



I have an app on my phone called TimeHop. It shows me pictures I've stored throughout the years, and what it does is show me pictures from that day over the course of years. I've checked TimeHop almost everyday for over five years now. I enjoy seeing pictures taken on this day and seeing how my children and family have grown up. But sometimes my children's cuteness is almost too much for me. I miss when their cheeks were chubby and they were toddling around. However, there are things I don't miss about the infant/toddler stage. There's constant movement and stress. For us having five children, I think we had a time where there were three in diapers at the same time. Just that is a full-time job!

But toddlers aren't just humans who need diaper changes. They get into things. They want things. They explore. And sometimes when you tell them "no," they can get mad or they can cry very loudly. Some children, like me when I was a kid, will throw temper tantrums. Thankfully the majority of humans don't stay in that stage of life when they become teenagers or adults. Can you imagine going to Walmart and seeing a parent beg their child for a new bike and then laying on the ground and throwing a tantrum? What would you think of that parent?

I mean, in some ways, we wouldn't be shocked if a child did that, but a parent?! Why is that utterly inexcusable for a parent to be that way? Because they're the PARENT! They're in a position to teach their children, to love their children, to be an example to their children. Parents are given more responsibility and accountability before the Lord.

The same is true for many other positions. If you're a police officer, you are given high responsibility and high accountability. If we hear of a cop smuggling drugs or being involved in violent activities, the officer is held to the higher standard. Or, what about the Queen of England. We have expectations of how a Queen behaves because of her position.

Ok, I won't belabor the point. This applies to the letter of 1 John. A couple weeks ago after preaching, I was talking with Jonathan Wilwerding, and I said how amazed I was that John doesn't separate a Christians status from the behaviors that ought to flow from the life of a Christian. Let me explain what I mean by this. I'll give two different modern examples that I think John would confront. There are some people who embrace what I'll call "easy-believism." They tell people that if they just pray a prayer then God forgives you of your sin and you're guaranteed Heaven. They explain that because of Jesus' death on the cross, anyone who prays for forgiveness are forgiven and declared righteous in God's sight. Therefore, it doesn't matter what you do the rest of your life. You can live like the devil and you're all good to go with God.

John doesn't agree with that. Your status as someone who has fellowship with God, who walks in the Light, and has Jesus as their advocate, must lead to behaviors that align with the status. To be justified means that you will also live out your justification. Status and actions must go hand-in-hand.

On the other hand, some people will say that if you ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, you'll be declared righteous in that moment, but you could lose it if you stop trusting Jesus. That view emphasizes actions at the expense of status. Your actions must keep you in the status. John would disagree with that as well – even later in this letter saying that they went out because they weren't of us. If we have an advocate and we're given eternal life, the life will be eternal and we will grow in the life he's given to us. Status and behavior go hand-in-hand.

I bring this up here this morning because I wonder if some of you might struggle with these realities. I mean, you may seek to obey God daily, but you think of some of the things John is saying as realities for theologians to think about in high towers by themselves. But John reveals that these realities have necessary consequences in our daily living. And this point is emphasized strongly in the verses we're looking at today in 1 John 2:12-17. The main idea of the sermon this morning is: **Christian, because of your standing before God, hate the "world."** Real quick, I want to qualify something. When I say hate the world, you notice the quotation marks because I don't want you to think that John is saying here that we are to hate people in this world. This term for "world" means something very specific that we're going to look into later. But we are going to see here that our standing must and will affect our behavior.

By the way, this mindset isn't just John's mindset. This is throughout Scripture, and I actually think the apostle Paul is most obvious. For all of his letters, he spends at least the first half addressing the Christians identity and status as saints and set apart and holy and righteous. Then he spends the second half or less addressing how to live out our identity. In other words, what John and Paul (and other writers in Scripture) call Christians to do is to **become who they are!** So, this morning, I'm going to break apart this main idea and we'll walk through verses 12-17 together. Let's now start with our standing before God.

### 1. . . .your standing before God (vv. 12-14).

After John challenges the people they need to love, and then states that anyone who hates their brother is walking in darkness; some could think that John might be challenging them to think they're not a follower of Jesus. Is John trying to get them to doubt? No. John is addressing the false teachers. But John is seeking to bolster the assurance and spur the readers on to faithful obedience. So, John assures them in verses 12-14. He repeats, six times, the intent of his writing to them. This is what he wants his readers to walk away knowing! If they know these things, their lives and behavior will be shaped dramatically.

Let's again read verses 12-14: 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. 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.<sup>1</sup>

John uses the phrases children, fathers, and young men. Who is John writing to here? Some people think that John is writing to people at various levels of spiritual maturity. Little children who are new believers and basically just need to know their sins are forgiven! Fathers, who are more mature and have a deep relationship with God. That could be the correct view; however, I don't think that holds under scrutiny.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:12–14.

In verse 1 of this chapter, John refers to all the Christians as little children. And elsewhere John refers to the believers as children. So, I think when John says “children” here, he’s referring to all. Now, what does he mean by “fathers” and “young men?” That could be a reference to spiritual maturity; however, if you study out these words in a broader New Testament context, they either never or rarely ever mean that. They refer to age. I think that fits here. The “fathers” is talking about an older age group. The “young men” are referring to younger people in the community of believers.

All this said, I personally think that all of us can glean from the hope that John gives to everyone. In his encouragement, he’s reminding them of their status and privileges as Christians. So, let’s take a few moments to look at these privileges:

**Children: Your sins are forgiven and you know the Father (vv. 12, 13c).** Remember that the phrase “little children” and “children” are referring to the believers John is writing to. By extension, I can confidently say that if you have turned from your sins and trusted in Jesus, these realities are true of you, too! Your sins are forgiven!

Now, get this. In the English, we don’t get the beauty of the Greek here. In the Greek, it’s in what’s called the perfect tense. That means that something happened in the past and the results continue on into the present. So, this could be translated, “Your sins have been, and remain, forgiven!” Christian, what delight here! “But wait,” you might say, “didn’t just say that we are to confess our sins and then we’ll be forgiven?” In chapter 1, John is referencing our practical daily relationship with the Lord. Here, John is talking about our status. Our daily practice is to match our status. We are to become what we are. So here, John says that our sins have been, and remain forgiven.

Believer, what joy and security we have in knowing our sins are forgiven. John adds they’re forgiven for his name’s sake. I believe referring to Jesus. Jesus forgave us to show his glory! Amazing that Jesus is glorified in forgiving sinners. We couldn’t save us. Only Christ could. So, praise him!!

Then at the end of verse 13, John says that we also know the Father. Some people might find this to be a boring statement, but think of Jesus’ words when he says that eternal life is knowing God! If you think God is boring, that’s more a statement about you than God. God is the wellspring of all that is truly good, beautiful, and best. God doesn’t simply have all wisdom. He is wisdom. God doesn’t possess glory. He *is* glory! He’s the eternal, all-powerful, all-glorious One!

And, John says that because of Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection – because Jesus is now our Advocate – we know the Father! We’re reconciled with God. This is what we’re made for. Do you know this? But I don’t want to assume everyone here is a Christian. Maybe you’re here and you’re contemplating Christianity. I want to take a moment if that is you. We know our brokenness and sin, but did you know that because of your sin, you’re separated from a gracious relationship with God? God holds you accountable for all your sinful actions, and you can’t make up for them because your sin comes because you don’t truly love God. You might say, “Why am I punished for not loving God?” Well, God is the summation of all. To not love God will lead to not loving people as you ought, not caring for things as you ought to. But, listen to the good news! Even when we were turned from him, God the Son (Jesus) came to this earth to bear the justice our sins deserved. On the cross, Jesus took the place of sinners. And Jesus says that anyone who turns from their sinfulness and turns to Jesus for rescue is forgiven and reconciled with God! You then become one of God’s little children! What love!!!

Now John speaks to the **Fathers: you know him who is from the beginning (13a, 14a)**. This is a reference to Jesus. As John started his letter talking about that which we heard from the beginning. The One from the beginning is a reference to Jesus. You know Jesus! This isn't simply a cerebral knowledge. This is a relationship. Again, to refer to Jesus' words, he didn't say that eternal life was only knowing the Father, but also knowing the One whom the Father has sent! The older in the church have a relationship with the Lord. John repeats this idea twice. Get it in your head. Your relationship with the Lord transcends all other relationships. Don't get distracted by other relationships. Your communion with the Lord Christ is most essential. After all, without Jesus, you would not be reconciled to God. Without Jesus, you wouldn't be forgiven. Without Jesus, you would have no advocate. Without Jesus, the Spirit wouldn't be at work within you. But with Jesus, who is from the beginning, you have all hope, amen?!

John then speaks to the **Young Men: You are strong, the word of God abides in you, you have overcome the evil one (v. 14b)**. What John already emphasizes are status and privileges of the Christian, but this makes a clear case that John is speaking in terms of status. These Christians are being attacked by false teachers. In their daily lives, they might feel weak. They may not know what to do. How does John encourage them? He tells them who they are.

The strength is not physical, but spiritual. But do you think they always felt strong? No. Even the apostle Paul says that we're strong in our weakness. So, I believe John is saying here that even though they're weak. Even though they might not feel all-wise, they are strong. God's word abides in them. Christian, think of this for you. Do you feel weak against sin and temptations? Because of God, you are strong! Do you ever feel unwise and you don't know how to answer people? Or, do you ever feel like you don't know what to do in your life? God's word abides in you! And, by the way, John isn't only saying that we individually are strong and God's word abides in us. But he's speaking in the plural. Together, as a church family, we're strong and have God's Word. We have already learned how necessary fellowship is as we walk in the light. And so, John emphasizes that here, too. Individually, God strengthens us and has given us his Word. And also, we together are strong. We together have the Word. And then notice this last one: you have overcome the evil one!

Wait. When did you or I overcome the evil one? This again is a status statement. Because Jesus crushed the serpent's head, all those who are united with Jesus have overcome Satan, too. So, listen carefully, Christian. If you ever feel like Satan is stronger than you, you can say that in and of yourself he is. But you're not in and of yourself. Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

These are realities for us. Our sins have been and remain forgiven. We know the Father. We know Jesus. We are strong, the word abides in us, and we have overcome the evil one. This is our status and privilege. Now, John will call us to live like it. Think of it this way. Since we have overcome the evil one, overcome the evil one! This is how the Scriptures speak elsewhere. In Romans 16, Paul says that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet. Wait a second. I thought we already overcame the serpent. We did. But we also haven't. It's an already-not-yet. So, John says we're strong, have the word in us, and have overcome. Now, overcome! By the way, this isn't simply a command. In John's mind, this *has to happen* for those who genuinely trust Jesus. So, because of our standing before God,

## 2. . . hate the “world” (vv. 15-17).

Let’s read verses 15-17 again: <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—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. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. <sup>2</sup>

Do not love the world. What does “world” mean? First off, we know that John doesn’t people the people of this world because in John 3:16, we hear that God loved the world and sent his Son to save the world. This word “world” here refers to something different. I’ve heard a lot of teaching on what it means to be “worldly.” And many times it essentially referred to anything that was viewed as rebellious. So, if a woman wore jeans, that could be considered worldly. Going to Disney World could be worldly. But worldly became very subjective. Whatever someone thought was bad became “worldly.” That’s not the definition of world. Notice in verse 16, John describes what the world consists of: the desires of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life. Essentially, the **world is any system of belief or practice that does not center around God**. In other words, they’re ungodly. I mean that literally. A system that doesn’t have the One True God as the center of it is without God. That doesn’t mean that the world can’t stumble across and discover truths. I’m thankful for non-Christian doctors and scientists and architects and mathematicians and dentists and restaurant owners and mechanics. They can know things that are true. But without Jesus, their beliefs are not centered on the One True God.

We are to *not love* any belief system or practice that doesn’t center around God. After all, if we *love* those systems that means we don’t love God. Why? Because we’re loving the system or practice above God. In addition, to love those things more than God are going to lead to affecting how we live. We will live in the desires of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of life. “Flesh” isn’t simply talking about our skin, but is talking about tendencies and lusts of our body that God calls sin. The desires of the eyes is the lust of the eyes. It doesn’t have to only refer to sexual lust, but can be covetousness, jealousy, envy. Your insatiable craving for whatever you see. It reminds me when Karis was really little and we were at Meijer. She ran down a toy aisle and while waving her arms across both sides of the aisle, she said, “I want this, and I want this!” The world has an insatiable craving for more and will never be satisfied. Then we have the pride of life. This actually refers to the pride that comes with status. The worldly mindset seeks to build up self so that people can think much of us. Look what car we drive or how large our savings account is or how nice we are. All of that builds ourselves and looks away from the Lord.

To love the world is inevitably to make ourselves the center. Please ponder yourself what beliefs elevate you above the Lord? Are there beliefs that are running contrary to Christ? Mindsets that are of this world that you’re embracing? I ask this because John states that if you love the world, you don’t love God. In other words, “the love of the father is not in him.”

Wait. **Why can’t we love the world and God at the same time?** John gives three reasons. **First, it’s not from the Father.** God didn’t give you these things. You might think, “Ok fine. No big deal. Why can’t I still want it if I like it? Sounds like God is a killjoy!” No. God is the source of joy. In his presence is fullness of joy. If God didn’t give it, you have to ask, who did. It’s Satan. He brought the first temptation in the world and has been lying from the beginning. Who do you want to follow? Who do you think is more wise, God or Satan or yourself? But if you are strong and have overcome the evil one, you will not love the world. You’ll hate it because it’s not from the Father.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:15–17.

**The second reason John gives is that the world is passing away.** People might accuse God of being a killjoy, but actually John says that sin is. The world is passing away, along with its desires. Do you really want to live for things that will die away? One frightening reality of hell, according to Revelation is that the sinner will still live in their sins, but they'll never experience any satisfaction. Like a drug addict who is shacking for one more hit, a sinner in hell will long for the satisfaction they once felt in sin, but the world and its desires have died. What people lived for just in the here and now will some day be done away with. Only God and his good gifts will remain. Why live for made-up things? Why not live for God and grow in enjoying his good gifts today?

**Finally, John says that whoever does God's will abides forever.** This may sound like John is saying that we can save ourselves. If we just obey God, we'll go to Heaven. But we have to remember the whole of John's teaching. Jesus forgives us. Jesus is our advocate. Jesus conquered Satan. And because God's Word is in us and we have fellowship with God, we will do God's will. This will be brought out more in chapter 3. But practically speaking, John is emphasizing here that following the Lord and obeying him matters and is far better than living for the world. The world dies, but God will never die and his good gifts will continue on throughout eternity!

**So, Christian, because of your standing before God, hate the "world." Your sins have been and remain forgiven. You know the Father. You know Jesus. You are strong, the word of God abides in you. You have overcome the evil one! Refuse the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Rejoice in our abiding God and, by his grace, obey him forever!**