

Introduction

So, I got out of the baptistry, and I was on my way to my quick change. You've got to move quick, by the way, when you're the baptizer and the preacher. Man, you don't have a whole lot of time to kill. I was on my way and they said, "Hey... there was no audio at all the entire time." So I just want you all to know, I told the best joke ever and you missed it! (Laughter) That was it. I can't tell it again because, you know, the moment is gone. You know, those kinds of things happen. Do you ever have the moments when things sort of short-circuit in the way that you had things planned out, and it just didn't work the way that you expected it to? Hey, guess what? That's actually what our sermon is about today... much like the audio not working in our sermon, we're going to talk about a spiritual short-circuit that oftentimes takes place. Last week we had Easter Sunday. Thousands of people were here at Houston Northwest. Around the world, millions of people gathered together as worshippers. We heard the proclamation of the truth that Jesus Christ is risen and alive, and everyone was excited about it and fired up about it... and then, Monday! Right! You know, I mean some of us went back to work this week, and we did not exactly live in light of the Resurrection. Did anybody maybe have a moment where they did not live in light of the Resurrection this week? Okay, five of you out there. Thank you for that. The rest of you, man... we've got a lot of work to do. What I was going to let you know is that, in 1 John, we discover that John has hope because of Jesus Christ, even for those of us who know the truth of the Resurrection yet struggle to live in light of it every single day. In fact, today we're going to talk about "Overcoming Hypocrisy."

If you were like me when I was growing up, I would invite my friends to church because that was what you were supposed to do. I was like, "Man, I'm going to invite my friends to church." My friends in high school would say, "I don't go to church." And I would say, "Why not?" They would say, "Because there's just a bunch of hypocrites in there." Did anybody in this room ever hear that, or maybe you were one of those people who said it? Did anybody ever hear that or say that? Yes. A lot of us have heard that. Why? What we're really saying is, "I don't want to go to a church if those people don't really believe what they preach. If they don't really practice what they preach, why would I want to go?" Well guess what? First John chapter 2 is all about hypocrites. In fact, if you look at 1 John chapter 2... if you don't have a Bible, it's okay you can follow along. Here in a second I'm going to read it. But, before I read it, I want to just point this out: If you look in 1 John chapter 2, and if you skip down, you will see in verse 4, this is what John says: *"Whoever says, 'I know Him'... 'Talking about Jesus...' '... but does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him."* John had hypocrites even in his day. I think sometimes we think hypocrites are a 21st century thing. No; hypocrites were a first century thing. Right after Jesus had been resurrected and ascended, there were already hypocrites. So what does that tell us? People are really messed up. Right? So we're going to talk about how to overcome hypocrisy today, and I'm very excited about it. Let's just jump right in. 1 John chapter 2; let's read verses 1 through 17 together, and we'll see what the Word has to teach us today.

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says, 'I know Him' but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. 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.

"Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

At this point, John begins basically quoting a hymn or a poem that either he has written or was common in that day. He says:

*"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.*

"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. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

1. For All Time. (v. 2)

What does this have to do with hypocrisy? Well, John is trying to explain how it is that we can avoid a life when we say that we believe something with our mouths but yet we don't actually ever live it. It's not something that takes root and lives in our heart. So, I want us to walk today through 1 John 2:1-17 and demonstrate how it is that we can avoid this temptation toward hypocrisy. So, let's just jump right in together, and we'll see what we can explore together here in God's Word. Starting in chapter 2, verse 2: Now John is going to explain the key way that we are able to overcome... the key way, in fact, that we are able to overcome hypocrisy is because of who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ has done. Let me say that again: "The key way that we are able to overcome hypocrisy is because of who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ has done." Actually, we'll start in verse 1. Let's look here and just look at some of the terms that John uses to describe Him. First of all, He is (in verse 1), *"...an advocate with the Father."* Now, an advocate is someone who intercedes or who would interact for you, on your behalf. Sometimes we think of attorneys as an advocate and they can certainly be that way. There are also other people that work in different professions, simply being an advocate for customers or for others... beneficiaries. You can have

an advocate in a lot of particular situations; so, there's an advocate. Following the advocate, then they also declared Jesus Christ is our advocate for the Father, will argue on our behalf. Also, Jesus Christ is righteous. He is completely in line with Who God is. Now, no one could ever say that you and I are righteous. We have done multiple things that have been an offense to God. We've lived a life that is in rebellion to God. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ advocates for us on our behalf to the Father. In addition to that, Jesus Christ also is the Righteous One. So, we don't just have an advocate, we have a Righteous One who is totally and completely in line with God. So how does this work? Verse 2, this is where it gets crazy. *"He is the propitiation for our sins..."* and not for ours only, not just the church, *"...but also for the sins of the whole world."*

"Propitiation." I'm going to bet most of us did not use the word "propitiation" this week around the house. Is that accurate? (Laughter) Right. We don't typically throw that word around. What does the word "propitiation" mean? Propitiation is the best and closest translation we could come up with from English for a Greek word "hilasmos." Everybody say, "hilasmos." That's a good one, right? "Hilasmos." What does that mean? It means "mercy seat." So what's that about? Well, the Greek word "hilasmos" is transliterated from another word in the Old Testament, and basically what it is referring to is the seat that was on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. Let me explain. So, every year the highest, holiest day on the Jewish calendar is called "Yom Kippur" which is the Day of Atonement. It is still a really big deal, and even faithful Orthodox Jewish people to this day, even those that are celebrities oftentimes abstain from particular activities because they want to celebrate Yom Kippur. So, for example, does anybody in here remember whenever Sandy Koufax refused to pitch game 1 of the World Series because he was Jewish and it was the Day of Atonement? Anybody remember this? Yeah... okay, so he refused to do that because the first game fell on the Day of Atonement. It's the highest, holiest day. What would happen on that day? Well, in the Holy of Holies, in the most central place in the Temple in Jerusalem, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies one day a year, on the Day of Atonement. As he went in, he would take some blood from a bull and inside the Holy of Holies he would find the Ark of the Covenant. Now, the way that the Bible describes the Ark of the Covenant is that there's this gold chest, and it has a lid that is overlaid in gold, and on the lid are two cherubim or angels. Now, how exactly they're sitting there... there's a little bit of debate. Some people would say that they're on each corner, and they've got their wing out like this and a wing out like this, and then the other one is on this corner, wing out like this and wing out like this.... and that it makes a chair, a seat. Then the high priest would come in and would sit, arm rests on angels' wings and leaning back against angels' wings, and they would come in and they would intercede for the sins of himself and of his family, and then he could intercede on behalf of the people of Israel. So, he would come in. He would take the blood from the bull, and he would sprinkle it there on the Ark of the Covenant and then take his seat on the Mercy Seat. Other scholars say it wasn't that way. The angels were just across but they would put a special covering over the Ark of the Covenant then it made a seat. I don't know exactly what it was, but we do know this: The high priest would go into the Holy of Holies one day a year, on the Day of Atonement. He would take the blood from a bull. He would sprinkle it on seat there at the Ark of the Covenant, and then he would take a seat on the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God's faithfulness, God's purity, God's holiness, and then he would say, "Lord, forgive our sin." There was a geographical location, a place, a spot, where God's grace was bestowed and then ripple-effected out to the nation of Israel. And that particular place, that particular spot, was in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, on the seat upon the top of the Ark of the Covenant. That was the place where God's grace emanated from. Now John takes that understanding and says, "Ah... No longer is the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies... the location of the Mercy Seat." In fact, if you remember at the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel, once Jesus Christ was crucified and said, "It is finished"... what happened? The veil that separated the Holy of Holies

was ripped from top to bottom, demonstrating that God's presence was released and now out among people. So John declares and says this, "The "hilasmos," the Mercy Seat, is now no longer a place. It is now a person. The "hilasmos," the geographical location, the epicenter of God's grace is now in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ... He is our propitiation. He is our "hilasmos." He is our Mercy Seat. Just as the high priest would sit there on the chest of the Ark of the Covenant and intercede on behalf of the people of Israel, now Jesus Christ Himself is the Seat, interceding to the Father on behalf of the Church. We have an advocate who is righteous, who is the propitiation, but this is the key difference that John wants us to recognize: No longer is there a sacrifice given over and over and over and over. Now, the sacrifice has been given once, for all time, in Jesus Christ. So therefore there is no need for the Ark of the Covenant, there is no need for a sacrificial system, there is no need for the Holy of Holies because God has done what He has done in Jesus Christ for all time. Now... that is the lifetime supply of forgiveness for you and for me.

Have you ever won anything like a lifetime supply of anything? Has that ever happened to you? I have not but I was thinking about my sermon this week and I started Googling "winners of lifetime supplies of stuff." There are some crazy stories out there. I read about a guy who won a lifetime supply of toilet paper. I read about a lady who won a lifetime supply of Rice-A-Roni... you know, that's a lot of Rice-A-Roni! But the one that I just loved... this guy told a story on "Reddit" on how he won a lifetime supply of Mars bars. He was a kid and he entered into this contest, and he won a lifetime supply of Mars bars. I think they said he got two boxes of Mars bars a month for the rest of his life. If I remember correctly, he was 16 when he won this. He's now a grown man, and he still, to this day, every month gets two boxes of Mars bars in the mail. How do you think this would go? You can pretty much predict how it would go. He said when he was a kid and the first month he got his Mars bars in the mail, he said, "Yeah... PARTY!!! He's in there... he's eating all the Mars bars that he can. He's calling his friends over. His friends are showing up. They're gorging themselves on Mars bars, making themselves sick. It was awesome... that was so incredible. Then the next month, two more boxes of Mars bars show up. I mean, he's excited about it. He eats as many as he can. He gives some away to his friends. Then... month three and month four... He said, "You know, after about six months, I didn't want to eat any more Mars bars..." (Laughter) "...I was kind of tired of them." Then he said, "After about a year, I couldn't even give them away anymore." (Laughter) My friends were like, "Dude, I've got a freezer filled with Mars bars; you keep giving them to me. I don't eat THAT many Mars bars, when you get right down to it." Now, this man says, as a grown man, every two or three months he takes the boxes of Mars bars that he has stacked in his pantry and he goes to the Food Pantry in the neighborhood and donates hundreds of Mars bars every year to the local Food Pantry. Now isn't that kind of funny? Like, the joy of a 16-year-old boy winning a lifetime supply of Mars bars is soon replaced by a man who really can't even stand the thought of looking at another Mars bar. What happens inside of our heart?

Well, it's interesting because we are, according to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, exactly like the guy with the Mars bars. We are a group of people who will always become bored with whatever we have. I want you to think about this. We are a group of people that any time that we get what we think we want, we eventually grow tired of it. You don't believe me? You know it's true but I'll prove it to you anyway. I want you to picture in your mind, right now... are you ready? ...your dream house. Have you got it? Can you see it? Now, go live in it for three years. Is it still your dream house? Picture your dream car right now... the best car you can imagine. Now drive it for three years. Is it still your dream car? Someone said, "Yes, it is!" (Laughter) But most of us, "No." Picture your dream cellphone... (Laughter) Now carry it in your pocket for 6 months... maybe... if you're lucky, right? Is it still your dream cellphone? It is not. Why not?

...Because we are not satisfied creatures. We strive for things and then once we receive them, we no longer want them.

Let me tell you why I believe that hypocrisy is a key problem in not just the American Church but also in the ancient Church. Are you ready? ...Because each of us has a moment when we desperately recognize our need for the grace of Jesus Christ and the cross, and we prostrate ourselves at the feet of Christ, and we cry out and we get the grace of God. But if we are not careful, we will become people who become bored with the gift of the cross. Then do you know what happens? We get bored with it and eventually we're not even really sure that we want it anymore. Now you hear that and you think, "Well, that's crazy; it can't be that way." Well, I can understand why you would say that, but I bet that many of us in this room, if we are really open and really honest right now, we would say we have been through times in our lives where we know that we should be excited about what God is doing in our church or in our life or in our family... or whatever... but we just, for whatever reason, can't seem to muster up any energy to care. Why is that? Because, as Aristotle points out, sometimes we strive for particular things and then become bored with the very things for which we strive. But this is the truth that John wants us to understand: That Jesus is a gift that is good enough that actually is good FOR all time. He is more than just a lifetime supply of forgiveness, and this is the key thing that I want us to understand.

2. By Obedience (v. 3)

This is why we need to now look at verse 3. So even though it is a forgiveness for all time, it is a propitiation for all time, and an advocate for all time, it continues on even further and this is why: Take a look now at verse 3: *"...by this we know that we have come to know Him..."* How do you know that you know Jesus Christ? This is it... are you ready? ...If we keep His commandments. You know that you are in love with... that you are knowing Jesus Christ if you do what He says... if you follow Him.

You see, this is where hypocrisy comes in, and I'm going to try and explain this. Many of us in this room, when we came to Christ and we felt that the Lord was challenging us to change and to give certain things up and exhibit new behaviors and that sort of thing, we started doing it, right? We started to exhibit those new behaviors, but what eventually happens is a subtle shift. We go from a moment where, for whatever reason, we believe that our motivation is Jesus Christ, and for whatever reason, hypocrisy enters in because we start acting, not out of an abiding in Christ or a knowledge of Christ, but instead hypocrisy creeps in because we start living out the commandments of Christ divorced from the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We start acting instead for someone around us rather than Jesus. You see, sometimes we start doing the things that the Bible tells us to do, but we do them because we want to make our spouse happy. Has anybody here ever gone to church just to make your spouse happy? Yeah, I'm sure nobody in this room has ever done that. Anybody here ever done the right thing because the people that are around you expect you to be the sort of person who does the right thing, and so you just do it because it's what you're supposed to do and not because you're actually acting out of a knowledge of Jesus Christ? How does that wear on your soul after a while? You keep doing the right thing but eventually do you find yourself going, "I am tired of doing the right thing. The right thing stinks. The right thing is boring. I want to do something rebellious for a change." Anybody ever done that? Yeah... why do you get like that? Do you want to know why? You become a hypocrite, doing the right thing for the wrong reason because you're doing it for the wrong motivation in the first place. There comes a moment when we start acting for other people rather than acting instead... on the truth of Jesus Christ.

Let's go back to our Aristotle, okay? So what does Aristotle say? He says, "Humans, since they'll always get bored with their dream house or with their dream car, or their dream cellphone, and we know that that's the case. Do you know what they need? They need a striving after something to which they can never attain. So what did Aristotle think that was? Philosophy. Philosophy, strictly understood in the Greek culture, was the pursuit of wisdom, so he said, "Therefore, we always need to be striving after philosophy because we'll never completely understand wisdom, and if we do so then we'll always have something that is satisfactory." But John, I believe, was a pretty smart guy. I think, if you go back and you read the prologue to John chapter 1, in the Gospel, I think you will see that John was very familiar with Greek philosophy. That's where his, "*In the beginning was the Word...*" (which is the Greek word "logos" [side note])... at any rate, I think that because John was so proficient in Greek philosophy, he understood this tendency in his culture, and that is why he says in this place, "the way that you keep commandments isn't about pursuing philosophy, but the way that you keep the commandments, the way that you do the right thing, the way that you are a good person... is by knowing Him." This is how we know that you know Him... that you do what He says. You see, you do what He says because you know Jesus Christ. You cannot know a dead person, as we discussed last week. You can only have fellowship with, you can only have communion with, you can only walk with someone who is indeed alive, and the only way that that will take place is if you have fellowship with Jesus Christ through His Word, through prayer, and then you will get this sort of sense. So why does matter? This is the thing: What John is basically saying is, "Aristotle is right. We will always get bored with what we have, except for one thing... Jesus. He is the one thing that we will never get tired of."

Now... Why do some of us in the Church get tired of Jesus Christ? I'm going to tell you why. ...Because we think of Him as flat and one-dimensional. We think of Him as our free ticket into heaven. We don't think of Him as King of Kings, Lord of Lords. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Scripture... It is a fount that never ever has a bottom. You can plumb the depths of the riches of the grace of Jesus Christ as long as you can, your entire life, and you will never hit the bottom. There is always another layer. There is always another way to go deeper. There is always another place where you can say, "Wow... there is more for me to learn... There is more for me to discover, and those who have followed God their entire lives and have mined those riches, they would be the ones to say, "The more I get to know the depths of the riches of the grace of God, the more that I recognize it is larger than I could have ever understood." This is why. How many people in this room have had this experience? You were in church and you hear a sermon from a passage and you say, "I never thought about it like that before!" Or how many times have you been reading your Bible and you say, "I've read this passage of Scripture a hundred times but I never noticed this." This is why we have that sense... You don't get that the one hundredth time you view the Princess Bride, right? (Laughter) (speaking with accent) "Hallo... My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father; prepare to die." I mean, we know it... we love it. It makes us feel excited whenever we see that. Right? "No more rhymes now and I mean it... Anybody want a peanut?" We get excited about that stuff. But here's the same thing. We know what it's about to say. But the beauty of the truth of Scripture is this. It's not like a movie that we've watched a hundred times and we can quote along with because there is always another layer of meaning, the deeper that we go down into it. The Princess Bride, as engaging and as entertaining of a film as it is, it's just kind of there. Right? Even if there is some sort of allegory and meaning, there's probably only one allegory or meaning. Even the best novels that we read, we read those particular passages or poems, and as we read them we love the particular phrases that are turned or the beauty of the words as they're connected together. I have many poems that I love and novels that I love, but the truth of the matter is that most of those I don't read every single day. Why? ...Because I can't always find something else there. But do you know what? In the Scripture, almost every single day, I get up and I read God's Word and as I do I find something and man, it hits me. It's fresh. Why is that?...Because God is

limitless. He is boundless; He cannot be contained. John is saying this: "The reason that we fall into hypocrisy is because we are too easily satisfied with who we believe Jesus to be." But if we pursue Scripture and who Scripture describes Jesus to be, we will find a limitless, boundless Being whom we can never completely know, and we will spend the rest of this earthly life... in fact, He is so boundless... all of eternity getting to know Him, and we will never be completely able to know Him, and that, John says, is the most satisfying relationship that you could ever have. That is satisfaction.

So, if that is what we need... we need a God whose depths we can plumb over and over and over, and then it will move us away from hypocrisy. Why? ...Because if I know who God is in Jesus Christ, then it moves me to right action in light of that.

3. In History. (v. 7)

So, John moves on in verse 7: *"Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment..."* So he says, "Look, there are some old words that are out there and you've heard them," but then he goes on and he says, in verse 8, *"At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."* So John says, "You overcome hypocrisy by what Jesus has done for all time and by obedience to that, but then there's also the sort of situation in history that I want you to understand. The commandment that I'm going to tell you fits in with what's been said in the past and now it presents a new reality for the future." And what is this new commandment? Verse 10 then declares this: *"Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling..."* (verse 11) *"...But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."* This is what John is now attempting to demonstrate. He says, "The command that I'm going to give you is a command you have heard a hundred times, but it's still fresh and new." What's the new command? *"Love one another."* What's the old command? Leviticus 19:18: *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."* Deuteronomy 6:5: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."* It's an old command. You love God and therefore it will make you love other people. And now John says, "In the same way, I want you to now love one another." But... this is what John is saying: "It's new because it's grounded in two things..."

1. Jesus Christ
2. You will go to greater lengths to love people than ever before.

In the Old Testament, most people thought of the concept of loving your neighbor is just the people around you. The Gospel of Jesus Christ opened up loving one another to everyone.

Let me put it to you another way. How many of us in this room would say, "You know, not only do I sometimes struggle with doing the right thing for the wrong reasons or just to make people around me happy, but sometimes, if I'm really honest, I do the right thing even to the people around me, but I don't really like the people that I'm doing the right thing to." How many of us would say, "I do the right thing but I kind of don't love the people to whom I'm doing the command of Jesus Christ"? You see, what John would argue is this: He says, in verse 10 and verse 11: "Look if you want to say that you're in the light, you're going to actually love the people. If you don't love your brother, you've got the darkness."

Let's just break it down real simple so we can all understand. Are you ready? How many of us would say that we don't love the people around us but we just endure them? We don't love them, we just tolerate them. You know, in contemporary culture, the key word is tolerance. Right? We've just got to learn how to

tolerate one another. Listen. I don't want people to tolerate me. If I tolerate my kids... yeah, I tolerate my kids... What does that mean? I don't go in there and beat 'em up. They're on my nerve; you know, they're hopping on it. That last nerve, right there; they're on it. But... well, I'm going to tolerate this. You may tolerate someone for a season or for a time because they are difficult to be around, but that is not what John is arguing for. He says, "If you know Christ and you are obeying His commandments, guess what? You will be doing those things out of a motivation of love. You will actually love the people that you are around." How many of us would say, "My coworkers... I try to do the thing that Jesus Christ commands me to do, but if I'm real honest, I'm just tolerating them. I don't actually love them." If you do not find yourself growing in love each and every day for the people around you, then guess what? You're probably not abiding in Christ. "You said I'm not saved?" Nope, I'm not saying that. There's a great chance that there are lots and lots of people in this room who had a moment that they saw their own wretched sin, they fell under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and they prostrated themselves and said, "I need to receive Jesus Christ." But do know what then happened? Then they reached a point, for whatever reason, and got so satisfied or so smug with themselves that they stopped showing that same sort of love and grace to the people that are around them. Then what happens? We stop loving them and we start just putting up with them. That's hypocrisy, isn't it? I mean, there was no one in the New Testament that was better at keeping the rules than the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Jesus said though that they were white-washed tombs. What does that mean? Well, on the inside, if you pull the door away from the tomb, you find dead bodies, bones, decay, nastiness, death... You roll the stone back in front of it and white-wash it... that means paint it to make it look real pretty, nice and white. Does anybody want to be a white-washed tomb? Look real good on the outside but on the inside you're dying a thousand deaths because you have no spiritual knowledge of... you're not abiding in Christ? How many people in this room have walked in that? Right? You've said, "Man, I know that I was forgiven at the cross by the blood of Jesus Christ, but at the same time I know that I'm not really someone who loves the people around me. I'm kind of a white-washed tomb. I'm doing the right thing, but I don't have the motivation of the love of my neighbor around me.

I think that this is what Francis Schaeffer in his book "The Mark of the Christian" argues, and this is again the same thing that Jesus is getting at, whenever He calls the Pharisees white-washed tombs. This is what John is getting at whenever he says, "If you say that you love your brother but secretly you hate him, you don't walk in the light." It's not just doing the right thing. That's the great lie that many of us have tricked ourselves into believing: "As long as I do the right thing, then it's okay." Listen... Sometimes you don't want to do the right thing and you gut it out and you do it. Okay. Well done...good job. That should not be your day-in/day-out posture. Generally speaking, do you know what you have to do? You have the actually truly love the people around you and not so that they will come to church and not so that they will become converted. Do you know what? You will probably spend a great amount of days in your life loving people who will never say "Yes" to Jesus Christ. That doesn't give you an excuse to simply endure or tolerate them. You're supposed to love them anyway. I want you to think about this. How many people did Jesus love that ended up putting Him on the cross? Does that mean that He shouldn't have loved them? No. We love people whether they want to crucify us or enshrine us because we are followers of Christ. That is what we're supposed to do.

4. To the Eternal. (v. 15)

So now, this is where John kind of builds it then. He says, "Look, hypocrisy then is a problem for those of us who start to act for other people, or we start to act out of the wrong motivation. So what's the solution to it? He gets down to the end of the chapter there and he says in verse 15: "*Do not love the world or the things in the world.*" Now this verse confused me. Right? "*Do not love the world*"? I thought I was supposed to

love the world. Right? *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but rather to save the world."* I thought I was supposed to love the world? First John 2:2 that we just read, *"Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and not just our sins but the sins of the whole world."* I thought we were supposed to love everyone? That's not what he's talking about here. He says, "Don't love the world." What does he mean by "Don't love the world"? He doesn't mean, "Don't treat people around you with love." He means this... look at verse 16: *"For all that is in the world..."* so he's not talking about the people themselves or the things themselves or Creation itself. He's talking about their motives or their heart. Look at this: *"...the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions..."* Do you love those people? Do you love them with the love of Jesus Christ? "But listen to me... don't you fall prey to"... This is what John says: "Don't you fall prey to the desires of the flesh." Just because the rest of them are getting into their fleshly desires, you don't do that. Why? ...Because you've elevated Christ and you are acting out of motive from the grace of God. John then says, "Don't you give into the desires of the eyes, just because that person that looks good to you or that thing that you want that you could get by ill-gotten gain... don't you fall prey to that. Why? Because you are acting out of motivation to Jesus Christ. Then he looks again and he says, in the last part of the verse there: *"... the pride in possessions..."* Just because you have stuff, don't you think that it's your stuff to hold onto or don't you believe that it's yours because you're somehow meritorious or somehow you've earned those things. God has graced that to you. *"Don't give into the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions..."* In other words, love the world for who they are, but do not necessarily say that their methods or their heart or their desires are correct. So you love them even though they're broken. You see, this is where the church and compassionate culture go separate ways. Right? ...Because compassionate secular culture becomes sort of sentimental. They look at people and they say, "Hey... we love you; no matter who you are, we're going to receive you. It's okay and everything is good." What the Church does is it says, "Yes, we love you for who you are and we will always be there for you, and we receive you just as you are, BUT... we want you to be redeemed in Jesus Christ and to live the life that He wants for you." You see secular culture's compassion and sentimentality is a hollow shadow of what the true Gospel is. Yes, there is an open receptivity: "We receive you no matter who you are..." but we will not be satisfied until we see God doing His salvific and sanctifying work in you and moving you into the Kingdom of Light. So, therefore... "We love you but we don't always sign off on everything you do." Look. If I truly love my kids, I don't always like, "Oh yeah; I'm so glad that you just punched your brother in the face. I receive you and I accept you no matter how you are." I would never do that. Why? You know why? ...Because I want them to be redeemed by who God wants them to be, to grow into a man. In the same way, many of us have behaviors that we know are sinful and we know are rebellious, and we know we shouldn't be doing, and we want people in the church. This is how people outside of the church say, "Well the Church is so judgemental." You're right, the Church has been judgemental, but listen... the Church starts in this place. We receive you in. You are welcome here, but we are going to proclaim the Gospel of grace, and we're going to seek to see God sanctify you into the image of Jesus Christ. If you refuse that, we're going to love you by saying, "Get off your tail and hear the Word of God in your life." You see, this is where hypocrisy comes in because hypocrisy also starts because we begin to get enamored with what the world declares are good goals and not what Scripture declares are our goals. You see, there's a compassion issue, but then there's a Gospel issue. So this is the thing. Hypocrisy... a lot of times... at root level, do you know what it is? It's not actually an attitude problem or an action problem. It's a worship problem. We worship what the world can offer over what Jesus Christ has promised. So we start to worship the stuff that we can get or the people that we can be friends with or the people we can be seen with, or whatever it is that we can be offered. And the reason that we fall into hypocrisy is we begin to elevate that higher than the promises that

God has given us in Jesus Christ. So, therefore, I then, whenever I move out of hypocrisy, do you know what I have to do? I then have to not only want that for myself. I have to want that for all the people around me, and that will inform the way that I love.

So this is what John says in verse 17: *"...the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."* What is John trying to say? He's trying to say this: "If I love you rightly or correctly, I will always be exhorting you..." Are you ready for this? "If I love you rightly or correctly, I will always be exhorting you toward the future that Jesus Christ has declared is best for you... not the one that you want... not the one that you feel best about... not the one that makes us all get warm fuzzies but the one that Jesus Christ has declared in Scripture to be your best future." That's love: Pushing people toward the future that God has declared to be best in the Bible. That's why Jesus could say to people all the time, "...Neither do I condemn you, yet go and leave your life of sin." There is no condemnation but yet there is still commandment to transform because whenever I receive Jesus Christ and my highest motivation becomes pleasing Him and not making other people happy, then guess what? I receive the grace that He gives me but then I am motivated to do something. Do you know what that is? Change because He loves me and so I pursue the future that he wants.

So what is the future that God has declared for the world? All things will one day be redeemed, all things will one day be perfected, but also all things will one day be judged. So, therefore, we're always a people who are saying, "You are intended for grace, for redemption in Jesus Christ, but also the sin in your life—God has declared that unholy and unrighteous, and so there has been a propitiation for all time given that. And because that sin was killed on the cross... and because of that, guess what? "Now I'm going to urge you, exhort you, to leave that behind and now move into the life that God has promised you in Jesus Christ." It is not judgemental or hateful to exhort someone to leave sin. "I will love you and receive you because, guess what? I got sin after me all the time, and I need you to exhort and love me in that same place." Some people say, "Well, I just can't talk to my friend about their sin because I don't want to hurt their feelings." That's great; so we'll just let them have the condemnation of God instead? That sounds awesome. Right? That would be a bad strategy, right? We don't want them to fall under circumstances in this world so we're always exhorting them, "Battle that sin with Scripture, battle that sin with prayer, battle that sin with new attitudes because you need to leave hypocrisy behind and instead embrace the life that God has for you in Jesus Christ."

So, therefore, *"...this world is passing away with its desires..."* and all that kind of stuff, *"...but whoever does the will of God abides forever."* How do we do the will of God? We've already said it. We know that God has taken care of our sin problem for all time in Jesus Christ. We live not to please other people, but then we obey in order to plumb the depths of the riches of the grace of God, and then as we do that, we then learn to love one another. It all starts with putting Jesus in His proper place as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

So, Church, in light of Easter, as we heard of the Resurrection last week, I now want to exhort you to this truth. Jesus Christ is alive, He has conquered death and because of that we have a deeper, richer, more robust motivation toward holiness than anyone else in the world because we have the Gospel of grace. So, may we not become bored with it and think we understand it completely, but instead let us pursue it and chase after it and plumb those depths so that we can know God's grace at its highest level and therefore we can live the life He intended for you and for me. Not a life of hypocrisy but a life of reverent, obedient worship given to Him one hundred percent. Amen and amen. Let's pray together.

"Father, we love You. We thank You for the gift of holiness that was given through the cross of Jesus Christ. Father, we're only able to be a people who are holy, who are able to be obedient, not because we have great efforts or not because we are someone who is more intelligent or more spiritual; Father, we're only able to do that because of the grace that You have bestowed through your Son. So, Father, now I pray some things for us. God, I pray first of all that there would be those of us in the room who would never be bored with what You did on the cross. And, Father, if we ever start to view that as pedestrian or as domestic, Lord, that You would whack us and draw us back to the beauty and the riches that are there in your Scripture, so that we would understand how incredible it is. Lord, always draw us back to that. Father, I also pray this. I pray not only that we would be drawn back to the great beauty and the great truths of redemption that came with the cross of Calvary, but Father also that we would be an obedient people... that we would be obedient because of the right motivation, not to impress other people but because of grace, and then Father that we would be motivated to love them as You have loved us. Father, teach us to love other people and to truly love them... not just endure them, not just tolerate them, but love them. And God, if we do all these things, we can then strive for and aim toward the eternity, the future that You have chosen for the Church. Lord, we pray this and we ask it, passionately believing that this is what You want for us. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen."