

## A Better Love

*1 John 2:12-17; October 29, 2017*

I'm sure many of you have heard by now but the past week was a pretty wild week for Pastor Tanner. Late last Saturday night, Tanner began having sharp pains in his stomach. He even texted me late last Saturday night and said, "Jon, get a back up sermon ready. I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to go in the morning." Well, he woke up in the morning feeling better, though not 100%, and so he came and preached last Sunday. I'm glad that worked out and so are you. Can you imagine me whipping a sermon together in a couple of hours on a Sunday morning :)? He pressed through the pain last Sunday because it was a big Sunday. It was our sixth anniversary celebration and Tanner had been preparing to sharing with everyone the news of the ripple project (if you haven't heard about that, go watch the sermon online). Anyways, as soon as the Jazz Brunch was over, Tanner knew he needed to go straight to the Emergency Room. He was in the hospital from Sunday through Thursday afternoon and he's at home resting right now. He ended up being diagnosed with a ruptured abscess on his appendix. This abscess is going to be drained for the next week and then hopefully they'll be able to schedule surgery to remove his appendix sometime in the next two months. I know many of you guys are wondering how you can help.

- Shoot him an encouraging text.
- Sign up to bring them a meal (my wife posted an update this past week on our Facebook pages linking to a website where you can sign up to bring them a meal).
- Drop him a card in the mail (215 High St., Medford).

If you were to drop a note to him in the mail...think about it. What would you say? Here's a stab: "Tanner, last Sunday was a pretty wild day in so many ways. It was awesome seeing so many people here last week and hearing about the ripple project and God's financial provision already. Wow! \$32,000+! And then jus like that, you're off to the hospital. I'm so glad to here that you are doing better and are at home now. Having issues with your appendix is no joke. People have even died from things like you've experienced. But we're glad of the news that you are much better. We are so thankful for the doctors and nurses who cared for you and for all of the advances in medicine these days to treat the symptoms that you were having. As a result, we are confident of your continued healing over the next few weeks. On the other hand, be careful. Rest. Don't over do it. We don't want your appendix irritated again before they are able to take it out. Take every precaution not to get your drain infected. Listen to your doctor's advice. Listen to your wife. Listen to your elders. We love you and look forward to seeing you in person again soon."

Transition: this is similar to why John wrote 1 John. On one hand, he's writing confident of their spiritual status and he wants to assure and encourage them (read 2:21; 5:13). On the other hand, he's call them to vigilance and deeper devotion (read 2:1, 26). Be confident and be vigilant. We see both of these in our passage today.

**Read 1 John 2:12-17**

In verses 12-14, John is confident of their right standing with God and he's writing to assure them and encourage them.

In verses 15-17, John is calling them to deeper devotion and vigilance in light of their assurance and right standing with God.

How do these two relate? John Piper notes, "I think John means for the strand of confidence to motivate the strand of vigilance. He wants to motivate the fight with the confidence of victory."

**The Point: Increasing assurance of eternal life should move us to deeper love for God and doing his will.**

### **I. Be increasingly confident and grateful for your spiritual status (12-14).**

Before we just into the details of these verses, let me address some of the oddities that are apparent.

#### **1. What's up with John's style?**

- It's pretty clear that John switches up his style here in these three verses. The ESV Bible even puts this section in poetic form, drawing attention to the repetitive clauses.
- What's clear is that:
  - John addresses three different groups of peoples: "children, fathers, and young men."
  - He also repeats virtually the same message to each of these groups twice.
- Before we think a little more deeper about those things, let me just remind us of the flow in 1 John.
  - He has just completed two triadic sections of addressing the claims of the false teachers.
    - "If we say..." (see 1:6, 8, 10).
    - "Whoever says..." (see 2:4, 6, 9).
  - John now turns to address the believers and his goal in this section is to encourage and reassure of them that they have in fact received the benefits of the gospel.

#### **2. Who's he actually writing to? Who are these three groups of people?**

- There are a couple of options:
  - He could be addressing three groups of people based either on:
    - Physical age
    - Spiritual maturity.
  - He could just be using these terms rhetorically to describe one group, namely, the church.
  - Finally, he could be using a combination of the above (most likely).
    - He begins by addressing them "little children" like he did in 2:1 (see also

2:18; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21). In this, sense, he's addressing the entire church, all of the believers.

- Within the group of believers, he then recollects and addresses the young and old in both physical age and in spiritual maturity. Why does he do this? Maybe he thinks the language of "little children" could offend the leaders of the church so he addresses them directly in this passage.
- Whatever John is doing, he does not mean that what is true of one group is *not* true of the other group. Here's the deal, whatever is true for each of these groups is true for all believers. Let's all listen up.

### **3. Why the repetition?**

- For emphasis. What do you do when you want to get your point across? You repeat it. He wants these truths to sink in.

## **Three Powerful Truths about your Spiritual Status.**

### **1. Your sins are forgiven.**

- Pause! Let that sink in: "Your sins are forgiven." The tense is actually the perfect tense so that translation is really, "Your sins have been forgiven." It's done. It's completed. It's in the past.
- What's the basis of this forgiveness? The answer is found in the phrase, "for his name's sake." Another way to translate this phrase is, "Because of his name" (NET).

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31 ESV)*

- One commentary notes that there was a Semitic belief that "the name stands for the identify of that person, and to know that name gives the person access to that power" (Akin).
- In other words, you are forgiven because of person and work of Christ in its totality. This forgiveness is possible because of Jesus' life and death (see 1:6-2:2).
- See Psalm 103:1-14
- Remember what I said in 1:6-7: your sins are forgiven!

### **2. You know God.**

- The first reference to knowing *him* is most definitely Christological. Jesus was there at the beginning of time and at the beginning of the church. Their "knowledge" of him, in particular, his earthly life, was extremely important.
- This knowledge refers to a "deep, ongoing spiritual relationship." A knowledge that is not merely intellectual. It is deeply personal.
- Combined with the promise of forgiveness above, we now see that the believers can claim the two main promises of the new covenant (see Jer. 31:33-34).

“...for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33-34 ESV)

- Remember what I said in 2:4: you do know him!

### 3. You have overcome the evil one.

- The “evil one” being referred to here is the devil (cf. 5:18-19). The devil represents everything that is opposed to God.
- Again, the tense is perfect so that translation in reality is, “You have overcome.” It’s a done deal. How can we say this when we still wage war against evil?
  - They can claim and John can say they have overcome the evil one because of the victorious work of Jesus on the cross and in his resurrection. Jesus has defeated sin and death through his death and resurrection. The victory has been won. When you place your faith in Jesus, his victory is your victory. Jesus is the one who secures that victory over sin and death.
  - As a result, the assurance of my eternal destiny and right standing with God isn’t contingent upon how good I am but upon how great Jesus is. The more he becomes a treasure in my life the more confident I should be of spending eternity with him.
- John adds two additional phrases in his repetition related to overcoming the evil one. What’s he doing? I believe he is answering how we overcome the evil one. You have overcome the evil one because you are strong and you are strong because the word of God abides in you.
  - God’s Word helps us to overcome the devil’s two main faith-destroying efforts:
    - Satan accuses us.
      - He accuses us with sin that we have already done.
      - Reference *Embracing Accusation* by Shane and Shane.
        - “I hear him say, Cursed are the ones who can’t abide.”
        - “I am cursed and gone astray. I can’t gain salvation.”
        - “If the penalty of sin is death then death is mine.”
        - Oh the devil's singing over me an age old song that I am cursed and gone astray. Singing the first verse so conveniently over me, he's forgotten the refrain: Jesus saves!”
    - Satan tempts us.
      - He tempts us with sin that we haven’t yet done.
      - How does Satan tempt us? He lies.
        - “And in all his lying, it boils down to two lies. In every test: his lie is: God is bad. And in every temptation his lie is: Sin is better. God is bad and sin is better. He has one tune to play, and he plays it in a thousand ways” (John Piper).

“Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am in that moment doubtful as to God’s true intentions in giving me that command. Does He really have my best interests at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having? Such questions, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of disobedience. However, the gospel changes my view of God’s commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the Person from whom those commandments come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God loved me enough to sacrifice His Son’s life for me, then he must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commandments to me. Viewing God’s commands and prohibitions in this light, I can see them for what they really are: friendly signposts from a heavenly Father who is seeking to love me through each directive, so that I might experience His very fullness forever” (Milton Vincent).

- The Word of God gives us the strength to overcome the accusations and temptations of the devil because God’s Word is truth (cf. John 8:32; 17:17). When our minds abide in God’s Word (present tense = ongoing) and are saturated with the truth of God’s Word and we believe, we are strengthened to refute the lies of Satan (cf. Rev. 12:10-11).
- Look forward to what I’m going to say in 3:8: you have overcome the devil!

Transition: this encouragement and reassurance sets the stage for the exhortation that is to come. As a result of your forgiveness, knowledge of God and victory over the evil one, don’t love the world. Our daily battle is fueled by the victory that is ours in Jesus.

## **II. Deepen your love for God and doing his will (15-17)**

### **1. Don’t love the world (15-17a).**

- World defined: 1) created universe (3:17), 2) world of human persons (2:2), or 3) an evil organized earthly system controlled by Satan, opposing the kingdom of God (4:3-5; 5:19; 16:11).
- Love for the world is incompatible with love for God (15-16).
  - “The desires/lusts of the flesh” (desires for things we don’t have).
    - The problem isn’t that God created a bad world. The problem is that humans, as a result of sin, make idols out of God’s created world.
    - When we see the vacuum and emptiness in our hearts and souls, instead of turning to God, we fill these desires with things that are contrary to God’s will.
  - “The desires/lusts of the eyes” (desires for things we don’t have).
    - Our eyes are windows into our souls (cf. Matt. 5:27-30).
    - “...all of these temptations of the world focus on enjoyment in the present without an analysis or understanding of the future ramifications” (Akin).
  - “The pride of life” or “The boastful pride of life” or “The arrogance produced by material possessions” or “The boasting of what one has and does” (the pride in what we do have).

- John's concern is to condemn pride and boasting about having things and doing things which this world deems as important. A desire to outshine others.
- "In this area of temptation, individuals make idols of their livelihood, social standing, and any other status symbol that the world determines is important but matters little to God" (Akin).
- What happens is that the material security of one's wealth, possessions or social status produces a boastful overconfidence. It could even lead you to conclude, "I have everything and I don't need God."
- Summary: the world is driven by passions for pleasure and pride in possessions.
- If you love the world you will die with the world (17a).
  - For the person who stores up treasures on earth, their death is truly tragic. They don't gain anything but lose everything.
  - For those of you that have initiated retirement planning...where do you buy stock or mutual funds? Isn't it in things that are on the rise?
  - Are you going to live for the dot (your temporary life) or the line (eternity)?
- Transition: to declare allegiance to one side is to declare opposition to the other.

## **2. Love God and doing his will (17b).**

- If you love God and doing his will you will live forever. This one is really simple. Love for God is demonstrated in obedience to his commands (see 5:3; cf. John 14:15). If you love God...you will love doing his will.
- "But if the love of the Father is in you, if you love God with all your heart, then every room you enter will be a temple of love to God, all your work will be a sacrifice of love to God, every meal will be a banquet of love with God, every song will be an overture of love to God" (John Piper).
- If you lack love for God, there are two options: 1) you aren't born of God or 2) your love for God has grown cool. In both cases, love for the world must be crushed. Turn from the world to God and his will.

**The Point: Increasing assurance of eternal life should move us to deeper love for God and doing his will.**