

THAT YOU MAY
KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“Assurance and
the Hatred of Evil”

1 John 2:12–17

November 5, 2025 | Men of the Word | Grace Community Church

“Vanity Fair” in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*

“Then I saw in my dream, that when Christian and Faithful had left the wilderness, they soon saw a town ahead of them named Vanity. At that



town there is a fair called Vanity Fair, and it is kept open all the year long. It bears the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is held is lighter than vanity—and also because all that is sold there is vanity. As is the saying of the wise, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity! . . ."

“Assurance and the Hatred of Evil” – 1 John 2:12–17

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

I. Remember Your Identity

1 John 2:12–14



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

**“I am writing to you, little children, because
your sins have been forgiven you for His
name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know Him who has been from
the beginning. I am writing to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.**

**I have written to you, children, because you
know the Father. I have written to you,
fathers, because you know Him who has been
from the beginning. I have written to you,
young men, because you are strong, and the
word of God abides in you, and you have
overcome the evil one” (2:12–14).**

- A highly unique section in 1 John.
- Two sets of almost identical literary triplets (vv. 12–13b; vv. 13c–14).
- Each statement contains: a statement of writing; the identification of the one written to; and a reason for the writing.
- John repeats himself so that his encouragement would be unmistakable.

A. An Encouragement to All Christians

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. . . . I have written to you, children, because you know the Father” (vv. 12a, 13c).

- **“Little children . . . children”** – refers to all born-again Christians, everyone under the apostle John’s care and authority (see 2:1).
- **“Your sins have been forgiven you”** – “to release from legal or moral obligation”—*once and for all*; the basic description of a Christian.
- **“For His name’s sake”** – the ultimate reason for the forgiveness—for the sake of Christ, who served as “the propitiation for our sins” (2:2).
- **“You know the Father”** – the basic description of a Christian (John 17:3).

B. An Encouragement to Mature Men

“I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. . . . I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning” (vv. 12b, 14a).

- **“Fathers”** – a sub-category of John’s “children”; men who were spiritually mature members of the church, who were influential in the church, and had disciples of their own.
- **“You know Him who has been from the beginning”** – speaks of the successful acquisition of personal knowledge, specifically of the Incarnate Christ, the one “Who was from the beginning” (see 1:1–3).
- John repeats himself almost verbatim, to affirm his confidence in them.

C. An Encouragement to Young Men

“I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. . . . I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (vv. 13b, 14b).

- **“Young men”** – those who were known for their spiritual hunger and stamina; those learning to battle sin in earnest.
- **“You have overcome the evil one”** – John describes their battle with the devil as a guaranteed victory (see also 4:4; 5:4–5, 18–19).
- **“You are strong”** – spiritual energy and vitality.
- **“The word of God abides in you”** – the source of the strength and victory.

- In sum, vv. 12–14 are filled with expressions of the apostle John's *confidence* in the spiritual state of his audience.
- Having already provided a series of strict tests by which to assess whether a person's confession was genuine, John makes a special point to encourage his readers that *they passed these tests*.



- The assurance of salvation was something John wanted them to enjoy.
- This assurance was also important for providing proper motivation for what was still yet to come in his letter.

II. Regard Your Responsibility

1 John 2:15a



“Do not love the world nor the things in the world.”

“Do not love” the world nor the things in the world” (2:15a).

- Responsibility arises out of the assurance of one’s identity; John now states a simple yet pointed *prohibition* for those who are children of God. Only those who had this identity could obey.
- John previously prohibited hatred and called for love (2:9–11); now he reverses course and prohibits love.

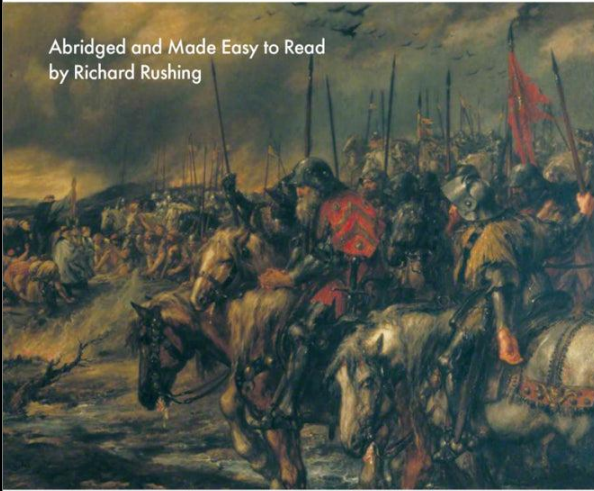


- **“Do not love”** – a strong command; it could imply that John believed his readers struggled in this area, but more likely John states it as a *categorical prohibition*.

The Mortification of Sin

John Owen

Abridged and Made Easy to Read
by Richard Rushing



PURITAN  PAPERBACKS

“Unless a man be a believer, that is,
one that is truly ingrafted into Christ,
he can never mortify any one sin.”

—John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*, 69

“Do not love **the world** nor the things in the world” (2:15a).

- “**The world**” – the term, κόσμος (*kosmos*), is used 6x in vv. 15–17; its basic meaning is “order” as opposed to “chaos”; it can refer to *the planet* or to *humanity*, but here it refers to *the present system/domain of evil*.
 - **1 John 1:5–6** – “. . . God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all”
 - **1 John 5:19** – “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.”
- Elsewhere, John describes “this world” as *ruled* by Satan (e.g., John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world” (2:15a).

- **“The things in the world”** – not the things God has created, but the components that belong to this present system of evil—the things of darkness that are antithetical to the God of Light.
- John will summarize these “things” in three categories in v. 16; he is not prohibiting enjoyment of the good things God has created (see 1 Tim 4:1–5), but the enjoyment of those things that are morally corrupt.
- This is not a call to asceticism, self-abasement, or the severe treatment of the body, but a call to reject any affection for or gratification in the things that stand contrary to God and His will (see also James 4:4).

“Worldliness is whatever makes sin look normal
and righteousness look strange.”

—Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, 37

III. Recognize Your Reasons

1 John 2:15b–17



“... For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. . . .”

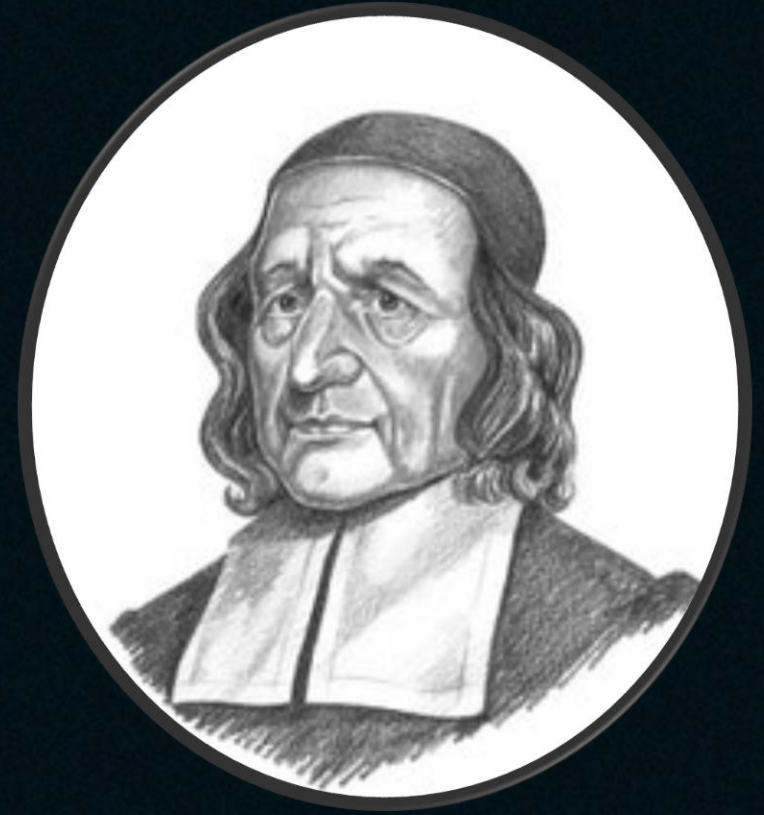
A. You Cannot Serve Two Masters

“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (v. 15b).

- John provides a plausible scenario.
- **“If anyone loves”** – refers to a habitual practice, an *ongoing attraction*.
- **“The love of the Father”** – a love expressed *toward* the Father that is characteristic of genuine salvation.
- **“Is not in him”** – a simple fact; a love for God cannot co-exist in the same person with a love for the domain of darkness; the objects of such love are antithetical.

“The two poles could sooner meet,
than the love of Christ and the love of
the world.”

—Thomas Brooks



Men of the Word

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

—Matthew 6:24



Men of the Word

B. This Is Not Your Father's World

“For **all that is in the world**, **the lust of the flesh** and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (v. 16).

- “**All that is in the world**” – defines “the things in the world” in v. 15a.
- John identifies these “things” according to three basic categories; notice they all point *inwardly*, and not to external things.

LUST OF THE FLESH

- 1) “**The lust of the flesh**” – “a strong, internal desire/craving,” which in this context is for something *forbidden*; not human appetites in themselves, but appetites darkened by evil; expresses itself in secret and prompts outward gratification.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (v. 16).

LUST OF THE EYES

- 2) “The lust of the eyes”** – a strong, internal craving which is fed by *the sense of sight*—the eye-gate; it is focused on physical things that can be viewed (money, clothes, cars, women, etc.).

BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE

- 3) “The boastful pride of life”** – “a claim to something, particularly to impress others”; congratulating self, in public, for achievements; self-confidence and self-sufficiency (see James 4:13–16).

Men of the Word

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (v. 16).

- John ends the statement with a strong contrast; as in v. 15b, these things are mutually exclusive.
- **“Is not from the Father”** – these things do not originate in God; He has not created them; there is nothing in them that is consistent with who He is.
- **“But is from the world”** – these things originate in the realm of darkness, which is ruled by the evil one.
- One who is characterized by these things must have no assurance.

C. It Will Not Stand the Test of Time

“The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (v. 17).

- **“The world is passing away”** – this present domain of darkness, ruled by the evil one, is decaying; its destruction is guaranteed because Christ has already come as Savior, and is coming again as King (see 2:8).
- **“And also its lusts”** – not only is the domain of darkness as a whole passing away, but all the small “things” that are part of it as well.
- It is, as Solomon described it in Ecclesiastes, *but a vapor*.



And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.

—Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,”
Stanza 3

“The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but **the one who does the will of God** **lives forever**” (v. 17).

- “**The one who does the will of God**” – to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (1 John 3:23), and in response to receive new life; this life is manifested in transformation leading to obedience.
- “**Lives forever**” – in contrast to the limited duration of “this world,” the one who is *born again* is promised *eternal life* (John 3:16).
 - **1 John 5:4–5** – “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

THAT YOU MAY KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Assurance is intended not to promote license but to motivate godliness.
- ✓ What God has created is to be enjoyed, but what stands opposed to Him is to be reviled.
- ✓ Our biggest threat is not from “the world” out there, but from “the world” in our own selves.
- ✓ The right aversion to the world will only come in proportion to the degree one grows in the adoration of God.