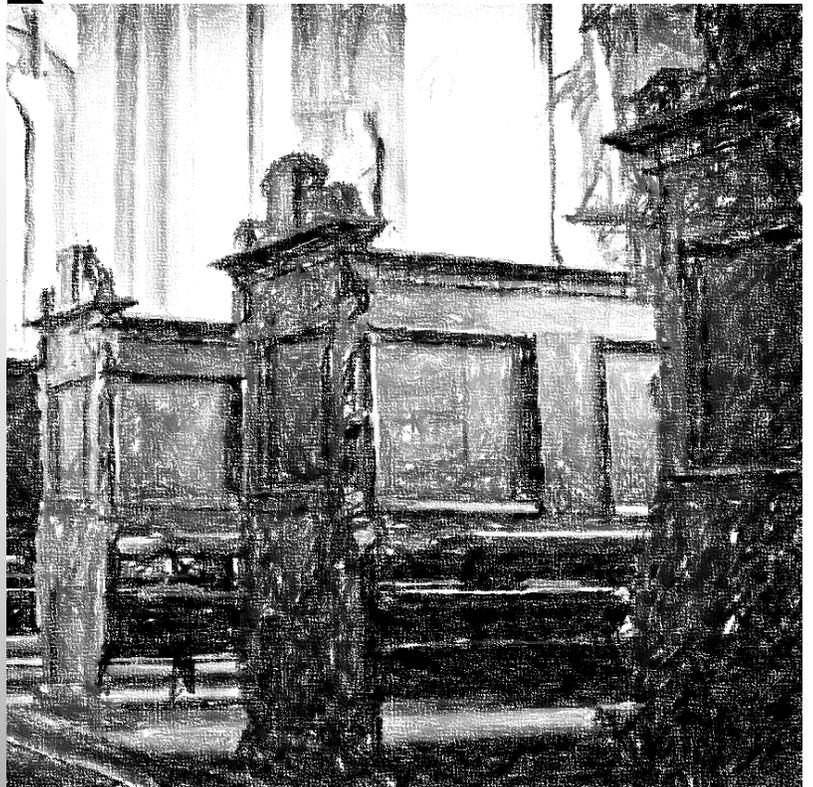




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The Epistle of First John

Responding to Threats Against The Church's One Foundation

1 John 2:12-17

Perhaps one of the greatest needs of our human existence – that often goes overlooked – is the need for a peaceful conscience. Keep in mind that sin has dislodged all of humanity, causing us to live not with peace but with fear, guilt, shame, the need for control, and blaming. Thus, mankind often spends the majority of the time coping and adjusting to fear, guilt, shame, the need for control, and blaming. We deal primarily with the symptoms of sin.

John, though, in verse 12, drops a nugget of gold-Gospel! He stated with compassion, *"I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name."* While it would be easy to quickly read over this short verse, it is important for us to examine the syntax and grammar of this verse.

First, let us examine the word "are forgiven." The word forgive in verse 12 means: to send away, expire, to let go, to loose from a person. That is to say; forgiveness is to have the conscience freed from the guilt, shame, and fear of sin. But we may say, "Our culture doesn't seem to be aware of sin!" Perhaps we do not talk much about sin but

make no mistake, the majority of our time – as humans – is spent trying to escape guilt, shame, and fear that is caused from sin and our sinful condition.

For example, the majority of social media is mankind displaying righteous, good, and positive perspectives of a person. And getting "Likes" or "Hearts" or "Re-tweets" is a form of validation – validation that offsets fear. Furthermore, today's 'Cancel Culture' – is it not shame from culture for a supposed sin? And the social justice movement, is it not a way to point out societal guilt?

Our culture is fixated on sin – even though we often do not use the term. We are fixated on injustices, inequality, oppression, and so forth – all words for sin. But unlike the culture, Christianity recognizes that sin is not merely an offense towards one's neighbor, but it is also an offense against the Lord. And there is more, our culture bounces back and forth between the notions of a) everything is permissible, and b) everyone is to blame. However, what our culture does not understand, give, or offer is 'forgiveness.' Our culture – the world – disdains the very

idea of forgiveness. Why? Because forgiveness is the sending away of the sin. It is the letting go – the remittance of sin.

Christianity is about radical forgiveness, as stated in verse 12. To be forgiven is to have a clean conscience and to stand before God the Father free of guilt, shame, and fear. But there is more; John shows us that this forgiveness is in the 'perfect tense.' Grammatically, the forgiveness in Christianity – through Christ – is ongoing. It continues. Therefore, there is no way possible that the sins of the past can pop up to condemn, blame, shame, and threaten.

But how is all this possible? It is possible because of the name of Jesus – who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished for humanity. Jesus accomplished forgiveness of sins so that we might be free from guilt, shame, fear, God's wrath, and condemnation. Forgiveness grants life, freedom, and a conscience at peace – no matter what the world, the devil, or the old Adam states otherwise!

In verse 15, John shifts to the world. When he uses the word, "the world," he is referring to anything and everything that is destructive towards the Lord and His precious children. Keep in mind that the world was originally created good by God; however, due to sin, the world has been poisoned. Like a virus, sin has turned the world upsidedown. Thus, 'the world' refers to anything that is contrary to the Light. This includes all enemies, evil systems, and evil deception.

John clearly states that the Christian – as a forgiven child – does not love the world. Sure, the Christian lives in this world until death; however, the Christian is a mere pilgrim traveling through a world bent towards darkness.

While it may seem that John is advocating that the Christian escape from the world – as is a common theme of the Gnostics – John is instead pointing out the fact that the world is "passing away." (See verse 17). Thus, the Christian does not find his or her home with the world! How can they? They are forgiven and belong to the Light!

With respect to the world, John points out the unholy trinity of influence of the world. He shows that the world works through: 1) the desires of the flesh (appetite of the gut), 2) the desire of the eyes (longing for shiny things), 3) the pretenses of life (arrogant attitude of awesomeness). However, as previously stated, this unholy trinity of influence is of darkness – deception at best. And it is passing away.

