

1 John 2:1-17 - We have an Advocate with the Father

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First John. Open your Bible to First John here on Wednesday night. We have finished the Old Testament, so now we're taking up the slack, if you will; kind of what we still have yet to do in the Old Testament. So we're in First John chapter two. We did the whole first chapter of 1 John last week.

But I'm going to tell you ahead of time, we're not going to get through the entire second chapter here, because as I got into this chapter, there was just, there was too much. There was. And can I tell you here, and I was kind of reminded of this as I studied through First John chapter 2, today I have to tell you that this is not, okay how do I say this? John was not necessarily writing to people who were immature in their faith. There's a lot in this study that is, meat. And it takes some pretty good choppers to kind of chew this stuff up and assimilate it. And so, this is one of the reasons why I wanted to go a little bit slower tonight through chapter two. Because I want to be careful that we don't take so much that we, we just move too quickly through it without really taking the time to really see what's there.

It's important to know as we read through this chapter that John was addressing issues that he was very concerned about in the world at that time. In his local area, there were false teachings. There were false doctrines that had cropped up and he was addressing those issues.

Also, another thing that is really important when you're reading through John's epistles particularly, he doesn't always explain everything in a full sort of a way. What you all, what you have to do is you have to know what else he said in some of his other letters to interpret what he's saying in this letter or what he said in his gospel account.

In other words, what I'm saying to you is the best means of interpreting the Bible is the Bible. People ask me all the time, "Can you recommend a good commentary"? Well, be careful of relying on commentaries. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. In other words, when we know the whole council of God's word, that is the best commentary on what the word has to say.

And we're going to see that tonight a little bit in some of the verses that we're going to be looking at here in First John, so let's begin here. Chapter two.

It begins by saying ¹"*My little children*". And that tells you right there that John is talking to believers. This is a letter to believers, okay? It is directed to you.

He says, and he tells right off the bat here why he's writing this letter. He says, "*I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin*".

And what John is saying by that, is that his goal in writing this letter was to encourage believers like you and me, to be able to stand our ground and not give in to the onslaught of temptations that come our way from the world each and every day.

And that's God's goal for you and me as well. We do fall into sin at times. We mess up. But we don't sin because we have to, we sin because we're weak. We sin because we fail. Our lives are full of weakness and our lives are full of failure.

And I'm not saying that in a way to somehow justify sin. I'm simply speaking a truth. But we have to remember something: God has bent over backwards to give us what we need to have victory over sin, and that's an important thing to remember. Let me show you a passage on the screen from second Peter. I can't see it on the TV back here. We never turned that one on. All right, Second Peter, chapter one, verse three. It says,

[SLIDE]

2Peter 1:3

"His divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence". (ESV)

What is John saying in that passage? He's saying God has given us everything we need for godliness. Did you catch that? God has given us everything we need for godliness. Let's interpret that.

He's given you everything you need so that you won't sin. Godliness is walking in the purity and the righteousness of God. He's given us everything we need. But He has also made provision for us in those times when we do sin. And that's what he goes on to say in the rest of this verse when he says, ¹"*but if anyone*

does sin”, and we know that's going to happen, “*we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ, the righteous*”.

John reminds us here that we have an advocate. An advocate. What is the word “advocate”? This is the Greek word *parakletos*, and it is translated “helper” elsewhere in the Bible.

It means one who is called to the aid of another. In fact, it was actually used in the legal system back in ancient days to describe people who would speak up for someone who's accused of a crime or a misdemeanor or whatever they happen to be accused of, but would speak to the judge on behalf of that individual to try to get the judge to show favor to the person who was accused.

All right, so John is saying that you and I have been given an advocate with the Father. Now, even though this word is also used to describe the Holy Spirit, in the gospel of John, here he is speaking of the advocate as Jesus himself. He is our advocate. He is our defender. Isn't that crazy? Think about that people.

John says, if we do sin, we have an advocate, someone who's speaking on our behalf before the Father. Now, does that mean that every time you sin Jesus has to go before the Father and say. “Whoa. Wait. Don't nuke ‘em. Hang on a minute. This one belongs to me. It's okay. Just settle down”.

I don't want to give you that impression that Jesus is constantly trying to pacify the Father, as if the Father is some angry judge who is just waiting, to lop your head off for whatever you might have done. That's not the advocacy that we're conveying here.

The idea here is that you and I are under the blood of Jesus Christ, and that blood constantly speaks on our behalf. The blood that He sacrificed, the blood that He shed on the cross constantly, perpetually speaks on our behalf, speaks on behalf of those who are trusting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. That blood constantly speaks a word of forgiveness, and that is the advocacy that Jesus gives us before the Father.

Now I hope you're comforted by this. I hope you're comforted by the fact that God didn't extend forgiveness to you at one point when you came to him, only to get kind of angry and take it away later on because you've messed up.

You need to know believers, that God is never surprised by the mistakes that we make. He knew before you came to Him, all the mistakes that you would make, and He chose to love you and He chose to save you, even knowing that there

would be bumps in the road. He loves you that much, so just know that. Be confident of that.

John goes on to speak of all that, this advocacy, if you will, that is ours in Jesus. And he says He is the propitiation for our sins. I bet you use that word all the time, right? In your daily conversation. He says He is the propitiation for our sins. The word propitiation is actually rendered as atoning sacrifice in the New International version, but even then, you don't really get the full meaning of the word, because the word propitiation means essentially to avert wrath. Jesus is the one who has averted the wrath of God.

And again, I don't want you to get the picture of God the father who's in heaven, just kind of perpetually steaming at the sin of mankind and has always talked down by Jesus. "Just settle down, Dad. Just settle". That's not the picture. The wrath of God is the very natural response of God towards sin. You need to understand that sin arouses God's wrath. Okay? That is as natural as his love. He can't do otherwise because He is God. He is righteous. He is pure.

However, Jesus on our behalf, propitiated the wrath of God. In other words, averted the wrath of God for us so that that wrath has been absolved. It's been taken out of the equation. For you and me, there is no wrath of God. Guys, this is one of the reasons why I believe personally, and if you disagree, that's okay. But it's one of the reasons I believe personally that the church is going to be taken away prior to the outpouring of God's wrath on the earth during the great tribulation period.

The Bible even tells us, Paul wrote to us and said, "*For we are not appointed unto wrath, but unto salvation*". (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

Why are we not appointed under wrath? Jesus has averted the wrath of God on your behalf. There is now no wrath. There is now no condemnation for you. Why? Jesus took it. He took it upon himself. He bore the wrath of God for you. And that is what John is reminding you and me about today.

So you might say, "Well, pastor Paul, then why do I, when I sin, why do I feel condemned"? Well, listen, there's an enemy who's after you. There's an enemy who condemns. He's called the accuser of the brethren in the Bible in the book of Revelation, and he accuses you to yourself.

He's constantly accusing you before God too, but that's not going to stand because there's One who speaks on your behalf. But he accuses even you to

yourself. And we accept that accusation. People say to me all the time, “Pastor Paul, how do I get to the place where I can finally forgive myself”?

Well, you got to come to the place where you stop listening to the enemy, you start listening more to God. As it relates to your sin and what He has accomplished on your behalf to reconcile you to God. See, sometimes we listen more to the whisperings of the enemy than we do the wisdom of God, and we have to fess up to that.

And say, I'm done. I'm going to, from this point on, I'm going to be done listening to the enemy and his accusatory remarks against me. Yes, I know that I've sinned. I confess, I admit it. But I also know what Jesus has done for me. He has averted the wrath of God, and *“there is, therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”*. (Romans 8:1)

Listen, if you're one of those people who feels condemned from time to time, you got to take hold of that verse. You got to lift it up as the shield of faith, and you have to avert the fiery darts of the enemy. In fact, Paul says in Ephesians that *“the shield of faith extinguishes the fiery darts of the enemy”*. It doesn't just avert them, it extinguishes them. (Ephesians 6:16)

So stand, you guys, stand with the shield of faith. If you feel condemned after a time of personal failure, you just, you listen. Confess your sin to God. Know that He has forgiven you. Know that the blood of Jesus has washed you clean. And then begin to just declare there is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

I'm going to stand in that! It's very important. Now He is the propitiation for our sins. “Our” He’s talking about believers because remember he's writing to believers here. But who also did He propitiate for? Who else did He avert the wrath of God for? John says the whole world. Let's read the whole verse again, shall we?

²*“He is the propitiation”* (or, He has averted the wrath of God) *“for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”*.

That is so important that we get that. Now, but be careful how you interpret this statement because somebody might look at this verse and say, well, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. That means the whole world is saved.

No, it doesn't. It might seem on the face of it like that is the case. But that's called universalism, and it's a doctrine that is actually taught in some churches.

And the doctrine of universalism says that we are universally saved by the death of Jesus, regardless of how we respond to that death or death and resurrection. In other words, regardless of how we respond to his sacrifice, doesn't matter if I believe or not, I'm saved. That's universalism and it's not biblical.

Because we must appropriate the propitiation that has been accomplished for us by Jesus on the cross. That's what receiving Jesus is all about, right? And that's why, we're told, in fact, let's go back to John 1:12 from the Gospel of John up on the screen.

[SLIDE]

John 1:12

“To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”.

See, there we're told that there is a condition and that condition is faith and receiving. Now that condition is not a good work. We're not saved by our good works. We're saved by receiving what He did for us. He did the good work. We have to receive it, and that's the important understanding that we have here.

Yes, Jesus died to make salvation available to the whole world. There's no reason why people have to be lost. We talked about this earlier. There's no reason why people have to be lost. They have to reject what Jesus did for them on the cross in order to be lost.

We, on the other hand, have to put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and receive what He did. Lord, I, and that's just as simple as, Lord, I receive what you did for me.

People say to me all the time, they want to make it more difficult than what it is. “Pastor Paul, how do you receive his work on the cross”? It's like, come on man. You're overthinking this thing. How do you receive a gift? If somebody hands you a gift, how do you receive it? You reach out and you take it.

This is not rocket science. This is the simplest, most basic of human understanding. I simply receive it. I accept it, right? I believe. I believe by faith. He did it for me. I've just received, it's not difficult. Verse three:

“And by this we know we have come to know him if we keep his commandments”.

Now I want you to stop there. Because what John is going to do over the course of, really the rest of this chapter, and as I said, we're not going to get into the whole chapter tonight. But what he's going to do is he's going to begin to give us some ways that we can test ourselves to know that we are "in Christ". And he begins by saying, ³"*by this, we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments*".

And ultimately, I want to tell you something. This verse is about having confidence in our salvation. And John says that it's possible. By this we can know, right? And he's going to offer these ways of knowing and having confidence that we belong to Jesus. And the first one here has to do with having a changed life. And he says it this way:

"*We know we've come to know him if we keep his commandments*". Now, what does he mean by that? What does he mean by "keep his commandments"? Because I got to tell you, there are some people who hear or see the word "commandments" in the Bible, and they jump to the conclusion that we have to keep the 10 Commandments to be saved. And I keep telling people, you're not saved by keeping commandments. You are saved by putting your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

And you know what the natural response is from people? We get this on our YouTube channel all the time.

"Are you saying that the 10 Commandments, we should just throw out the 10 Commandments and just forget about them then? Are you saying we should just reject what God said in the 10 Commandments"?

Oh, I'm not saying that. What do you, why did you jump to that conclusion? What? What about what I said brought you to that conclusion?

"Well, you said to 10 Commandments aren't important".

I didn't say the 10 Commandments aren't important, I said they can't save you. The 10 Commandments are wonderful. As Paul says in the book of Romans, there's nothing wrong with the law. There's something wrong with us, but there's nothing wrong with the law. The law's good. The law's great! It's us who are having a problem, and you can't keep the law enough to be saved. So, no, we don't throw out the 10 Commandments. We do have to understand the 10 Commandments.

Do you know that when you look at the 10 Commandments, some of them are moral and some of them are ceremonial? Have you ever noticed that? People sometimes fail to make that distinction. And that's why they say, when we say things like, in the New Covenant, under the new Covenant, we aren't commanded to keep the Sabbath in the way that Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath.

We keep the Sabbath. We actually do keep the Sabbath, but we do it by faith. We keep all of the commandments by faith now. Jesus is our Sabbath rest. We're resting from our works, and we're trusting in him and in that way, we keep the Sabbath. But there, but then there are some people they just that, that tilts them and then they'll see another commandment that says, you shall not murder. And you just say, so is that one's kind of gone away too?

Then suddenly, you say, well this one here, over here, we don't have to worry about that one, but this one here you do. And they just haven't taken time to think about it and understand it from the standpoint of what God is saying to us in his word.

And do you understand Christians, that when it comes to the law of God, the law giver, the one who gave the 10 Commandments, is now living in your heart? Do you understand that? Do you understand the implications of the One who gave the law now has come to live inside of you? He indwells you. He's having an influence on you. He's impacting how you live.

The law is no longer external, written in stone. It is internal. It has been written on your heart, and that is exactly what God said through the prophet Jeremiah. He said, "*the time is coming when I will take my law and I will write it upon their hearts*". (Jeremiah 31:33)

So you and I don't need an external law any longer. It is written here (heart). It is inside of us now instead of Thou Shall Not. It is, "I wouldn't dare do that. I wouldn't think of it". He has written it on our hearts. That means Christians, when you have Jesus living in your heart, it's going to change the way you live.

That is what John is saying when he says, ³"*We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments*". In other words, what John is saying here is we know that we have come to know him if we are walking in obedience to the voice of the Spirit. If we are being Spirit-led and He is guiding us.

So, so important that we understand the relationship of God's law to the New Testament believer today. You know, once we're saved, when we get saved,

God births in us many things. But one is a desire to be obedient to Him. It's like, I just want to, I just love Jesus. I just want to do what He says. I just want to follow His word. I love Him and I want to please Him. I want to live my life to please Him, now.

Where did you think that came from? Do you think that, do you think you thought that up? No, we know we have come to know him when there's this bubbled desire that just it, it bubbles up in our life. I just want to live for him. I want to serve him. I want to know more about him. I want to please him. That's what John is talking about here.

He describes it further as he goes on in verse four. Look what he says. He says, “whoever says, I know Him, but does not keep his commandments”. In other words, there's not that desire to walk in obedience to his word and so forth.

He says, that person is a liar. They're saying one thing, but they're doing another. And he says, the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word now, that's another way of keeping his, He says, keeping his commandments. It's keeping his word in him. Truly the love of God is perfected. Notice he says “in Him”.

In Him, inside of Him, the love of God is perfected. Notice he doesn't just say in Him obedience is perfected. No, it's the love of God. It's like you show that you love Him by your obedience to Him. Remember what Jesus said to his disciples? I bet it brought a lot of them up short. He said, “*why do you keep calling me Lord and you don't do what I say*”? (Luke 6:46, paraphrased)

It's so easy to talk about God and think about God or whatever and carry your Bible around and come to church, but the rubber meets the road in that simple desire to live my life for Him. I want to please Him because I love Him. And the reason I love Him is because He loved me first, right? We love God. Because He loved us first. So he says, (and I'm in the middle of verse five).

“By this, we may know that we are in Him. Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked”.

In other words, you should be influenced in your daily life by the spirit of God living in you. So I love how John helps us to understand what he means by keeping his commandments. And he's going to talk more about that. He's going to talk more about what it means to obey.

Now notice again in verse six, John says,

“Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked”.

This means not only according to what is written in the word, but do you know there's a lot of things that aren't dealt with in the word? Do you guys ever notice that? There are so many questions that I get about what does the Bible say about, and the Bible doesn't say anything about it. People want to know.

Okay. They'll say, they write me. Say “Pastor Paul, okay, here's the deal. What happens if you have a situation where you got”, and they'll talk, “they got a husband who's married to a wife, and the wife doesn't want it, and he, and they'll give me this scenario, then what? Then what does the Bible say about that”?

I say, “Well, the Bible doesn't say anything about that”.

“Well, then what are we supposed to do?”

I say, “Well, okay, you have to understand. The Bible gives principles, and for example, when it comes to marriage, He says to the husband, husbands, love your wives in such a way that you're willing to lay down your life for her. Okay? Wives, respect your husbands and honor the position that God gave him as the head of the home. Now that's the principle and we're to walk that out”.

When you understand the principles of God's word and then you allow the Holy Spirit to apply that principle to what your personal situation is, you now have an answer for everything.

Here's the question you ask when you're dealing, (and I'm only dealing with marital issues right now. Could be with anything), but you know when you're dealing with a marital issue and you say, well, there doesn't say anything about this in the Bible. Well, okay, what does it say? It says, husbands love your wives, wives respect and honor your husband.

Okay, well, then I'll ask my question. I'm the husband now, is what I'm doing, what I'm saying, what I'm suggesting, whatever, is that showing sacrificial love toward my wife? That's the question I have to ask, right? In other words, am I loving her in a way that shows her that I'm willing to lay down my life for her?

You see, that speaks now to that personal situation that I'm going through that the Bible does not specifically address, but it speaks to it nonetheless with the overarching principle. Same thing with the wife. She says she can always ask

herself, is what I'm saying, doing, thinking, whatever, am I conveying respect and honor toward this man whom God has given me?

And she has to apply that according to what the Holy Spirit speaks to her heart. It's like,

“Lord, speak to me. Tell me, I give this to you. I pray about this situation, Lord, am I doing this the way you want me to do it”? And God gives insight as we pray and apply those principles.

So it's very important that you understand those basic, overarching principles in the Word of God that speak to these areas. Because you'll never have to ask yourself the question, “Well - where in the Bible does it say...”, if the Bible covered every circumstance and situation known to man, good grief. It would be a lot thicker than the one you have on your lap.

All right, moving on, verse seven.

“Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you've had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard at the same time. ⁸It is a new commandment that I'm writing to you, which is true in him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is coming”.

Now this is, if you, when you read this verse and you just kind of give it a cursory sort of a reading, it almost sounds contradictory. It almost sounds like John is saying, “I'm not giving you an old commandment, but I am kind of giving you, or I'm not giving you a new commandment. It's an old commandment, but I am giving you a new commandment”.

It's kind of like when little kids contradict themselves. It's just hilarious. You hear you're talking to a three-year-old. I remember this one little kid was telling me, I can jump over that fence right there, but I can't jump over that fence. And it was kind of funny, because it was kind of like he thought better of it after it came out of his mouth.

That's not what John is doing here, okay? So you've got to be careful when John says, *“I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning”*. He's referring to the commandment that Jesus spoke of at the beginning of his ministry. And that's what he speaks of when he talks about the commandment you've had from the beginning. He's talking

about the beginning of Jesus' ministry and he's referring to the commandment to love one another, but he doesn't say it here.

This is one of those places where, in order to interpret this properly, you have to know what John said elsewhere. In other words, you got to let the word interpret the word and you got to go to Second John. Let me show it to you on the screen. Second John, which you know is just one chapter. So it's just verse five, and he says:

[SLIDE]

2 John 5

“And now I ask you dear lady - not as though I am writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning - that we love one another”.

So see, this is the commandment he's talking about. This is the one he's saying that this isn't a new commandment. This is one we've had from the beginning. But in a sense, this is a new commandment. Why? Because Jesus gave it as a new commandment.

Let me show you. John Chapter 13:

[SLIDE]

John 13:34

“A new commandment I give to you. (This is Jesus.) That you love one another, just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another”. (John 13:34)

Why did Jesus call it a new commandment? Because that, along with loving the Lord your God, is the law summed up. Jesus was asked at one point, what's the greatest commandment? And Jesus said, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind”*. But He said, there's another commandment no less great. *“Love your neighbor as yourself”*. (Matthew 22:37, 39)

So you see this loving God and loving others, he said, these two commandments sum up the law and the prophets and make a summary statement of the law and the prophets. Fascinating. So in that sense, Jesus is saying, I'm giving you a new commandment. And this trumps frankly, all the others because all the others are bound up in these. Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor as yourself.

And so in this sense, it is a new commandment. And he says at the end of verse eight, if you look with me there, he says,

“The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining”.

Well, you know, because I've told you before, that darkness and light are some of John's favorite pictures. And so, when he talks about the darkness passing away and the light shining in our hearts, this is his springboard to now say what he does in verses nine through 11.

I'm going to read these verses together and then we'll look at them. Verse nine.

*“Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.
¹⁰Whoever loves his brother abides in the light and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because darkness has blinded his eyes”.*

Do you guys remember in the last chapter we talked about darkness and light? And I told you that John will use these terms to speak of different things based on the context of what he wants to say. And in chapter one, walking in the light meant walking in the understanding that I'm a sinner. Walking in darkness was walking in the denial that I am a sinner.

Okay, now he's using darkness and light in a different way. He's talking about walking in darkness, is being blinded about the idea or the command that God has given that I am to love my brother and sister in Christ. And walking in the light is walking in the full understanding of the revelation of the importance of that love that I show, right? And so this is all about relationships with fellow believers.

Now we're going to talk about stuff that's probably going to, we're going to meddle a little bit in, in maybe some areas of what's going on in your life. We'll just see what the Holy Spirit does, but John is saying that our relationship with God can be seen by our love for others in the body of Christ. There, I'll just kind of let that one sink in for a minute.

Our love and our relationship with God can be seen by our relationship with others in the body of Christ. And John is really just echoing what Jesus said. And because Jesus talked about the love, we have one for another. In fact, He said it would be the hallmark of how people would know that we belong to Him. They will know you are my disciples. Jesus said by the love you have one

for another. They will know and others will know if you're walking in a close relationship with God, based on how you are dealing in your relationship with other believers.

So this is an important topic in John's epistles, let me just tell you. And it is one that can make us uncomfortable because we know that when you deal with people in the body of Christ and when you deal closely with people, things are going to happen and people are going to get hurt. People are going to get offended.

I wish we knew the number of people who no longer attend church because somebody made them mad or hurt them. Hurt their feelings. I hear from people all the time who tell me they don't go to church. They go to church online because there's nobody to mess with them.

Well, like I said, your relationship with the Lord is going to be seen. It's going to project a picture, based on how that your relationship with others is fairing and so forth. And this is one of the tests that John advances for us to understand our relationship with God because, don't you know that if you have a brother or sister in Christ with whom there, there is an unresolved issue that is going to affect your relationship with God. There's no way that it can't.

Now I understand that things can happen and become strained, and you can do your best to resolve the issue on your end of the equation, and the other person can refuse. They can say, you know what I'm not willing to be reconciled. Well, that's on them. That's on them. All God is concerned about is that you do your part.

So if there's somebody with whom you have an issue in the body of Christ, you need to personally resolve it. Resolve it before the Lord and attempt to resolve it with them. And if they say, no, I'm not willing, then you can, then that is where you'd make that just a matter of prayer.

Lord I, from my heart, I believe that I've forgiven this person. And whatever issues we had between us I let it go and I have sought reconciliation with my brother or my sister, whatever, you know, but they were unwilling. So father, I just want to pray that you would open their heart so that we would be able to have that reconciliation one day. But I'm just going to leave this in your hands.

And you know Lord, that I did what I could. I went to them, I apologized for anything that might have been my part. And I asked for that reconciliation, but

they didn't bite. Okay. See, you want to be able to go before the Lord and say, "I did my part".

So this is an important thing. We do not want to be walking in darkness related to this, because when we leave things unresolved, it's just the playground for the enemy. And he's looking for things like that to exploit. And we want to be careful not to give him a foothold as Paul says.

So next, John is going to address believers according to their particular level of spiritual maturity. He says in verse 12,

"I'm writing to you little children because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake".

So he's not talking about little children in the physical sense of the word. He's talking about babes in Christ. And the one thing that when we come to Jesus, when we first come to Jesus, there's really only about one thing we know. And that is, we know our sins have been forgiven. And we're all kind of doing a happy dance. And it's all great, and we got a big smile and "my sins are forgiven". And that's about all I know. I don't really know anything about my Bible. I don't know much about how to walk with the Lord, but I know one thing: my sins are forgiven.

Thank you, Jesus. Right? And so he says,

"I'm writing to you" (Verse 13), "I'm writing to you fathers because you know him, who is from the beginning".

Now, John addresses the fathers, the mature men, and the hallmark of these mature men is that they know. They know Him, who is from the beginning. They know the Lord.

The Greek word there that is translated "know" refers to a certainty of knowing. And that speaks of maturity where there you take on this certainty, right, of knowing the Lord. We're still in verse 13,

"I'm writing to you young men because you've overcome the evil one".

Why would he speak to young men about overcoming temptations? Well, the reason is because the temptations that are faced by a young man are greater than any other person. And that's one of the reasons why you read in the Psalms, let me show you on the screen. Psalm 119 verse 9.

[SLIDE]

Psalm 119:9

“How can a young man keep his way pure”?

Notice he doesn't say 'young woman'. A young man. The temptations that face a young man when his bodily functions come online. I mean, it is a gravitational pull that could move a mountain. And so what's the answer to the question? Well, it's by guarding his heart according to the word.

You know, the world just kind of says, “Well just let him go. We'll just teach him how to have safe sex because there's no way we're going to stop him because you can't”.

God's word says there's a power in the word. There is a strength in the word that can even bring purity to a young man. But he's going to take it seriously.

But boy, I tell you that it is an overwhelming sort of a thing with a young man. If you have a young man in your home, understand this overwhelming drive that is part of his physical makeup. And that's why John says what he says. Still in verse 13.

“I write to you children because you know the Father”.

Now this is interesting because John uses a different Greek word for children than he did in verse 12. And this speaks of a different phase of growth of the child. This young person that's beginning now to grow and beginning to walk in the knowledge of the Lord. He says,

“I write to you” verse 14, *“fathers, because you know him, who is from the beginning”.*

Notice that's a repetition. I write to you young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you've overcome the evil one again. A repetition. And repetition is always given in the word to show emphasis, right? God repeats things for emphasis. Now, in the last three verses that we're going to cover here tonight, John is going to pinpoint a specific threat to our fellowship and our closeness with God.

Because you need to understand, as a believer, your relationship with God is at risk. It's at risk from the world. It's at risk because you have a sinful nature. It's at risk because of the devil. Those are your enemies, your sinful nature, the

world, the enemy. I'm talking about Satan. So understand that there is a threat, and you want to keep that relationship fresh, you want to keep that relationship close and intimate.

What stands in the way of that? Verse 15? Let's read verses 15 through 17.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world”, And then he mentions those three categories of sin, “the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world”, he says, “is passing away along with its desires; but whoever does the will of God abides forever”.

I want to remind you of something here. John, is addressing Christian believers. So the question we ask from this, is it possible for a believer to become captivated by the world and very cold in their relationship with God?

Well, obviously it is, and that's why John is essentially saying in this passage, don't let it happen. Be watchful, because he knows that the temptation will be great somewhere along the line. This is oftentimes, many times why we lose young people. We lose them to the world. Many of you went through a time in your life where you were lost to the world.

You might have had some inclinations about God in your really young years, and then you got into those teenage years and the world turned up the sound and the light show and you saw all the things that drew you away into the world. And you ran after that for a season and eventually you had to come to a place of seeing how bankrupt the world really is. But it can be pretty beautiful.

Do you know that one of Paul's closest men had this happen to him? You remember when Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy? Look on the screen. Paul writes to Timothy saying:

[SLIDE]

2 Timothy 4:9-10a

“do your best to come to me soon for Demus, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica”. (2 Timothy 4:9 – 10a)

What happened with Demus is exactly what John is warning you and me about here in this passage. He became friendly with the world. He ran after the world. He was captivated by the world. And when John says to you and me in this

passage, to not love the world or the things in the world, he's not speaking of an utter rejection of the world in the sense that we despise all the people in the world.

I want you to remember the Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son”* (John 3:16), right? So God cares about the world because it has people in it who He wants to be saved. And God wants them to be saved. The Bible tells us God is not *“willing that any should be lost, but that all would come to repentance”* 2 Peter 3:9 (NKJ)

And for that reason, we can't simply just say, well, I reject everything that that is in the world because if you're going to do that, you're going to reject the people in the world. And some Christians have done that. In their rejection of worldliness, they've rejected the love of people and the concern for people, and they made people of the world the enemy.

And you can hear it in some people the way they talk. They talk about the people of the world, like they are the enemy. “Yeah. Those people, those unbelievers...”, and they don't have a nice kind word to say about anything or anybody. And they call, they like to call people names and they come up with titles for people who are dealing with certain areas of sin and they throw those things out. And they're very crude names.

“...and I don't like him because he's an ex thing, whatever”. And you can tell that they've created this “we versus they” sort of an attitude toward the people of the world. “I'm a Christian, but these people, they're just, they're of Satan, they're going to burn in hell”, and they're angry and you can hear the anger.

In our study of the gospel of John, we read that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but rather to save it. So if Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, why are we walking around condemning the people of the world? That's not our job. Our job is to bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through prayer and witnessing. That's what we're called to do. And we're called to love them because God loves them.

They're lost just like you were at one time. And aren't you glad God loved you? And aren't you glad somebody probably prayed for you to come to Christ?

So what John is warning us about here is having a love of the things of the world, the sinful pleasures of the world to the point where we become devoted to those things rather than being devoted to the Lord. Our love for God should

eclipse any love for the world rather than a love for the world eclipsing our love for God.

James wrote about this very same threat. Look on the screen, James chapter four, verse four. He said:

[SLIDE]

James 4:4

“You adulterous people”. And it really is an act of spiritual adultery, to be in love with the world when we ought to be in love with God. He says, *“do you not know that friendship with the world is actually enmity”* (which is hatred), *“with God”*? He says, *“Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”*.

He's not talking about being a friend of unbelievers. We do have to befriend unbelievers from time to time. Now we have to be careful in those friendships. We have to be careful about not allowing the influence of the world into our lives. But there's a balance here where we do have to reach out to people, praying for them, caring about them, loving them, respecting them, honoring them as people who've been created in the image of God, but who are lost.

And they don't know. They don't know that they're lost. They're looking for satisfaction, but they're not finding it. And we know the answer. We know that only Jesus satisfies, and that's the message we should go to, speak to them about.

But that's not going to happen if we're going around hating them. So we can't hate people. But we also have to be very careful. You've got to choose your friends carefully. You got to be careful.

Don't go to your friends from the world when you're looking for advice, okay? They're going to give you worldly advice. I find that when Christians go to people of the world for advice, it's because they want to hear what the world has to say. Because they know that the world probably is going to side with what's in their heart, what they want to do.

So we've got to be very careful. Extending friendship, but not to the point where we're fellowshiping with the world. It's very important that we fellowship with believers, and that's that intimacy of sharing, praying for one another, caring for one another. You know that's not going to happen in the

world. We can open ourselves to some kind of unholy connections if we're not careful.

We look at these areas and we'll kind of end with this. Verse 16. He lines out these things that captivate us for all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh. That's just your carnal appetites, by the way, carnal appetites, we talk about carnal appetites. Do you understand that fundamentally carnal appetites aren't bad in and of themselves. It's how we satisfy them. Okay?

God created men and women to desire one another. That desire is meant to be satisfied within the confines of marriage. The world says, "don't worry about that, just hop in bed. Doesn't matter, whenever, wherever with whomever. Just do it. Just do it". Well, that is an illegitimate way of satisfying a God-given urge.

So you see, it's how we respond. It's how we choose to satisfy those things. I mean, anything, there's nothing wrong with your physical urge for food and nourishment, but do you know that it can become a sin? If it becomes your god? It can be anything. Anything. Your desire for romance, your desire, for love, for affection, any of those things can be made... You can be, you can become a slave of any of those things.

They were meant to just be a blessing to you. But when we try to satisfy them illegitimately, it becomes a problem. He goes on to speak of the desires of the eyes. That's the lust of the eyes. And best illustrated, perhaps in the Old Testament story of David goes out on his balcony at night, sees a woman bathing, he's living in the palace. He is higher than the tops of the houses in Jerusalem.

He looks out, he sees a woman bathing on her rooftop, which were, they would do for privacy reasons. Problem is people in the palaces could see, because it was higher. So he looks out, he sees this woman bathing. He sees this woman bathing. What does he do? "I want her. I want her". And he takes her. Lust of the eyes.

And then finally, John writes of the pride of life. We've talked about this before. Desire for popularity. Desire for people to see me as special, important. And the world. And this is the tough part. The world has ways to satisfy all these lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. The world says, "Oh, I know how to do that".

Do you understand that? When Jesus was tempted by Satan, he covered these three areas, right?

First, he started off with the lust of the flesh. “If you're the son of God, see these stones here. Make them into bread”. Remember, Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. When it says He was hungry, that's a huge understatement.

Satan comes along and says, let's satisfy this illegitimately, shall we? “You're the son of God. Hey, just say the word, make them into bread. I bet you if you look at that rock, it even looked like a loaf of bread. If you kind of squint, turn it into bread. Go for it. It's yours”. Lust of the flesh.

Lust of the eyes. The Bible says that Satan took him to a place where He could see all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and splendor where He could see, right? Lust of the eyes.

And then he took Him to the highest point of the temple and said, “Jump down, because if you do, the Bible says that his angels will lift you up and you'll just float to the ground and won't people be amazed and they will love you”. Pride of life. Satan doesn't have any other things to do other than those three. All sin comes under those three categories. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. It's all he's got, but he makes the most of it. And we have to be watching for it again and again.

The world says, “Oh, I got ways to make that happen. We'll make that happen for you”. But John reminds us here as we end this section that we're studying, the world is passing away along with its desires.

So we're not to be part of something that is passing away. We are to be part of something that is eternal. Amen? Let's pray.

Father, I thank you so much for the time that you've given us tonight to be in the Word, to open our hearts, to hear your voice. Lord, the letter of First John can become challenging and we have to kind of lean into this thing a bit and press in to know what John is saying to us here.

Help us, Lord, define that balance. Help us, Lord, to see what the word has to say on these things so that we can walk in wisdom, so that we can walk in strength, so that we can walk in safety. Lord, these are important warnings for us as believers. Help us to stay close to you, Father. Help us to keep a humble and soft heart. Help us to look to you. Help us to live for you. Fill our hearts with love. We ask it in Jesus precious name. Amen. Amen. God bless.