



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 John 2:12-17

"World Beaters"

1 John 2

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Mark. Good morning. We are in a study in 1 John. We're in chapter 2 and this morning we're going to look at verses 12-17.

John writes, "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 any 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."

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your many blessings to us. We thank You for the rain. As Mark said, you're the one that gives the sunshine and the rain, and we thank you for blessing us in that way.

But certainly blessing us with this time together in Your word, this time of fellowship with the saints on this Lord's day. That's really respite from the world that we will have read about and will consider this morning, and all of the challenges that it presents to us.

We are in a spiritual war that is constant and will not end as long as we are in it, as long as we are this side of heaven. So we need Your strength. We need Your refreshment, which is what Your word gives us. It is what arms us. It is our great weapon in this battle, and so we thank You, Father, for giving it to us. We thank You for the possession we have of Your inherent word, Your revelation, this unique book. Help us to value it and to apply ourselves to it, to appropriate it to our lives. That is such an important part of the lesson that we will consider this morning.

So bless us as we study these things and build us up in the faith. Equip us; prepare us for the challenges that come. They come in unexpected ways, in unexpected times, which means we need to be on the alert continually and never sleeping, always prepared to face the challenges of the evil one. He's real. He stalks the earth. He comes at us in the most unexpected ways. So Lord, may we be prepared for that.

And bless us, Lord, materially. We have material needs constantly. You are faithful to provide for all of them. In fact, Paul says You do so exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. And You're providing for us even when we're not asking, and You do so in the best of ways and we give You praise and thanks for that. But You've given us the means of grace, which is prayer to obtain the blessings that You have for us, and so we pray that You bless those who are without employment. We pray that You'd open doors of opportunity for them. Give them patience in the meantime. Bless those who are sick. We pray for those that are grieving. We pray for those that are under stress at home or at work or whatever. That's a part of the battle that we face.

Father, You know all of our needs. We pray that You'd provide, give encouragement, and give strength in the midst of all of it. Bless

our nation. Bless our leaders. Bless all of those who govern us. You've placed them in these positions. We pray that You give them wisdom and protection, and that You'd bless our land. Great blessing of our land is spiritual revival. That's the great rainfall that we need and that refreshes the land and gives life. We pray for that. And if that comes, it will come through Your people. You'll use us. Equip us this morning for that task for doing that wherever we will be this week. So we look to You to bless us. Thank You for this time together. Bless it and may it be a time of learning, of worship, and enjoyment. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] The Westminster confession of faith describes the Christian life in rather stark terms, as a continual and irreconcilable war. Christians are soldiers. Ephesians 6 describes the pieces of our armor. We fight an invisible war on three fronts - the world, the flesh, and the devil. Those fronts and enemies aren't always easily distinguished from one another, but each are mentioned in our passage, John 2:12-17. It's a passage John wrote to encourage Christians in the fight, but also one that he wrote to clarify his teaching.

We all do that. We get in an conversation of some weight, of some significance, or we get in a debate and we'll sometimes pause to get some clarity. "Do you understand what I'm saying? Are you following me?" Well, the apostle had to do that too. He was clear in his own mind, but he knew that perhaps he wasn't clear on some issues and so he pauses to give some clarity. He's been explaining the difference between those who know God and those who don't. He was doing that in order to strengthen Christians in the assurance of their salvation.

He does that by giving what are called the tests of life. There are three of them: obedience to God's commands, love of the brethren, and faith in the truth. Those who are born again are children of God and they manifest it in their lives, and those are the evidences of it. Now, they're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ

alone. We're not saved by being obedient. We're not saved by loving the brethren. These aren't the means of our salvation. They're the evidence of it. They're the fruit of it. They're the natural outworking of a new life that God has given us by His grace in regeneration. We're new creatures and it will be exhibited. That's really what John is saying, and these are the ways, three of the ways, in which that will be seen.

And he's given the first two in his studies, or we've seen them so far in our studies. But before he gives the third test, which is in verses 18-27, the test of faith, of knowledge of the truth, he pauses to make sure that his readers understand what he's saying and understand that he has confidence in them. John knew that it's not at all uncommon for people to misinterpret or misapply statements. We all do that. And we hear something and we hear it the wrong way, we take it the wrong way. And he made some firm, rather uncompromising statements. He said the one who is not obedient is a liar and the person who lacks love is in darkness.

But then no one obeys perfectly. And none of us loves as we ought. John could imagine that some were wondering if they pass the tests. And if they were wondering that, then rather than strengthening them in their faith, they were being weakened in it. So John now interrupts his instruction in order to correct any misunderstandings by giving a personal word of encouragement to these doubting Christians and reaffirm that they were born again, that he believed that they were born again and had every reason to believe that, and they did too. Now he does that in verses 12-14. And then having given them that encouragement, that they're genuine children of God, he then gives them incentive to fight the good fight in verses 15-17 by warning them of the world, the anti-god, antichrist system that is so seductive.

This is a passage of clarification and motivation in which John expresses confidence in his friends, his children of light who had success in the spiritual war, and he encourages them in light of that success and then in light of who they are to fight on. In verses 12-14,

John writes to three groups of people and he makes six statements about them, two statements for each group. Each statement confirms their salvation and each description identifies them as members of God's family.

He writes first to the little children, then to the fathers, and then to the young men. These descriptions or categories that he gives are not to be understood physically. It's not temporal age that he's describing, but spiritual development. God's family, like every human family, has members with different levels of maturity. And John speaks to each group according to the spiritual experience that is most common to their level of maturity. The little children could refer to the congregation. In fact, John does speak to the entire congregation in that way. So some have taken all of these descriptions as being each one applicable to everybody in the congregation, that in some way they all apply, and that's certainly a possible interpretation.

I'm taking it of three different groups, and here of young believers whose experience is common to all new believers, and that is the knowledge of God's forgiveness and acceptance. Young believers don't understand everything and don't understand what they understand at great depth, but they certainly understand forgiveness. That's the first thing we come to understand, and in understanding that, acceptance with God. So in verse 12 he says that he was writing to them because their sins had been forgiven, in verse 13, because they know the Father. Now again, as I said, that's true of all believers. And each statement that's made here in these verses applies to some degree to all believers, but certainly when a person is first saved, he or she appreciates that, appreciates his or her new position, or as he was, or she was, condemned under the wrath of God. Now that's gone. They're accepted into God's family. They've been forgiven, forgiven forever. The guilt is gone. They had been justified and received into God's family. He is no longer their judge, but their Father. That's liberating.

When you think about it, justification is not just kind of a theoretical thing. It's not just a doctrine in and of itself, but a doctrine - and this is true of all doctrines, but certainly this - a doctrine with very important application, very important motivation. Because what it says is at the moment of faith you are absolutely, completely 100 percent accepted by God, forgiven completely, and fully and completely accepted. From the moment of your faith, you cannot be more accepted by God than you will be 10,000 years later. It's complete. And what that means is as a believer in Jesus Christ, you don't need to be striving to gain His approval. You have it. He's your Father, fully and completely. You can rest in that and develop, not rest and not fight, because you'll make the point. This is really what we need to do. That's what the Christian life is. But you rest in your salvation. That is a liberating truth, one that Paul emphasizes in Romans 8 where he says that every believer has been freed of a spirit of slavery and has the spirit of adoption, and as sons we cry out Abba, Father.

Every child has an inner witness to his or her salvation. The Spirit of God making that witness to his or her soul. But here, John is the one who's giving these believers that assurance. He was writing not because they were not saved and they needed to know that, but because they were saved and they needed to know that. He knew them. He knew what they were like. He knew their profession of faith. He had confidence in them, had confidence that they knew God. And this letter was intended to encourage them in that, to be an encouragement for them so that they would grow in their knowledge of God and they would develop as Christian men and women.

So it addresses the little children first and then the fathers in verses 13 and 14. They are the spiritual adults in the congregation. John describes them in both verses the same way that He described the children. They know him. They know the Father. The difference between the two is the length of time of the knowledge, the length of time that the fathers have known God. So their knowledge is the same

knowledge, but this is greater knowledge. This is more developed knowledge, and that in itself really would be motivation for the children to grow in their knowledge of God. It produces maturity in the faith, which gives wisdom and discernment in the spiritual walk and warfare. And that's really what John speaks of next, the warfare, the walk, but also the knowledge that gives us the strength to carry it on.

Between the little children and the fathers are the young men in verses 13 and 14 who are visibly engaged in battle. "I am writing to you young men because you have overcome the evil one." And again, "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you've overcome the evil one." Well, they were strong they'd overcome the evil one because the word of God abides in them. That's the important of Scripture, the importance of knowledge.

And John gives a lot of attention to that here. He gives a lot of attention to the young men. They are very important. They may have more energy than maturity, but they are, as F.F. Bruce wrote, the first line of defense against attack. We need to pray for the young men and women of the congregation. They are the soldiers who become the leaders. And again, John is not speaking in terms of literal, physical maturity. He's speaking of spiritual maturity, so this can apply to all different age groups, these young men. But generally speaking, it's young people, people in their prime, who would fit into that spiritually, and they face challenges.

It may be a challenge at the university where they have to sit in a class where a professor is a skeptic and mocks the faith and they have to sit through that and kind of figure that out, deal with that. Or with their peers who challenge the way they live and try to draw them away from that. Or the young marriages or families that come, or businesses that come. All of that comes with challenges. And so I say we need to pray for these young men, young women as well, because it's true. They are the future leaders.

Well, these young men, those to whom John is writing, had proven themselves to be very able against the enemy, against the false teachers. They had overcome the evil one, he said, and they had shown that they were strong. And what made them strong was the word of God. It's what gives us the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His person and His will, and the knowledge of His promises and His works. As we study the word of God, we know what He promises to give us. As we study His ways, how He has worked in history, as seen in the Bible, as He has helped others, we know how He can help us. We know what He's able to do, which is everything. Nothing's too hard for Him.

So as we study these things, we're strengthened. Our mind is strengthened. And as we walk in the things that we understand, as we walk by faith, as we live in obedience, we experience God's blessings. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word." That's what these young men did. Scripture made them wise and bold like Daniel and his three friends in Babylon. And it enabled them to overcome Satan and his wiles, his tricks, and his agents, these false teachers.

In Ephesians 6, the word of God is the sword of the saint. It's the one weapon that Paul lists in our spiritual armory and it's all we need to carry out the fight that we're in. Jesus proved that in the wilderness, where he met the evil one. Three times the devil tempted Him and three times the Lord answered the temptation with scripture. Finally, Matthew writes, the devil left Him, left Him defeated.

It's through the knowledge of the word of God and it's right application to each situation or temptation we face, each decision that we make, that we overcome in triumph. Now you'll notice in reading these verses that the first statement John makes to each group is in the present tense and the second one is in the past tense. "I am writing to you, little children. I have written to you, children." And there's speculation as to the reason for that, different reasons are given may simply be stylistic.

But I think it's better to understand these differences and this repetition as a way of expressing the invariability of each statement, the unbreakableness of the statements, the certainty of them. The past tense has the sense or the emphasis on not only what happened in the past, but the present consequences. In other words, what happened in the past also continues, has continuing results into the present, and it lays some emphasis on that. It lays some emphasis on their standing and the assurance that they have of each one of these statements that they're true.

Now the New International version brings that out a little more consistently than the New American Standard Bible does. "Your sins have been forgiven and still are." That's the sense of it. "You have known Him and still do." "You have overcome the evil one and continue to do that." So this isn't something that happened in the past and now they're experiencing failure. They continue to be in this position of forgiveness and knowledge and victory. Now that was a great encouragement. It was designed or intended by John to be an encouragement. John was convinced they were forgiven, that they were God's church, and in Paul's words, more than conquerors. All believers are. You believe in Jesus Christ? You are more than a conqueror.

So they were not to doubt, but to be reassured of their salvation and that is very necessary. If a person's going to progress in the Christian life, he or she needs to have the assurance of his salvation. Assurance doesn't save us. people can lack assurance and die with a lack of assurance and they're still saved. We can have questions about ourselves and Satan can trouble us with that. He doesn't take our salvation away. It's certain, whether we're assured of it or not, if we're born again, if we put our faith in Christ. But there's not going to be much growth if there's not assurance. If you're constantly doubting that you're saved, you're going to be wallowing in doubt and not progressing. It's very important for development in the Christian life to have the assurance of salvation. And John was convinced of their

salvation and he confirmed his confidence in them. He wants to make that very clear to them.

But having done that, that's not the end of it. They had overcome the devil. They were more than conquerors. But the warfare is not over. It doesn't end. It doesn't end as long as we are in this world. It doesn't end this side of the grave. And the world is the western front, so to speak, in this war. The western front, of course, in the First World War was where the great heat of the battle, the Great War was fought. And in the spiritual warfare it's the world that's the western front. And it's not only where much of the fighting happens, it is the enemy. The fight is against it.

And so having been rearmed with the assurance of their salvation, they were now to behave as saved people. They were to live as God's children. They were to resist the world, not conform to it. That's what John encourages them to do in verses 15-17, where he warns of the danger of this world and motivates them, and by application, motivates us to love the Lord, not the world, and serve Him. "Do not love the world," he says, "nor the things in the world."

Now what John means is do not love this world's system, which is decidedly anti-God, antichrist. The context indicates that that's his meaning, and we must always read the Bible in its context, especially since John uses the word "world" in a number of different, and not always in a bad way. Sometimes it means the universe, it means the cosmos. It's that way in John's gospel, in John 1:10, where he draws a lot upon the book of Genesis. He writes, "He was in the world and the world was made through Him," speaking of the word, the logos, speaking of Christ. "He was in the world and the world was made through Him." Well, he's talking about the natural world, the globe, the universe, for that matter.

And Genesis 1:31 says that after God created all of that it was very good. So that's using the world in a good sense, of the place in which we live. But the world also means people. It means the human race, the population of the world, and that is the sense that John uses

the word in John 3:16, where "God so loved the world." It's not "He loved this globe." It's He loved the people in this world and He gave His only begotten Son for it.

The world of mankind, though, can be the world of the elect or the world of the non-elect, or the world of the believer or the world of the unbeliever, and that's clear, I think, later, from 1 John 5:19. "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one." Well, not everyone lies in the power of the evil one - not the elect, not the young men in verse 13. They've overcome the evil one. So the world there is the world of men, but with a different meaning, the world of the unbeliever.

The world has different meanings. The word "world" has different meanings. And it can mean the globe, the creation. It can mean the world of men, or it can mean, his third meaning, which I've already suggested and which I think is present here in our verse, the world system. The system that is opposed to God - an ethical system, a world of men in rebellion against God with all of its principles and all of its ways. That's the way John is using the meaning here.

We are certainly to love the world in terms of the world of men. God does. We are to love the world of His creation. God loves His creation. He pronounced it very good. And we are to be stewards of it and take care of it. But the world in rebellion, the world's system that is opposed to God, the things of the world, its values and pleasures and purposes, we are not to love. We are to resist it. The organizing, guiding power of that society is the evil one, the one Jesus called the prince of this world.

So behind it all is something thoroughly dark and malevolent, something evil. But the battle is not, at least on the face of it, the battle is not all that cosmic. It sounds - I guess that's the right word to use - it sounds cosmic. This evil one is behind this evil system. At least in our experience, it's more mundane than that. It's more common and routine. It involves the daily experiences of life that work against us very subtly. You don't recognize the devil in all these things. He's there, but it's much more subtle than that and the subtly's in the

mundane aspect of it. Just in the daily aspect of life, where we meet the challenges.

Paul warns of this in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world." Don't adopt the world's attitudes and goals. Don't conform to the world's ambitions and desires and ways. There's nothing wrong with the material world. There's nothing wrong with wealth. Wealth is a gift. It's a blessing in and of itself, but it's like anything. It's like any good thing. It can become a bad thing. Riches can become an idol. Paul, in fact, calls covetedness, or greed, idolatry. There's nothing wrong with acquiring material possessions. The danger is in becoming a materialistic and being preoccupied with worldly things. That's not a danger only for the rich either. That's a danger for poor people just as well. They can become obsessed with things. They can become obsessed with a desire to have what they don't have, and because they don't have it, they can become bitter over not possessing things. That's just as much a problem.

The warnings of both the apostles Paul and John are don't conform to the world's standard of success or adopt the world's goals in life, or make the world's ways the laws of your life. "Do not love the world nor the things in the world." And in verses 16 and 17, John gives two reasons for not loving it. Love for world is inconsistent with love for God. And secondly, it's a bad investment. The world is transient. It doesn't last. The world is passing away.

So at the end of verse 15, John says, "The love of the Father is not in those who love the world." The two don't mix. We cannot serve two masters. And then he says in verse 16, "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 lust of the flesh would certainly involve prurient thoughts, lustful thoughts, lewd behavior. But it's broader than that. The flesh is our sinful nature. It's a law in our members, as Paul describes it in Romans 7.

So these are the godless desires that are in our minds, in all of our minds, the bad stuff that continually rises up from within us and that is a conflict with the Holy Spirit and troubles us so much, that troubled Paul so much in Romans 7. And Paul writes of this struggle also in Galatians 5. "And the deeds of the flesh - improper desires and attitudes like immorality and sensuality, but also jealousy and anger and envy. That's the lust of the flesh. It's internal. It's what wells up within us and is in conflict with the Holy Spirit and with our new nature. The lust of the eyes is external. These are the temptations that assault us from without. We meet them through the eyes.

It's the tendency, as one writer put it, "to be captivated by the outward show of things, by the glitter of it all." Achan is a good example of that, Achan's covetedness when Israel was entering the land, crossed the Jordan, and began to conquer Canaan. The first city they conquered was Jericho, and Achan, in the midst of the battle, saw some beautiful things. He saw a beautiful Babylonian garment. He saw a pile of shekels, silver shekels, and a wedge of gold, and he took it.

Now that wouldn't have been a problem in any other city that they conquered. They were free to take the spoils of war for themselves, but not that city. Jericho was the first city to be captured, and you'll remember, it is burned. And some have thought that is probably seen as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. It was His city. It was the first city. It was to be dedicated to Him, and so everything in it was His. Everything was forbidden to the Israelite. It was a city devoted to the Lord. But Achan said, "I saw them." He knew better. He knew what he was not to do, but he said, "I saw them. I coveted them and took them." well, that's the lust of the eye.

David, his sin with Bathsheba happened when he saw her bathing and didn't look away. Then he took her, even though she was another man's wife and forbidden to him. Neither Achan nor David went out seeking forbidden fruit. David didn't go out onto his rooftop and say, "I wonder if I can see some ladies out there bathing." He just went out there innocently. Then she captured his eye. See, that's the

way it often happens. It happens suddenly. It happens unexpectedly. It did for Achan. It did for David. What they saw was beautiful and then they didn't resist it.

It's hard to resist it. It's hard to resist the lust of the eye. It is powerful, and so implicit in this instruction is beware. Be alert. You don't know when it's coming. You don't have a sign in the highway saying that in the next five miles there's going to be something lustful to see. "Watch out around that corner." It's not like that. It's just suddenly there is it. Be alert. Be prepared. That's, as I say, the implied instruction in that.

The third mark of the world is the boastful pride of life. It's the desire that drives us to impress people. This has to do with our place in society. Self-glorification, as one of the commentators put it. Our place in society and not being content with it. F.F. Bruce wrote of soul-stunting ambitions, like keeping up with the Joneses. Now that's a very subtle influence in which a good desire for self-improvement or self-betterment can become something vain and arrogant.

It's good to work hard. I know I don't need to say that. I don't mean to be talking down in saying that, but it's good to work hard. We all should do that. It's good to have as a goal to be the best at what you do. We're to do everything to God's glory. We can't do that if we're lazy or if we're indifferent. We should be industrious and diligent. But when being the best student in class produces self-importance and a condescending attitude, then it's bad.

When the effort to reach the goal of getting a promotion morphs into a selfish ambition that runs over people in order to gain the prize, then it's soul-stunting. It's satanic. That's what drove Satan. And there's such a thing as reverse snobbery as well, when a person takes pride in his or her self-denial. Someone called that pride that **apes** humility. It's not genuine humility. It's pride. These are the characteristics that mark the world which beckons the believer to follow in its path with promises of pleasure and fulfillment. It's all a vain thing. The pleasure doesn't last. The status doesn't satisfy. I don't

speaking from the experience of one who has gained a fortune or has won honors, only to find them an empty experience.

But the world has enough wealthy and powerful and beautiful people who are unhappy and miserable to prove all of that. Whether I've experienced it or not, or you've experienced it, the world is constantly experiencing it and it's evidenced in their life every day. And the scriptures do teach that. It's one of the lessons of the book of Ecclesiastes. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. All is vanity. All of these efforts to gain pleasure under the sun, life under the sun, and build a kingdom for oneself, it's vanity - comes to nothing.

But even if the world lived up to its promises, it never does. The world is a cheat and it will always cheat you. But let's give it the benefit of the doubt. Let's say it pays richly and everything that it promises is received and a person has pleasure and satisfaction, more than he and she had envisioned when he first began to follow the way of the world and everything that a person had desired, all of the fulfillment he or she had hoped for came true, it's still a foolish investment, because it's all fleeting.

That's the second reason we are not to love the world. It is doomed. The world is passing away and also its lusts. All of this is going to end. Everything men have built and that look so permanent and so important, all of it will be destroyed. In fact, John says it's already happening. The world is passing away. That's how transient, that's how temporal it all is. The world order is already on the way out. As we speak right now it's passing away. It's like the night that soon passes.

John said earlier, "The true light is already shining. The dawn is already breaking, and as the dawn is breaking the dark is fading." This is happening right now through God's people, through you, as you live out your Christian life, as you speak about the gospel. The light is shining and it's beginning to fill the world. And then Christ will come, because that's just a harbinger of what's to come. Christ will come and

His kingdom will fill the world like sunshine and there will be no darkness.

Now that's what lasts, the kingdom to come and those who are a part of it. That's what John says. The one who does God's will lives forever. He lives now in this world presently with new life, supernatural life, but that's life that doesn't end. That's life that goes on for all eternity.

So why would heirs of the world to come invest their lives in this present world that doesn't last, that is so fleeting that it is already in the process of passing away, like smoke in the air? Nevertheless, it is easy to do that. It's easy to invest in it. It's easy to become worldly. The world is alluring. It appeals to so much to us, and the devil who orchestrates it all is a genius. He is wise with dark wisdom and very clever. He knows how to direct all of these influences to affect us. He knows what appeals to your flesh. He knows what attracts our eye and stimulates our pride, and the pressure is constant. It never lets up.

The world is all around us and the world wants to be in us. Don't open the gate. Don't open the door to the world. That's what John is saying. In Rome's twilight, the emperor Valens let the Barbarians in. They were being pushed west by the Huns and so they wanted to escape the Huns who were coming west, and so the tribe - huge, large tribes - stood on the Danube River, begging to be allowed to cross. They promised to lay down their weapons and be loyal citizens. They appealed to the emperor's pride by referring to him as a benevolent emperor. So he let them in. Hoards of Barbarians.

Edward Gibbon, in his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, called it an unwise decision. He said it introduced into the heart of the empire a nation of enemies. Within a few years the Goths broke their word, took up their swords, and plundered Greece. And then they crossed over to Italy and they sacked Rome. That's what happens when you let in the enemy.

The world is that enemy to the church and to the Christian. It's always at the gate. When we allow it in, the world overruns us. We

become worldly. We lose power. We lose our witness. Churches invite the world in when they abandon the truth of God's word and they abandon sound doctrine and sound practice in order to seem relevant and acceptable. There's nothing wrong with being relevant. We should all be relevant and we should seek to be relevant. It's not wrong to change and adapt for that purpose. And there need to be changes. There needs to be flexibility.

But it is wrong to compromise and neglect the things that are intended to make us different, the things that are indispensable, and that's scripture. Scripture is our strength. Neglect the word and we die. So what are you setting your affections on? The things that are permanent, the things that are of real importance, the things of God's word, or the things that are temporary, the things that delight the eye but are passing away?

That is a soul-stunting ambition. It leaves us small and weak. It leaves us worldly and impoverished. We are really poor in this life if we set our affections on the world and the things of this world. We're cheating ourselves if we do that. Jesus told His disciples, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." God's going to take care of you. Seek His goals and His purpose in life and God will provide. Seek first His kingdom.

John tells us, "Do not love the world. Love the Lord." Know His word. Study the scriptures and obey God's commands. Love the brethren. That's how we advance in our Christian experience. That's how we increase in our knowledge and our love of God. That's how we beat the world. That's how we strengthen our souls against the flesh. That's how we overcome the evil one. We are soldiers. We are always in the fight. As the confession said, it is a continual and irreconcilable war. We're always in it. But by God's grace, and His grace alone, we will stay alert and active and continue to be overcomers, to be world beaters. That's what they were and that's what they would be, and that's what you are and that's what you will be.

But if you're here without Christ, you won't be. In fact, you're not going to beat the world. You are the world. You're in it and it's in you. And that means that your end is the same as the end of the world. And remember, it's passing away. It's like smoke, and so are you, just a vapor.

But there is a promise of permanence, a promise of forgiveness and life forever. Notice again verse 12. "Your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake," meaning, because of Christ. We have forgiveness and eternal life because of what He did for us, not because of what we've done. We can't do anything for ourselves that would save ourselves. He's done it all. What we can do by His grace is receive it - receive it through faith and believe in Him. If you've not done so, put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust in Him. He receives all who do. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we give You praise and thanks for the fact that we stand in His power and life and not our own. We face great challenges, but You have equipped us for them and You have ensured that we will ultimately always prevail. We thank You for that, thank You for Your grace, thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. It's in His name we pray. Amen.