

The Departed

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to the Bible now and turn to our Bible reading from the day, and you'll find that in 1 John, John's first letter, chapter 2, I believe that's on page 1021 in the Church Bibles, 1 John, chapter 2.

I'm going to read from verse 12 through to verse 27. This is the halfway point in John's letter where he breaks into a little poem or a little song or a hymn rejoicing in the victory that Christians have in Christ.

I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who's from the beginning.

I'm 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's from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you're strong and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world.

[1 : 23] all 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. Children, it's the last hour. And as you've heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

Therefore, we know that it's the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they'd been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

But you have been anointed by the Holy One and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you don't know the truth, but because you know it and because no lie is of the truth.

Who is the liar? But he who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the Antichrist. He who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father.

[2 : 42] Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you've heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

And this is the promise that he made to us. Eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you and you have no need that anyone should teach you.

But as his anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him.

This is the word of the Lord and we thank him for it. Please sit down.

We're going to read again from the beginning of 1 John this time. And you'll notice some familiar themes from our previous reading.

[3 : 51] That which was from the beginning, which we've heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we've looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life.

The life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. Good. Good. Well, please do have 1 John open in front of you.

Let me ask you a question. I wonder how many of you use Google Street View on a regular basis for the technologically challenged among you, also known as those of us who have a life.

[5 : 01] Google Street View is part of Google Maps. On Google Maps, you can look up maps on the internet. Nothing very unusual about that. But Street View is a bit different from a regular map.

Because if you switch to Street View, you can kind of climb inside the map and find out what it looks like on the ground in the place that you're looking at on the map.

So instead of seeing a diagram with a little line named Bath Street, you can find yourself in a reconstructed 3D picture of Bath Street which you can navigate around.

It's absolutely brilliant. You can walk along. You can look at the buildings. You can focus in and see what's on sale in the shop windows. You can turn around and look at the buildings on the other side of the road. You can see if the day the pictures were taken on was a nice dry day or a normal wet day and so on.

Those of you who use Street View will know that in the bottom corner of the Street View picture is a little map. And the little map in the bottom corner reminds you where your present location is.

[6 : 07] And it's incredibly helpful because it helps you not to get lost when you're wandering rather sadly around your little photographic world rather than getting out there and meeting people and doing things.

In today's passage, we reach the most important part of this letter. If you were looking at this letter through Google Maps, this is the point where you would be switching to Street View because you'd want to know what it really looked like down there on the ground.

This is the bit of the letter where we're introduced for the first time to those that I'm going to call the departed. A group of very spiritual looking people who've left the church and caused great upset by their superior looking teaching.

Before we look at what it really looks like on the ground down there, we're going to click on the map in the bottom right-hand corner and zoom out for a moment and remind ourselves of where we are in this letter and what's going on.

1 John is a letter of two halves. In the middle is this little poem that starts in 2:12. I'm writing to you children, to fathers, to young men, to children, to fathers, to young men.

[7 : 26] It's a very encouraging poem with a very reassuring tone. Your sins are forgiven. You know him is from the beginning. You have overcome the evil one and so on.

The first bit of the letter, the bit before the poem, is about what it's like to live in the light in a dark realm where the darkness is on its way out but hasn't gone yet.

The second half of the letter, instead of talking about a passing away darkness that hasn't gone yet, talks instead about a passing away world that hasn't quite gone yet.

23 times in this letter the word world is used. 22 of them are in the second half of the letter. They're just different takes on the same thing, a passing away darkness and a passing away world.

But these two halves are slightly different in tone. The first half establishes the lie of the land. There's a great deal about Jesus and his work in dealing with sin.

[8 : 34] And there's also a good deal about people who claim to know God but whose claims may not be true. Jesus is made big in part one and the reality of false claims about God is made prominent.

but the first half of the letter is not especially direct. There are no direct commands in the first half of the letter.

But when you look at 2:15 we're in seriously different territory. Do not love the world. We're straight into a big strong imperative.

And indeed in the second half of the letter the imperatives come thick and fast. Do not love the world. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. Do not be surprised when the world hates you.

Do not love in word or talk but indeed in truth. Do not believe every spirit. Keep yourselves from idols and so on and so on and so on. Big strong imperatives. Do this.

[9 : 35] Do not do that. And what the second half does is it drills in the applications that flow out of the first half. And the biggest of them all the headline application of this letter the headline application is 2:15.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. This week and next week we're going to begin to explore what exactly that means.

And let me say it needs exploring. And never has a command in the Bible been more variously interpreted than this one. In a previous generation this command was used to encourage Christians that they shouldn't go to the cinema or watch television or go dancing or any number of things that people thought were too worldly.

In a previous church we were in there was a family in the church who'd been there for a long time 20 years or so. They'd previously belonged to another church. They'd been thrown out of that church because the father of the family had dared to take his children to see the royal tournament in London.

A military display. That was deemed to be loving the world. Well what does loving the world mean? What does it mean not to love the world? Well today we'll begin to learn why that was such an important command for John's readers to hear.

[11:00] And we'll begin to learn that that command has a very surprising shape to it which is also exceptionally important for us and for Christians in every age.

Let's look then first at the command and then at the surprising angle that John develops from this command. First the command 2.15 Do not love the world or the things in the world.

Now let me be bold for a moment and ask the really obvious question. Why not love the world and the things in it? It's God's world after all.

He made it. It's a good world. What's the problem with loving the world if you love God? Verse 15 If anyone loves the world the love of the Father which I take it means love for the Father is not in him. Hang on how does that work? You would think that if you did love the generous Father who's so generously made everything you would also love the world that he has made.

[12:07] But according to John you cannot love the world and the Father together. Why? He goes on. For all that is in the world verse 16 starts and it ends is not from the Father but is from the world.

And at this point you could be forgiven for saying come on surely he must have his doctrine of creation wrong. Surely the opposite is true. Surely everything in the world is from the Father. Is there anything in the world that's not from the Father?

What do you mean John? Well he says precisely what he means in the middle of verse 16. 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.

All those things are not from the Father but from the world. It's that aspect of life in this world that John is commanding his readers not to love.

What does he mean? Well the word desire here is with only a few exceptions a negative word in the New Testament. And here it's linked to another word which is not usually used positively in the New Testament either.

[13:25] The flesh the desires of the flesh probably means something like the natural desires of the sinful and fallen human person. Now you'll notice that there are three desires here.

The desires of the flesh the desires of the eyes the pride in possessions. John tends to put things together in threes and often when he does that the first one is a kind of headline idea and numbers two and three unpack what that means.

What does he mean by the desires of the flesh? Well he means the desires of our eyes. I take it this means that the kind of desire that springs up within the sinful nature from seeing things we want to possess.

What does the pride in possessions mean? Well I take it it means the pride or boasting that the same sinful nature derives from having possessed things.

So what John is saying is that that little game that we all play so frequently that little game of seeing things and wanting them and possessing them and feeling really good about ourselves because we've done that the kind of retail therapy game and all its different forms that is not from the father.

[14:45] It comes from the anti-god world and because it's not from the father verse 17 it's going to go and the world is passing away along with its desires.

And what will endure is not he who acquires things but he who does the will of God. Whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Now let's pause for a moment and reflect on how very important this command is. Is it not true that desiring and acquiring things does make you feel substantial?

It does. It's foolish to be foolish to deny that. And of course in one sense it does make you substantial but that feeling of substance is a temporary feeling.

This is self-evident at one level. The money we earn and the things we acquire and the stuff we accumulate ultimately does nothing at all for us. Nothing. In a temporary sense it does loads of things for us.

[15:51] Comfort, respect, status, a sense of significance, power, honor, those are real things but they're all temporary things.

One of the salutary lessons of being a medical student is attending post-mortems. Going to post-mortems is a great way of learning medicine. You learn a lot of medicine from looking at dead people.

But let me say, you cannot go to many post-mortems without thinking, one day somebody may be slicing me up like that to find out why I died suddenly.

Can I assure you that everyone looks the same on the autopsy table? Opened up, measured, weighed, no voice, powerless to resist the dismembering.

Nobody talks about what you earned. In the post-mortem demonstration room. No one talks about the house you lived in, or the car you drove, or the clothes you wore, or the deeds you did, or the reputation you had, or the sermons you preached, or the churches you led.

[17:04] The person on the table no longer gets excited about those things that were once exciting, the next possession, the next project, the next contract, the next church plant. Everyone is the same on the slab.

Everyone ends up in a box at the funeral. We enter the world with no stuff at all, and we acquire it and dispense it for a while, and then we leave the world with no stuff at all.

We pass things on to our children and memories and principles and wisdom only for them to exit the world in precisely the same way that we will do, with nothing at all. How much we've earned and owned will be of absolutely no consequence before the judgment seat of God.

It will be nothing at all. At one level, this is self-evident. And yet, though this world is passing away, it seems ever so substantial now.

Doesn't it? A big enough thing to seem worth loving. I have a friend, she comes from a very wealthy background. She said, my father has a fridge magnet.

[18:16] He who dies with the most toys wins. Trouble is, I think he believes what's on his fridge magnet because the guy next door has a private jet and it really bothers my father that he doesn't have one yet.

He who dies with the most toys wins. How many lives are pretty much like that one way or another? Even Christian lives, even church leaders' lives. Says John, no, the only thing of substance is doing the will of God.

That's the only thing of substance. I wonder if we believe that. I wonder if we believe that all the stuff we work so hard for, all the stuff we work to be able to pass on to our children, I wonder if you believe that that is passing away.

It is. But it seems so substantial. And it's quite clear that most of the world, most of the time, spends all its energies chasing after all that stuff all the time.

This is a very important command, isn't it? Very important. But, and here's the puzzle, what on earth is that command doing in this letter?

[19:30] You see, if you were writing a letter to a bunch of business people, or doctors, or lawyers, or teachers, actually there are quite a lot of those around, aren't there? You could see how relevant it might be. But this is a letter about how to cope with troublesome people who teach wrongly and make real believers feel very unsettled.

This letter is written so that John's readers will not think that those who've departed their church are really spiritually superior to them, so that they will not listen to them, so that they will hold on to what they've heard from the beginning.

Is it really the case that the thing they need to know most is how important it is not to be a materialist? Well, it can't be. So what on earth is this command doing?

Is the headline command of this letter? Well, what John is doing here is beginning to introduce the most alarming idea possible, namely, that those who have departed, though they look spiritual, are in fact the world.

The things they love are the things the world loves. The agenda they're following is the world's agenda, dressed up in spiritual clothes. And what John is going to say all the way through this letter, from this point onwards, is do not listen to them.

[20 : 58] Do not desire what they desire. Do not take from them what they offer to you. Do not follow them. Do not love them. Don't love the world.

For what they say and desire and offer and do and love belongs to the world and is passing away. If you buy into them, you're buying into the world.

Now, friends, in case you find that hard to believe, look on in the letter, and you'll find him doing exactly the same thing in chapter 4. This is not the last time he mentions this idea. And this time there is no doubt whatever about the link between the world and the untrue teachers who've departed.

Look at chapter 4, verse 1. Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they're from God. Why?

For many false prophets have gone out into the world. Here, he's talking about the people that have left this congregation. Look how he describes them in verse 4.

[22 : 03] Little children, you are from God and have overcome them. For he who's in you is greater than he who's in, you'd expect him to say them, but he says the world.

They are from the world. Therefore, they speak from the world and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. These guys, the ones who've left your congregation, are the world in disguise. Their speech sounds spiritual, but it's the world speaking when you listen to them.

Their agenda sounds godly, but their concerns are a dressed-up version of all the things that the world wants. And the big imperative of this letter is this. Do, verse 15, 2, 15, do not love them.

Do not love what they say. Do not desire what they desire. Do not follow their example. Do not hold on to their teaching. Do not go their way. Don't love the world.

[23 : 12] They are of the world. And, says John, if you love them, you're not a father lover. You're a world lover. father. I know they look spiritual and talk spiritual and claim to know the father and make you feel inferior, but if you listen to them, you're listening to the world, and if you follow them, you're siding with the world, and if you belong with them, you will perish with the world, which is passing away.

Don't love them. Is that really what John is talking about? Well, look where he goes next. Children, it's the last hour.

And as you've heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come, therefore we know that it's the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they'd been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

He goes straight from this command to not love the world, to talk about those who departed. Think that might be significant? Of course it is. He puts them right together.

Here we meet a very difficult reality of life in this passing away world, something that makes not loving the world much, much more complicated than just not being a materialist.

[24 : 38] In this world that is passing away, the church has many Antichrists in it, says John, and they are very easy to love. That's why you have to be told not to love them with some force.

Now, can I say we need to think about this term Antichrist for a moment? Is that a term you would ever feel comfortable using of anyone? I don't think so. I don't think so.

And the reason for our reticence is that we view that term through the lens of the contemporary horror genre. What image does Antichrist conjure to mind? Well, a dark stranger with a Dracula cloak and 666 tattooed somewhere in his body.

In Greek, the word Antichrists simply means instead of or in place of. These people are instead of Christ people, in place of Christ people.

It's not that dramatic a word actually. I take it John simply means that if you swallow their teaching, you won't be abiding in Jesus teaching anymore. It's an alternative to his.

[25 : 45] If you follow their way, you won't be following Jesus' way anymore. There are instead of Jesus' people. If you love them, you won't be loving him. That's what this term is used to imply.

These are instead of Jesus' people. And I assume also that this word implies that these people did in some ways seem really attractive and worth following.

They're attractive enough to be an alternative to Jesus. Don't follow them though because that will be to follow something that is instead of him.

Now, what are we going to learn about these people? In a few verses, John says a number of very important things about these people. And all of these things are meant to be very reassuring for these anxious ones who are looking at the people they know who've departed and feeling inferior because of that.

Let me just list the things that he says. First, it is not a surprise when such people turn up. Verse 18, children, it's the last hour.

[26 : 58] And as you've heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come, therefore we know that it's the last hour. Jewish literature of the day has it that an evil figure will arise before the end.

And John says, guys, you know this, well actually the end times are now, it is the last hour, and lots of Antichrists have arisen, lots of instead of Christ people, and that's why we know it's the last hour. There's a kind of matter of factness about verse 18. It's a, well, what would you expect in the last hour sort of statement. Friends, what do we expect? What do we expect will happen in the last hour, in the last days, in the gospel age in which we're in?

Well, we know that this last days is, is the gospel age. It's the time when the good news of Jesus is at last clearly revealed. This is the age in which the spirit of God has been poured out for the worldwide proclamation of that good news.

What would you expect in an age like this? Would you expect this to be a straightforward time, a time of ease? Would you expect the powers of evil to lie down and do nothing in a time like this?

[28 : 15] Would you expect the truth to advance in this age without any difficulty or opposition? Would you? In time of war, do you expect that no one will be influenced by enemy propaganda?

That no one will join the other side? Do you really expect that? In time of war, do you expect that the enemy will always look like the enemy? Do you expect that everyone who looks like a friend is really a friend in time of war?

Do you expect that? Well, of course you don't, and we oughtn't to. This gospel age is an age of conflict, of truth versus lies, of light versus darkness, an age when deceptive propaganda is heard every day, an age when attractive alternatives to truth are always being told, held out by people who seem to be trustworthy.

It would be really strange if you didn't find that some who looked like friends turned out not to be friends at all. It would be strange given the age we live in.

John is saying, guys, don't be surprised. It's not that much of a surprise. It is so easy to think when bad things are happening, especially if they're happening in your church.

[29 : 38] Is this happening because we did something wrong? Is this a judgment on us? Could we have seen it coming? Were we stupid in the people we appointed to positions of responsibility? Were we foolish to trust the people we trusted?

John says, guys, it's the last hour. What do you expect in the last hour? These things happen. If things like this weren't happening, it wouldn't be the last hour, would it?

very matter of fact, I guess we need to realize that it won't be a surprise when people like this emerge in our own congregations.

people like leave and make everyone feel unsettled and unsure of the truth. It's part of the age we live in.

It's just part of the package. Don't be surprised. Second, the departure of these people is not first of all from the congregation, but from the apostles message.

[30 : 38] Look at verse 19. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they'd been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out, that it might be complained, but they all are not of us.

Now, turn back to chapter one, please. That little bit we read earlier on. Notice how important here the we and us language.

we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, we have seen the life, verse 2, we testify to it, we proclaim it to you, verse 2, that which we've seen and heard, we proclaim to you, verse 3.

The we here, the us, is not every Christian, it's the apostles, the appointed messengers of Jesus. And the same is true in 219.

They went out not from you, they went out from us. They went out from our teaching.

[31 : 43] The big thing about these people is not that they've left this congregation, but they've left the apostles' message. Of course, these two don't always go together.

To leave the congregation is not necessarily to depart from the apostles' message. People leave congregations for all kinds of reasons, good and bad, without departing from the apostles' message.

In the same way, people can leave the apostles' message and not leave church. That's common enough and can be very complicated to deal with. Because as long as people are in church and insist that they're really one of you, that can be tremendously difficult, very destructive and misleading for people.

But John is sure that the people who've left this congregation have departed not just from you guys over there, but from us, from our message and the network of relationships that it brings people into.

Now, this is a reassuring word for those who remain. The reason this lot have left is not that you were deficient, not that you didn't have the truth.

[33 : 03] The reason they've left is that even though they looked impressive, they've departed from the truth. Third, God is in control of their departure, verse 19.

Why did they leave? Verse 19, that it might become plain that they are all not of us. No doubt these guys had their own stated reasons for leaving the congregation, and they left of their own accord. But John says God was in control of that, making something plain. Until they left, they could so easily have been mistaken for the real thing. But now they have left, it's much clearer what they really are.

Sometimes it is a painful relief when people leave churches. It's painful when they leave, but it shows clearly what may have been suspected for a long time that they had already left the apostles teaching.

God was in control of it, says John, you don't need to be chewed up by their departure. Fourth, you who remain are the ones in the know, the ones with spiritual knowledge.

[34 : 15] Verse 19, they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us, but you have been anointed by the Holy One and literally you all know.

Look at the contrast between verses 19 and 20. No doubt these people who were leaving said that they were the ones with the anointing and the knowledge of God. Actually, says John, you are the ones.

You know. And verse 21, I write to you not because you don't know the truth, maybe those guys who've left were saying that they didn't, but because you do know the truth. I want to reassure you that you know the truth.

Can I just make the point once again? We come up again and again in this letter. The people who are really dangerous to Christians are the ones who seem more spiritual than an ordinary Christian is.

That's how untruth works. If untruth looked untrue, and if untruth looked unspiritual, you'd never go for it for a second, would you?

[35 : 25] It's because it looks better and promises more than it's attractive. Fifth, their teaching about Jesus is a lie.

Verse 22, who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the father and the son. No one who denies the son has the father.

Whoever confesses the son has the father also. Now we don't know precisely what these people's teaching about Jesus was, but interestingly, at nearly every point where John mentions Jesus in this letter, the thing he focuses in on is Jesus' death for sins.

Turn back, for example, to chapter one. One, seven, John talks about the blood of Jesus, his son, who cleanses us from all sin.

Verse nine, Jesus, who is able to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Chapter two, verse two, Jesus, who died to turn away God's anger.

[36 : 36] He is the propitiation for our sins. And John repeatedly goes back to sin being the big problem and Jesus' death being the answer to it. And I guess, therefore, that in some way, those who departed had somehow downplayed that.

They downplayed the importance of sin, maybe. They misrepresented Jesus' death and its significance. confidence. My guess is that they did something like that.

I'm sure that none of them said, we deny Jesus. If someone walked through the church door today and started to go on about how they didn't believe in Jesus anymore, no one here would listen to

them for a second.

That's not how you deny Jesus and lead people astray. No, the way you deny Jesus according to John is by just pushing sin to the edge of the picture and pushing his death to the edge of the picture so that they're no longer the heart of what he came to do.

I assume that's something. John just goes back to that all the time and I assume that that's what the denial looked like. Maybe they started talking about all the victory they had over sin and their special power for living.

[37 : 56] Untrue teachers don't stop talking about Jesus. They just talk about him differently. They stop talking about him. We smell them out in a moment.

Six, hang on to our message, says John. That's the gateway to light and joy. Verse 24, let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. Don't listen to them. Listen to what you always listen to.

Listen to what we told you. Then you'll abide in the Son and the Father. You don't need a fancy new thing to abide in the Son and the Father. Just keep listening to what you've listened to. Seven, these people are trying to deceive you.

26, I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you and you have no need that anyone should teach you.

[38 : 58] But as his anointing teaches you about everything and it's true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. No doubt they were claiming that they had a special anointing.

John says, well, they might look believable, but actually they have a hidden agenda. they're trying to deceive you. And of course, no one who's trying to deceive you looks like they are.

John is making clear what is unclear on the ground. don't love the anti-God world, says John.

Don't love it. Now, it's difficult enough to remember that the substantial looking world that we live in is passing away.

But not loving the world is even more difficult than that. Because in this case, the anti-God world walked out of the pulpit three weeks ago.

[40 : 02] In this case, the anti-God world resigned en masse from the eldership last Monday morning. In this case, the anti-God world has just left the student team, or the international students team, or the Sunday school class, or whatever it happens to be.

These are people we love and know and trust and have respected, and they've left. don't, they, says John, are the anti-God world.

Do not love what they love. Do not follow what they follow. I was speaking a while ago to a guy who expressed this about a youth group he was once involved in.

It was a big and successful and gospel-minded youth group. A big group of enthusiastic teenagers. The church got a new pastor and a new youth worker, and they started to say, God is much too big to be contained within the words in a little black book.

It was a youth group of 25. That teaching hung around for quite a while. Only two of them were left standing at the end as Christians. It looked impressive, that teaching.

[41 : 22] God is much too big to be contained in the words of this book. Much too big. Looks impressive, doesn't it? Well, if he's that big, I must have him. If you have him, says John, you will leave.

You'll be following the world, and you won't hold on to Jesus. Friends, our time is gone. Let me take you back to Google Maps. Slightly different angle on Google Maps.

In this Google Map, the map is don't love the world, world. But the picture on the screen, the street view is don't love those spiritual looking people who've just departed.

That's the angle on not loving the world that John is working on in this book. Not loving the world, that's the big headline idea, and by that he means don't love those people, because they're from the world, and they're messages from the world, even though they look as spiritual as anything.

Some implications. We must learn, we must learn to live with the reality that in this world which is passing away, the world is very lovable.

[42 : 47] Not just in the most obvious ways, the seeing stuff and wanting it and acquiring it and feeling substantial because we've got it ways. No, the world is very lovable because superficially, often, it looks much more spiritual than you do as a Christian.

You'll see what it says and see what its life look like and think, I want some of that, I need some of that.

I feel lacking because I haven't got what they've got. John says, that's the world, don't love it.

Brothers and sisters, we must learn to recognize this and to teach it and to live with it.

Otherwise, we will be powerless to protect one another from being a prey to falsehood. Often, the world looks much more spiritual than the real Christian. It dresses itself up in Christian clothes.

peace. But this is not peacetime. This is wartime. This is the last hour. And the enemy works not just from the outside, but from the inside.

[43 : 59] And the enemy looks sometimes like a friend, trustworthy, spiritual. But when someone you've trusted and listened to departs from the apostles teaching, starts downplaying sin, starts marginalizing the death of Jesus, maybe leaves the congregation no matter how impressive they look, do not follow them.

Do not. For to follow that is to go for something instead of Christ, Antichrist. What you need to do instead is hang on to the apostles' teaching.

For then, says John, then and only then will you abide in the Son and in the Father. and in eternal life. Let's pray together.

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. There's the command. And here's the reassurance.

God, if what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. What we need is the gospel that we heard from the beginning.

[45 : 31] We thank you, Heavenly Father, for John's clarity and forcefulness. we recognize that in many ways the world around us seems substantial and easy to love.

We recognize that in the most obvious ways we find it difficult not to love it. We find it easy to love the look of things and desire the acquisition of things and feel good because we've got things.

but we pray that you'd help us to get to, as it were, to street view level and to recognize that sometimes the world dresses up in the most spiritual-looking clothes and we pray that when it does, we would not love it.

We pray that we wouldn't think that we lack something and we need to have it. We pray that we wouldn't think that when we've got what they offer, we have all we need.

Help us rather to let what we've heard from the beginning abide in us. Thank you for your promise that if what we've heard from the beginning abides in us, then we, even we, will abide in the Son and in the Father and in the eternal life promised to us.

[47 : 01] Hear us we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.