quite clearly how he divides it up. In fact, most of your Bibles likely have verses 12 through 14 in some sort of offset spacing, almost like it's a poem.

He makes a big deal about who he's talking to. I'm writing to you, little children. I'm writing to you, fathers. I'm writing to you, young men. And he does it again.

I'm writing to you, little children. I'm writing to you, fathers. I'm writing to you, young men. He pays a lot of attention to who he's writing to. And so should we.

[2 : 32] What is he doing when he talks to us three times over and then repeats himself? I'm writing to you, little children.

I'm writing to you, fathers. I'm writing to you, young men. Why is he calling that out? He's showing us kind of the whole scope of the church.

And it's interesting the way he addresses them. Because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. This first time through verse 12, he says, I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. Well, that's true of all Christians, young or old.

I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. That's true of all Christians, young or old. I'm writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. That's true of all Christians, young or old.

And so what we see here is John is not trying necessarily to divide the church into certain segments and say, I've got a particular message for you and a particular message for you and a particular message for you.

[3 : 35] And in fact, we'll see later the conclusion in verses 15 through 17 is for everyone. He's trying to call back the whole church to him and say, pay attention.

And actually, what he's going to say to us today is some of the largest stuff in the whole book. And so this is for the whole church.

And don't get confused. He says young men, fathers, in the first century, that's just how people spoke. This is not to exclude women in our church.

That is simply how throughout most of history it has been written. And so he says, the first time through, I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

And he begins to unfold an old message for us, the gospel message. And so this is true for everyone who has been born of God.

[4 : 42] Our sins have been forgiven and sin is at its root a rejection of him, a rejection of his authority, rejection of his way in our lives.

godlessness, in that sense, takes many, many forms. And he says here, your sins, not particular sins, your sins, all of them. They have been forgiven. The Lord has reconciled you to himself. And this is, unfortunately for us, I think sometimes really commonplace. We don't give it a lot of attention in our lives. But Jesus hung and died on a cross so that our sins might be on his shoulders, the wrath of God upon him as the Lord's will to crush him so that we might be made free. But that is not all. I'm writing to you, fathers, he says, verse 13, because you know him who is from the beginning. Our salvation, the gospel message, is not only about punching a ticket to heaven. I think sometimes that's what the world thinks of Christianity is, oh, it's another way to punch a ticket to heaven. And because we live in a culture that thinks it so much, sometimes it's easy for us to think that way too.

[6 : 08] I've got my bags packed and I'm ready to go. But that's not only what the gospel is about. It is true, we will go to heaven, those who are in Christ, but heaven is only heaven because God is there.

And that's what he draws our attention to here. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. All throughout the Old Testament before Jesus came and won our salvation at the cross, what was God's promise to his people?

I will be your God. You will be my people. I'm writing to you, young men, he says, because you have overcome the evil one.

It is more our salvation, it is more than punching a ticket to heaven. It is more even than knowing God. It is also great victory.

It is not a victory that we won, it is a victory that Christ won, triumphing over the grave, over the powers of this world so that there is nothing that can touch him, there's nothing that can touch us.

[7 : 31] God's and so John is pointing us to this huge, multifaceted gospel. It is big and broad and large.

We are saved from our sin, we are saved to God and we are saved over and against the enemy. And then he does something interesting.

He repeats himself. He says again, I write to you, children, at the end of verse 13. He already talked about children. What news does he have to say?

I write to you, children, because you know the Father. And that sounds very familiar to us. In fact, he goes again and says, I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning and that's actually a complete repeat of what he already told them.

Word for word. And he says, I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

[8 : 36] And so the children, he says, your sins have been forgiven and you know the Father. And so the fathers, he says, because you have known him from the beginning and then again, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

and then to the young men, he says, you have overcome the evil one. And then the second time he addresses them, the center, the heart of what he tells them is, the word of God abides in you.

And so for each of these things, the second time around, he draws it to what? Fellowship with the Lord. You know the Father. You know him who is from the beginning.

The word of God abides in you. And I can't think of a more intimate, relational, understanding kind of love language to put here.

You know God, he says to the children, because sin is what stood in the way and it has been forgiven. You know God, he says to the fathers. And that's a repeat because knowing God is not a means to an end.

[9 : 44] It is an end in itself. the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the very first question.

Most of you aren't Presbyterian, we're a Baptist church, but I really like this question. It says, what is the chief end of man? What are we for? The chief end of man is to enjoy God, glorify him forever.

And finally, he says to the young man, I write to you because you are strong. Why are they strong? Well, the word of God abides in them. Why have they overcome the evil one? Well, the word of God abides in them. And so we see there's this transition.

The first time through he talks about this huge expanse of the gospel. And then he repeats himself and says, you're no God. you know God. You know God.

[10:51] And we can almost hear him saying, therefore, as he moves to verse 15, can't we? If he goes over and over again to say, you know the Lord, you know the Lord, you know the Lord, do not love the world.

he says, are the things in the world. Therefore, he says almost, if you have so great a salvation, if you have been forgiven so much, if you know him, if you have what is the best in the universe, God himself, and if he has given you victory strength, don't love the world, don't love the things in the world.

Now, the question then is, what does John mean when he says the world? The Bible actually uses that term in a couple different ways. in the beginnings, the Lord created the heavens and the earth. It's often called the world. How did he create it? Good. That's what Genesis chapter one says over and over. His creation is good. good. And so, we're actually meant to be delighted by the created order, by the world that he has made for us.

Sunsets, a wonderful meal, snow-capped mountains, the Milky Way, the cry of a baby. These are intrinsically beautiful things and they should make our hearts sing.

[12:30] They should. And it's interesting that it's the Christian who understands them best and understands their beauty best. Christ. Someone who is not in Christ, who is not in the Lord, doesn't see the true and full beauty of the world.

Why? All the beauty in this world is a reflected beauty. I can look at the Grand Canyon. It makes me feel small.

And it is magnificent in and of itself, but it says something else. I go out on a starry night and I look at the heavens and I see the unbelievably huge expanse of stars in the sky.

But only the Christian recognizes what they truly say. We don't have the ability in our brains to comprehend just the size and scope of the universe.

And he breathed it out. He spoke it into being. It is a reflected glory because Psalm 19 says, the heavens declare what? The heavens declare the glory of God.

[13:51] The sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge. this world is good.

It is beautiful. And we should take joy in it. And as Christians we recognize that it points to something even more beautiful, even greater.

nature. And so when John says, do not love the world, he's not talking about the created order. And he's not talking about another way that the Bible often uses the word world.

There's the sense that the Bible uses the word world to mean people. The whole world of people. And that is not what John is saying here. He's not saying don't love people.

In fact, just as the heavens declare the glory of God and our reflective beauty, so are people. Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, said the triune God on the first page of the Bible.

[15:03] You and I exist. And everyone around us exists as images, image bearers. We are reflections of him, of his glory.

And so, it is likely the most famous verse in all the Bible. God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. It begins with God so loved the world.

And that he's talking about us, people. people. And so, we don't say, don't love people when we come to this verse.

Verse 15. No. But, what's most amazing about John 3, 16 is not how big the world is, which is, I think, oftentimes, what we think of when we say, God so loved the whole world.

And that's true, that's absolutely true about that verse. What is also true about that verse, and I think what John is getting at, is it's amazing, yes, because the world is big, but also because the world is bad.

[16:23] So, we're not going to be monks. We're not going to seclude ourselves from the world. We're not going to reject the pleasures of the world.

We don't seclude ourselves. Jesus, you know, came to the world. He was a friend of sinners. He called his followers his friends. We don't reject the beauty and the pleasures of the world outright because, well, think about it.

What will the inauguration of heaven be? A wedding feast. God is a God who loves celebration.

He made good things for us in this world. And so he's not opposed to pleasures and delights. He's for them. He is opposed to their misuse and their elevation to ultimate status.

So enjoy food, but don't become a glutton. So enjoy people, but don't find in them your own worth.

[17 : 30] Don't find your security in them. enjoy sex as God intended it, but don't corrupt it by taking it outside of the marriage covenant. And so we see that this world is good in many, many ways.

But there is a sense, and I think it's the sense that John wants us to understand in verse 15 the world and what it values. That is what we should not love.

And I think he gives us here three reasons not to love the world. And this will instruct us very helpfully in our Christian walk. First, the world's values are wicked.

the desires of the flesh, and by that he almost certainly means some of our instincts and desires, not to say that they're bad in and of themselves even, but they're misuse as the world misuses them.

Yes. We are fallen, and so Thanksgiving, the holiday, full of good things, turns into gluttony. the Lord created us as sexual beings, and we misuse that in every conceivable way.

[18 : 59] The Lord has created so many good gifts, and we tend to corrupt them, and different cultures express that in different ways, and ours is not unique in that, but we are technologically enabled in it, it feels, in many, many ways.

ways. We can spew hate at each other faster. That's a corruption of God's good gift of communication. And so all of the things that we long for, they are not necessarily in themselves bad, but we find a way of corrupting them, don't we?

He moves from the desires of the flesh to the desires of the eyes. These are the things probably he's thinking. things like power, money, and influence.

These are the things that we look after and want for ourselves, to advance ourselves. And then finally, the pride of life. That word there, life, is actually the very same word we were in a few months ago.

If you remember our series in the parables, the prodigal son asks himself for the share of his inheritance. And literally there he says the share of his life. And so this term is actually often, very often used to talk about goods and your net worth, almost.

[20 : 25] so this can be pride over my own life, but it can also be, look at what I got, look at the stuff I have. And we live in a culture, every human being has lived in a culture that celebrates its pride.

world. So John tells us the world has wicked values. And so that is one reason to not love the world. That actually makes so much sense for us because if we look back, what did we say about sin earlier, already? That it separates us from the Lord. We're going to delve a little bit further into that in just a moment.

But he also says that the world is passing away. Verse 17, the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

I made a dinosaur out of construction paper for my daughter the other day, and she was delighted by it, and then she was devastated when, after just a few moments of playing like a three-year-old with it, it was destroyed, utterly, completely ruined.

[21 : 46] It didn't look like a dinosaur at all anymore, right? And she was devastated, but it was never intended to last.

It was made of construction paper. If I wanted it to last, I'd go in the garage and we'd just saw it and make it out of wood, right? And even then, you know, when the house burns down someday, right, it wouldn't last. But I gave her that little thing, made a construction paper, and she thought it would last.

And it crumpled in her hands. She was the one who crumpled it, actually. But it wasn't meant to last. And the things of this world won't, in the final analysis, last.

Many of you know that very personally. And then, I think there's something to just hear.

The love of the world is opposed to the love of God. Verse 15, do not love the world, the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

[23 : 03] You can't have it both ways, he says. And this is a message that we hear throughout the Bible over and over again. Jesus in Matthew 6 says, no one can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Money was the inciting incident in that case. And over the summer we were in the book of James. James chapter 4, verse 4, says, Do you not know that

friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. This could be what keeps some people from coming to faith.

Knowing that friendship with God means severing friendships with the world. They know the cost. Jesus said, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Running to Christ means necessarily running away from other things. And that's something that I think that the church has not always done a great job discussing.

[24 : 24] In our current day, the issue of homosexuality is really prevalent in our cultural conversation. And oftentimes, I think the church has not expressed itself very well.

And not thought through what the cost is when we call people to faith and repentance. Asking someone to give up a practice or a habit.

Many times it's asking someone to give up a person that is near and dear to them. It is a very, very high cost. And so when Jesus says, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, that means take up his cross and die.

It is a very high cost. And so putting our trust, and that's what our faith is, in Christ, is trusting that he is in fact better than this world.

Oh, taste and see, the psalmist says, that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him, have no lack.

[25 : 53] The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing, because he is the source of all good things. Why is John giving us this warning, do not love the world?

He's already said, in verses 12, 13, and 14, that they've been forgiven, that they know the Father, that they've had victory over the evil one, and so why do they need this reminder?

Why is that here at all? Well, this is a temptation for everyone, loving the world, even for those who are in Christ. We live in the world, and our friends and neighbors, coworkers, peers, the entire culture around us, they love the things of the world, because they don't have anything else to love. God's people are not immune. Jeremiah chapter 2, long before Christ came, said, my people have committed two evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

[27 : 11] water. What he's saying there is, you've abandoned me, and you've gone looking for things that can't satisfy. A cisterns is a bucket for water, and the one you've got, it's broken and leaking, and it will never satisfy you.

And so God's people have always had the siren song of sin, knocking at the door, asking for us to walk away from the blessings that we have in Christ.

in the book of Revelation chapter 2, the Lord sends the letters to his churches. The letter that he sends to the church in Ephesus, he says some good things and some bad things.

He says, I know your works, your toil, your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and have found them to be false.

I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. That's awesome. And in fact, as we see next week, John is going to tell us about some false teachers who are trying to lead the flock astray.

[28 : 32] and in fact, many think that's the reason that John wrote this letter, is so that they would have confidence that they are in the right against the false teachers that we're going to encounter next week.

And so, we see a church doing very much the same thing, the same thing in Revelation chapter 2. You cannot bear with those who are evil. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

But, I have this against you, he says, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, repent, and do the works you did at first.

It is possible to be doctrinally sound, and our hearts far from God. And John knows that. And so, he gives us this encouragement, this correction, so that our hearts don't wander far from it.

The most important thing to remember here is the first half. It is the sum substance of the power to obey the second half.

[29 : 50] I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

This is a complete gospel, and we know this, Lord. I write to you, children, because you know the father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world.

At its best, it is a reflection of his glory, and at its worst, it is a corruption of his intentions for your good.

If you walked in here today and you're hurting, you might be saying, you know what, thanks, this is nice, but you might as well be talking about the weather, because that's really not what's going on in my life.

[30 : 59] I'm hurting, and yep, I don't love the world right now, because I'm hurting, and what does this have to do with me at all? Well, I'd like you to think about why you might be hurting today.

If you're hurting, it's likely because of one of two options, sin or loss, and both of those things are in this passage.

Look at verse 16. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father, but it's from the world.

When people are ruled by selfish, sinful desires or their pride, pain is multiplied in the world. That will always happen.

People are going to be abused, wounds are going to be inflicted, both physical and emotional, good things are misused.

[32 : 15] If you're hurting because of sin, your own or someone else's, the only solace for that, the only balm for that wound is found in the one who made an end of sin, Jesus Christ.

lost. And if you've lost something, and it hurts, I want to ask you, was it made to last? or was it something temporary from the beginning that, like that construction paper dinosaur, wasn't intended to provide you lasting joy?

Now, we certainly should mourn for losses in this world. I'm not saying don't, but I'm also saying don't attach ultimate importance to the things of this world.

Don't build your hopes on something passing, you're setting yourself up for despair. Instead, our passage encourages us, verse 13, I'm writing to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

[33 : 39] Our God stands from eternity to eternity. he is the one that we can find no loss in.

And it's in fact he who said, I will never leave you or forsake you. Now, we said John gave us this instruction, first the encouragement and then the warning, because we are always by the world around us and by the sin that still remains in our hearts, tempted to go back, find our joy in the world.

If you're stuck loving the world, look clearly at two things. First, look clearly at the world, recognize that the things of this world are not the things of God, so far as the world values things, and recall that they are not lasting things.

No politician, no home, no job, no toy, no entertainment will lastingly satisfy you, because it was never meant to.

Look clearly at the world and look clearly at your salvation. That's verses 12 to 14. You are forgiven in Christ. You need not despair.

[35 : 28] You know God, and He is so much better than sinful things and temporary things. He is reshaping your heart, implanting His very Word in you, so you know His heart, and have His power to live victoriously every day.

So, dwell in those things. Meditate on those things, your salvation, the salvation that reveals God's heart, so that you see both Him and your sin better, and drives you further into His Word where you will find life, you'll find vigor, you'll find help for fighting sin, for dealing with loss.

things. And I'll close today with the words of a hymn. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. life. Let's pray. pray. Father, it is a joy to be Your people.

thank You that our sins are forgiven, that we know You, and that in You, in the victory, Your Son won for us on the cross, triumphing over the grave and the powers of this world, that we have

victory too.

[37 : 22] Help us to remember that each and every day, so that we do not love the world the things in the world, but Lord, that we will do Your will and abide forever.

We pray these things in the matchless name of Christ, our King. Amen.