

What the gospel provides that the "Cancel Culture" [or Political Conservatism] cannot provide

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Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance
Critical Theory; Assurance; Confidence / 1 John 2:12-17

We all have to find a way to deal with the reality of the past, the temptations of the present, and the planning for the future. One way that this is being dealt with in our society is by what has been called the "Cancel Culture." While some of you will think that I am demonizing the "Cancel Culture," I think that the failure is really in the church and with the preaching of the gospel or lack thereof by the church. I am merely saying today that neither the "Cancel Culture" nor Political Conservatism is sufficient to deal with life, but the gospel of Jesus Christ is sufficient.

What is the "Cancel Culture"? This is described by Pluckrose/Lindsay as: "Calls for punishment of celebrities, artists, athletes, and other prominent individuals who have spoken against Social Justice [capital letters intentional], often unwittingly..." (222). What is the goal of the "Cancel Culture?" The goal may be difficult for me to express, but it may be observed in the practice: "This chilling practice often involves the utter destruction of someone's career and reputation for something she might have said decades ago, or as a teenager" (222). **There are clearly past injustices that should be identified, but where do we go after identification? How does the gospel shape our approach to this?** What we have in the gospel gives us a clear message about the past as well as a hope and confidence for the way forward.

There is a struggle which those who serve at Enabled Ministries encounter regularly. Of those within our community who are needy, many of them need jobs. When they come to the Enabled Ministries to receive food, they will tell you that one of the struggles in getting jobs is this: they have a past record. Because of the past they have, it is difficult for them to get a job so that they can pay their bills in order to live their lives. What they are looking for practically is some way that their past can be cleaned up so that they can have a clear path forward without hindrances.

You have all either seen the commercial or lived the experience — that of a child trying to pour their first bowl of cereal. As a child, you know that you can do it without spilling anything, but then you make one small mistake, and the milk or cereal is everywhere. What happens the next time? The next time, the parent does not trust you, so they begin doing it for you. They remember the past, and then they make adjustments moving forward. Some parents will say, “It’s okay,” but then they will do the work the next time. Other parents will say, “It’s not okay. Don’t ever try that again.” Other parents will say, “It’s okay. I will clean up the mess. Now, let me show you how to do this next time.” It’s this last parent that most resembles what the gospel does.

- › The gospel of Jesus Christ honestly acknowledges the past, deals with our sins, and gives us a clear path forward with confidence.

This again is why 1 John is so helpful in a day like today. What John is doing here is confirming the Christians and clarifying the way forward. **As followers of Jesus Christ, we can be joyfully confident in who we are and how we are to live.**

(1) Please know why you should be joyfully confident (1 John 2:12-14)

John wants his hearers to know why he is writing and to find assurance through this writing. Remembering the historical context is helpful. Last week, I shared with you the example of the Lego prison set. This set of Legos even has prisoners, and the fun part of putting the set together is coming up with a story to play out with the little Legos. The Lego man on the inside is always looking for a way out. In similar fashion, there were first century teachings which denied that God had come in the flesh. These teachers considered the material world, including our bodies, to be like prisons which house a pure inner person, and with a “secret knowledge,” salvation could be attained. These teachings would later be called Gnosticism. In response to this denial, **John is encouraging these believers whose confidence in the truth has been shaken:**

1 John 2:12 KJV 1900

¹² I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.

All are matters of faith and relationships:

(a) Your sins are forgiven! (v. 12)

All mankind is in **need of forgiveness for their sin, and this forgiveness is available.** Though we are sinners before the holy God, the Father sent Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice for sin. You can be forgiven if you will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today. **To have Jesus is to be forgiven of sin for all of eternity, and to have reason to be joyfully confident.** Are you forgiven?

The message that may be given within a cancel culture is that people just need to admit their wrongs, but this is misleading. “The black actor Kevin Hart was forced to step down as host of the Oscars” ... for old tweets including gay slurs...and when a lesbian presenter later accepted his apology, she was subsequently censured (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 222). This example with celebrities is one of several which show that admitting is not enough. **The cancel culture does not provide a way forward because forgiveness is not truly an option.**

- › The *gospel* provides a forgiveness that a cancel culture and political conservatism can never offer.

(b) You have known Jesus! (v. 13)

1 John 2:13 KJV 1900

¹³ I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

To know Jesus is to be in relationship with Jesus. Most children go through an imaginary friend stage. Do you remember your imaginary friend? An imaginary friend is one that you imagine in your mind but who is not real. **Jesus is not an imaginary friend.** He is the real Person who came in body to know you and to be known of you. **To know Jesus is reason to be joyfully confident.** Do you know Jesus?

(c) You have overcome Satan! (v. 13)

There was a children's television cartoon called *Dora the Explorer*. Part of the excitement of the story took place whenever Swiper showed up on the scene. Swiper was a fox who would attempt to steal something important to solving the mystery. In order to stop Swiper, everyone had to say, "Swiper, no swiping!" at the same time. This would stop Swiper from committing the crime.

Here, John reveals a truth about Satan. **How could it be possible that a mere mortal can overcome Satan?** 1 John 3:8 gives insight to this truth:

1 John 3:8 KJV 1900

⁸ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. The *darkness is passing away* (1 John 2:8) indicates that the Satan and his dominion have been dealt a crushing blow by the coming of Jesus Christ:

1 John 2:8 KJV 1900

⁸ Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Are you in Christ? Do you believe that in Christ you are an overcomer?

(d) You know God (Father)! (v. 13)

John's usage here seems to be a reference back to earlier references in the book that those who know the Father walk in the light, meaning they keep his commandments (specifically the commandment to love one another).

(e) You know Jesus (incarnate Word)! (v. 14)

This is a poetic reference back to the fact that Jesus, who was in the beginning, became flesh and was witnessed as such. **They can be joyfully confident because they know the truth of Jesus as the incarnate LOGOS.**

(f) You're overcoming Satan in the strength of the Word! (v. 14)

1 John 2:14 KJV 1900

¹⁴ I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Overcoming Satan through Christ is a historical reality that you get to exercise daily as you allow the word of God to abide in you as a means to overcome the Satanic realm regularly. As Jesus Christ, the victor, overcame Satan's temptations by the Word, so too we are strengthened against worldly temptations by the Word. **Knowing the source of strength against the enemy is reason to be joyfully confident.**

John wants them to know why they should be joyfully confident. This relationship also means that there is responsibility.

**(2) Please know how you should love and live
(1 John 2:15-17)**

The command of the passage is clear, and John is going to give **two reasons why the Christians must not love the world:**

(a) [1st reason] You cannot love the Father and the world.

1 John 2:15 KJV 1900

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Imagine that several gunmen enter a bank to rob it. During the heist, the police arrive, but they cannot enter because there are now hostages inside the bank with the gunmen. The police are actually there to free the hostages from the gunmen, but they have to wait until the best time to do so. The standoff lasts 6 days. Imagine that one of the hostages talks to someone on the outside and shows sympathy (love or care) for the gunmen. Rather than love for the ones who are there to deliver them, the hostages, after 6 days are showing love for the gunmen. This is what is referred to as *Stockholm Syndrome*. The hostages have begun to show a love for the wrong person.

When John gives this command to the Christians, he is telling them that they cannot love the Father and love this world at the same time. By world, John must be referring to the *darkness* before mentioned — a sinful power within this age. He outlines the world this way:

(i) Lust of the flesh

The desires of the flesh appeal to our appetites (Akin).¹
Examples: sexual immorality mentally, emotionally, physically; gluttony

(ii) Lust of the eyes

The desire of the eyes appeals to our affections (Akin).
Examples: covetousness, consumerism, materialism, love of money, looking that leads to unbridled wanting

(iii) Pride of life

Pride in possessions appeals to our ambitions. Pride is vainglory, boasting, or arrogance. It refers to the braggart who exaggerates what he has in order to impress others (Akin).
Examples: personal status [based on things, knowledge, accomplishments]; one-up syndrome

¹ Akin, Dr. Daniel L. Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition

(b) [2nd reason] The will of God is eternal, but the world is not eternal.

1 John 2:16–17 KJV 1900

¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The marshmallow test is one of the most famous pieces of social-science research: put a marshmallow in front of a child, tell her that she can have a second one if she can go 15 minutes without eating the first one, and then leave the room. Whether she's patient enough to double her payout is supposedly indicative of a willpower that will pay dividends down the line, at school and eventually at work. Passing the test is, to many, a promising signal of future success.²

The Christian should be marked by the reality of eternity. There is a future that is far better than the present. Because this is true, we have a proper perspective on this world. Because we know that the eternal is real, and this world is passing away:

- We war against sexual immorality in our flesh because it is not of our true Father.
- We war against coveting with our eyes because the things that are unseen are truly eternal.
- We war against the pride of life because our true identity in Christ is what will last forever.

› **Don't love the world; it is incompatible with love for the Father, and the world is passing away.**

The cancel culture and political conservatism cannot offer you true forgiveness or a clear path forward. What the gospel offers is true forgiveness in Jesus Christ and a clear path forward — *don't love the world*.

Have you considered the reality of eternity? Where will you spend eternity? Are you preaching the gospel message of forgiveness? **Christian**, you cannot

² <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/06/marshmallow-test/561779/>, Accessed: February 21, 2021

complain about the *cancel culture* if you are not actively preaching the gospel — which is the only way to rightly deal with the past, present, and future. **Young parents**, do your desires for your children more closely resemble this world or your heavenly Father? **Singles**, how does the will of the Father directly impact your decisions throughout the week? **Retirees**, would you consider your days as primarily consumed with self-care as opposed to the will of your Father?

- › The cancel culture and political conservatism can help point out what is wrong, but only the Lord can show how deeply wrong the sin is, deal with the sin completely, and give us a clear path forward.

Christians may KNOW that they are forgiven through Jesus Christ, and they may KNOW how to love and live.