



Why Jesus Died & How We Live

Love Made Known – Part 2

1 John 1:5-2:6

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to the first letter of John, chapter 1. It's good to come together across Washington around God's Word where together we're memorizing this chapter from His Word. Last week we began our journey through 1 John, this letter John wrote as a pastor to help people know that they have eternal life and to enjoy God's everlasting love.

We are trying to memorize this chapter together, one verse a week for ten weeks, so we're about to find out who has memorized 1 John 1:1 this week. I did forget to mention last week the translation I'm using and I apologize for that. You now have an excuse: "I didn't know which translation—otherwise I would have done it!" I'm preaching during this series from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Some of you may be memorizing from another translation. For that matter, some of you may be memorizing in a whole different language. If that's so, that's great. You can follow along as best as you can in whatever translation or language you're using. But if you have memorized 1 John 1:1 in the ESV, I want to invite you to say it with me now: *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life."*

That was pretty good! The words are kind of grammatically complex, so it's a little challenging, so let's try it one more time: *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life."*

Well, we're one-tenth of the way through memorizing a chapter of the Bible together. If you missed last week, you can obviously catch up with us fairly quickly. Next week, Lord willing, we will say verses one and two together. Remember, the reason we're doing this is because we want to hide God's Word in our hearts. We want God's Word to be part of us, affect us and transform the way we think, desire, act and speak. We want God's Word to flow from us. I was talking to somebody in the

lobby after first service, and I told him, “I’ve been saying this verse to myself all week long—all day, every day, on the way here in the car...” We want God’s Word to be like that to us.

Today we’ll look at 1 John 1:5-2:6. I’m delivering three pieces of news to you today, news that will lead us to two massive exhortations for our lives. So let’s start reading with 1 John 1:5. This is God’s Word.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

^{2:1} 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. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ³ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Three pieces of news: good news, bad news and the best news. We’ll start with the good news.

The Good News: God is Holy

We find the good news in 1 John 1:5: God is holy. *“This is the message we have heard...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”* I love this. We left off last week with John saying, “I write these things for your joy.” So here’s the message that is intended to bring joy. Are you ready? God is light. Joy in our lives starts with a proper understanding of and focus on God—a God-centered approach to everything.

That’s very different from the way we normally think. We think joy starts with focusing on ourselves, what we think we need, what we think we want. That’s where we go first, looking for joy accordingly. But that’s not where the Bible starts. The Bible says joy starts with seeing God as light. So what does that mean and why does that bring joy? Why is it good news that God is light?

Here’s why. For God to be light means that He is the source of pure life and perfect goodness. This is why I’m using the word ‘holy.’ Think about that. God is the source of pure life. For God to be light is a picture of the pure life that is found in Him. Remember back at the beginning of the Bible? Where did life begin? Genesis 1:3-4: *“God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.”* Life began with light. It’s no coincidence, then, that when John writes his

Gospel account of Jesus' life, he opens up by saying about Jesus, *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* In announcing the coming of Jesus, John is saying, "Light has come. Life has come."

So for God to be light means that He is the source of pure life and God is the source of perfect goodness because He is perfect. That's part of the meaning behind light here. There's no hint of darkness in God at all, 1 John 1:5 says. Everything in God is right. God never does anything wrong. He is perfect.

Next Saturday is faith day at Nationals Park and they asked me to throw out the first pitch. When my ten-year-old son found out about that, he just looked at me and said, "Dad, don't blow it. You can't throw it over the catcher, and you definitely can't bounce it up there to him. But you also can't just lob it up there." So he's put the pressure on and actually is taking some initiative. He's said, "Dad, we need to go out and practice." For a change, it's not me telling my son he needs to practice for a sport. So he helped me measure out 60.5 feet and then got down like a catcher for our practice. The current status report is I'm all over the place. He's saying, "Dad, you can't mess this up."

This is what's different about God. God never has to worry about messing anything up. He can't mess up. It's not possible in His character. He is perfectly good. 'Good' is key in that description, because light is contrasted with darkness all over the Bible to depict the contrast between good and evil. So when John says there's no darkness in God, he's saying there is no evil in God. Everything in God is good.

Have you ever met someone who you thought was a good person, but the more you get to know them there seems to be a darker side and you're disappointed? John says, "That will never happen with God. God has no dark side, no shade of darkness whatsoever. He's pure light." God has no stain of evil anywhere in Him. It is not possible for Him. He's perfect goodness and this is good news for us.

This is great ground for joy! Think about it. What if the God Who created us and is ruling over the world right now had a dark side? Take some of the other attributes of God in this passage. Verse nine tells us God is faithful and just. What if God was unfaithful? What if He said one thing one day and went back on it the next day? What if we couldn't trust God or count on His character? What if God was unjust? What if God delighted in injustice and actually promoted it? That would be very bad news.

The good news, though, is that God is holy. He's unlike anyone or anything else. Like light, He powerfully shines as the source of pure life and perfect goodness, which means God is perfectly faithful and perfectly just. So if you're a man or woman whose wife or husband has hurt you or divorced you, or a student whose mom or dad has hurt you or abandoned you—hear this: God will never, ever, ever be unfaithful to you. To all who look at the world and see injustice and hate it, know that the Psalms say God is a righteous judge Who feels indignation every day. He is just and will ensure ultimate justice.

Interestingly, it's this reality that leads us to the bad news.

The Bad News: We are Sinners

The bad news is that while God is holy, we are sinners. Nine times between 1 John 1:6 and 1 John 2:2, John mentions sin. That's more than once in each verse. And that's in addition to talking about darkness and unrighteousness and deception and lies. Our sinfulness is all over this passage. The problem is not just that we sin every once in a while. The problem is we are sinners at the core of our being. It's part of who we are.

In verses eight and ten, John is clearly addressing people who say they have no sin or that they have not sinned. John says, "You're lying. You're making God out to be a liar." That's blasphemy, because God says we're all sinners. We all have a bent toward sin—every one of us. You do, I do—we all have a bent toward disobeying God.

If you want a definition of sin, we'll get to it in John 3:4. John defines sin as lawlessness, as breaking the law of God, as refusing to hear and obey the Word of God. So whenever we think, desire or act in a way that God's Word tells us not to think, desire or act, we sin. Or, when we fail to think, desire or act in a way that God's Word says to think, desire or act, then we sin.

Now, I'm guessing many, if not most of us, would say, "Okay, yes, I sin," or, "I have sinned." But I wonder how often we stop and just feel the weight of that reality. I'm guessing some of us have never stopped and actually felt the weight of that reality. This is where I want you to see in this passage how bad this news is, particularly in light of the good news that God is holy. Put those two pieces of news together and you discover a massive problem. This problem is not just for us. The problem is also for God. God is holy, perfect, good, faithful, just.

We're about to dive into the theological deep end for a second, so stick with me and follow this. God is holy, perfect, faithful and just. We're the exact opposite. We are sinners, imperfect, prone to evil, unfaithful to God. As a result, we deserve His just judgment. For us to be sinners means we've turned from the light to the darkness. We've turned from good to evil. As a result, you and I deserve the just judgment due sin before a holy God: eternal death.

So we love the idea of God's justice, until we realize His justice actually means our condemnation, because we are guilty before a holy God. At which point we think, "Yeah, yeah, but God's loving, right? Since God is love, can't He just forgive us of our sins?" As soon as we say that, we show that we don't really understand the holiness of God. No, God cannot simply overlook our sins, for if He did, He would not be just.

Picture a man standing before a judge in a courtroom. The man is guilty of theft and murder. The judge knows it and says, "I simply forgive you. Just go free." We would have that judge off the bench in

a heartbeat. Why? Because he's not right. He's not just. Do we realize that God's forgiveness of our sin is a threat to His holiness? God's forgiveness of our sin is a problem for God.

I'm reading 2 Samuel right now in my daily Bible reading. In chapter 12 David was guilty of adultery, lying and murder. Nathan the prophet confronted him, and David responded to Nathan, "I've sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You're not going to die." Did you hear that? Adultery, lying and murder—just passed over. Is that justice? No.

So the question at the center of that passage, the tension there, is the same tension in the question at the center of this passage in 1 John. This tension question is also at the center of the Bible: how can a holy God show His love to sinners when they are rightly due His wrath? Justly due His wrath? This is the most important question in the Bible: how can God be true, just and kind to us? We've got to really feel that, because I don't think we think about that as a problem at all. How many people in our country today are losing sleep at night because God is being so kind to sinners?

No, on the contrary, we actually point the finger at God, saying, "How can You punish sinners? How can You tell us what's right and wrong? Who are You to condemn someone? How can You let people go to hell?" That's what we think. But the question of the Bible is the exact opposite. The question of the Bible is, "God, how can You be just and let sinners into heaven?" One is a very man-centered perspective—us-centered. One is a very God-centered perspective. My hope in diving into the theological deep end for a second here is to help us see life through a God-centered lens.

The question of the Bible is how can God be just and loving toward sinners at the same time? That's a problem we can't solve, because no matter what we do, we still stand as sinners before a holy God, deserving of eternal death. There's nothing we can do. No amount of good will fix this.

That's what I told an Uber driver earlier this week. He was a pretty wild driver and seemed like a pretty wild dude as well. I got to know his story. He's a professing Muslim, originally from Kuwait and has convinced himself—and he's trying to convince me—that if he does enough good, God will just overlook the bad. "It's not true," I said. "God is holy. He's much more holy than you can imagine. He's a good, just Judge, which means He can't just overlook sin and we can't escape the reality that we are sinners."

This is a problem, Martin Luther said, that needs God to solve it which leads to the third piece of news.

The Greatest News: Jesus Died for God

The good news is that God is holy. The bad news is we are sinners. All that leads to the best news: Jesus died for God. The best news in all the world is that Jesus died for God.

Now, you might think I misspoke there. “Wait a minute—didn’t you mean Jesus died for us? That’s the best news.” Remember, we’re trying to shift perspective here a little bit. So before we think about us, let’s think about God. I want to show you that the best news is that Jesus died for God.

Yes, as we’ll see in 1 John—Jesus absolutely died for us. But follow this. I think many Christians, even today, have never realized that Jesus’ death wasn’t just for us. Jesus’ death was ultimately for God. We’re not the center of the universe. God is. Everything ultimately revolves around Him. That’s what 1 John is teaching us. God is light—that’s where it all starts. In Him there’s no darkness. Then in verse seven we find that the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. How is that possible? How can Jesus’ blood cleanse guilty sinners from all their sin?

The answer to that question is in 1 John 2:2, where John writes, “[Jesus] *is the propitiation for our sins...*” That’s a great word. I’m pretty sure you won’t hear it anywhere else this week. I’m pretty confident you won’t hear it anywhere else in the world. You’ll only hear it in the Bible. You’ll hear it twice here in 1 John. Can you say it out loud with me? Propitiation. Say it again without spitting on the person in front of you. Propitiation. Ah, that’s a good word. I hope there are five-year-olds walking out of here today going, “Propitiation. I know what that is.” I want you to remember this word and what it means.

Propitiation is a word that refers to a sacrifice that settles judgment or satisfies wrath. So to give you a picture, throughout the Old Testament when God’s people deserved judgment for their sin, they would offer a sacrifice, a propitiation. They would offer this sacrifice as a symbol that the penalty for sin, which is death, had been paid. As a result, God’s just wrath toward sinful people was satisfied. His judgment was settled, so the people were spared.

By the time you get to the New Testament, the whole point is that those Old Testament sacrifices were not enough. None of those sacrifices could pay the full price for people’s sin against a holy God. So the question still stood: how can a holy God show His love to guilty sinners who are rightly and justly due His wrath? As we said, this problem is not just for us—it’s a problem for God and only God can solve it.

So we find out in the New Testament that God has solved it. He has solved it by sending His Son, “...*Jesus Christ the righteous,*” as 1 John 2:1 says. He’s the promised Savior Who never sins. He never broke God’s law, but kept God’s law perfectly, which means He did not deserve the penalty due sin, that is death. That made Him, as God in the flesh, uniquely qualified to pay the divine penalty due sinners, to settle the judgment of God and satisfy the wrath of God. This is what Jesus did at the cross. This is why Jesus went to the cross. He was dying first and foremost for the glory of God.

Listen to Him in John 12:27-28. Right before He went to the cross, Jesus said, “*Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to*

this hour. Father, glorify your name.” What drove Jesus to the cross? The glory of the Father drove Jesus to the cross. This is what Paul says in Romans 3:25 where he uses this word propitiation. He says God put Jesus forward *“as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”* Why did Jesus offer Himself as a sacrifice on the cross? Paul answers, *“This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”*

Think of David’s sins, for example, which could not ultimately stand. Paul continues to tell us the purpose of the cross *“was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”*

Jesus died to show that indeed God is holy. God is perfect. He is righteous and just. And He is good and He is loving. In one crowning moment in all of human history, Jesus died to satisfy the wrath of God due sinners while showing the love of God to sinners at the same time.

Chinese church leader Watchman Nee once said, “If I would appreciate the blood of Christ, I must accept God’s evaluation of it, for the blood is not primarily for me, but for God.” Jesus died for the glory of God in all of His holiness and justice and love.

This is so key. We’ve got to realize we need to turn the tables and have a God-centered view even of the cross. The cross is first and foremost about God. It is a declaration to the world that God is holy—that His love is holy and His wrath is holy. His justice is holy and His mercy is holy. We say things like, “I wonder what Jesus saw in me that would send Him to the cross.” He saw nothing good in you. That’s why He went to the cross. The cross is not a display of our value as much as it is a display of God’s value. The cross is not intended to make us think highly of ourselves. The cross is intended to make us think highly of God. We look at the cross and see that God is high. He is holy. He is just. He is righteous. He is rightly full of wrath toward sin. Praise God, He is also mercifully full of love toward sinners at the same time. All glory be to God. Jesus died for God, the glory of God on display. That’s the point here and this changes everything about how we view the gospel in our lives.

If you’ve never heard or believed this news, I invite you today—I urge you today—believe this news. This is not fake news. This is Real news, with a capital R. The most real news there is is to hear that you’re a sinner, yet God has made a way for you to be forgiven of all your sin. In love, He has sent His Son and He has poured out the judgment you deserve on Jesus instead of you.

If you repent and believe in Jesus, if you turn from your sin and yourself, trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord, you will be forgiven of all your sin and reconciled to God forever. That’s the best news in the world. So I invite you to believe it, to receive it today. Then when you do, realize that this leads into two massive exhortations. For every Christian within the sound of my voice—whether you’ve become a Christian today or if you’ve been a Christian for decades—here are two words of exhortation and encouragement.

Exhortation #1: Walk in the Light of God

In light of this best news, I exhort you to walk in the light of God. That's the picture here in 1 John. God is light. John says in 1 John 1:6-7, *"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."* We walk in the light as He is in the light. Remember, light is life and light is goodness.

So here's the exhortation. Live the good life. Now, here's the problem: there are a lot of things this world says are the good life, but they're lies. A bigger house is not the good life. A nicer car, more possessions—these are not the good life. Higher position—not the good life. More plaudits in this world—not the good life. Don't buy it. All those things are going to burn up in the end.

The good life is fellowship with God. What will compare with that? Fellowship with God. That's the emphasis you see from 1 John 1:6 all the way to 2:6—walking with God, knowing God, enjoying God, being with God. That's the good life.

Without going into details, this past week was just kind of a rough week, in the midst of a lot of travel. I was on planes almost every day, some days on multiple planes, going to multiple cities. I was just tired. But do you know what got me through? Fellowship with God. There was one early morning when I hadn't had a lot of sleep, then I had gotten on a plane really early, so I was spending time in the Word and in prayer. And man, the Lord God met me in that seat. He was speaking to my heart through His Word as I was praying. I don't know what it's like to sit next to somebody who's having a conversation with somebody who's not there physically—but I imagine it was a little awkward for the guy next to me. But it just didn't matter to me. I was fellowshiping; I was communing; I was spending time with God and He ministered to my heart.

I was praising God in a fresh way this morning for this reality and I am zealous for you to experience this reality too. I want to experience it more and more and more. As your pastor, I want you to know this. I want you to love life with God. I want us to be finished and done with a version of Christianity that says, "I want to pray a prayer and then just move on with life as I know it, a life that looks like that of everybody else in the world." That is not Christianity. I want to be finished and done with that.

Walk with God—how do you experience that? Let me give you some practical things flowing from this exhortation to walk in the light of God. How do you get there? One, you need to confess sin honestly. There is sin that separates us from fellowship with God. That's the whole point of the gospel. Jesus has paid the price, so now walking with God involves confessing sin. That's what John says over and over again here.

I mentioned earlier—I'm guessing many of us, if not most of us, would say, "I sin. I know I sin." So we're probably not denying sin, which it seems like is happening here in 1 John. But while we might not outright deny sin, I think we do find ways to soften sin, to justify it, to rationalize it. Maybe we redefine it in other terms. We might say, "Oh, it was just an impure thought. I'm a man. It's just normal. Just one website, for one minute. It's not going to hurt anybody."

Or we gossip about others without a second thought. We lash out in anger. It's not a big deal to us an hour later. We move on. We seek divorce outside the Word of God, because we're convinced that's what's best for us. We cut corners. We take advantage of others in the name of advancing our good. I could go on and on. We're good at finding ways to sin and call it something else.

Or we become desensitized to sin so we don't even notice it. It doesn't jar us to hear God's name taken in vain. We can watch hours of TV and movies and hardly even notice that. Do we realize what a dangerous position that is to be in? And that's the point—we don't realize it. We're dulled to sin, which means we desperately need to stop on a daily basis and search our hearts. We need to ask God to show us our sin and confess our sin.

This word "confess" in verse nine is a great word: *homologeō*. *Homo* means "the same" and *legō* means "to speak." So basically, to confess sin is to say about sin the same thing that God says about sin: "Yes, God, this is not good. I confess that." So Christian brother or sister, do you spend time in honest, specific confession of sin in your life on a consistent basis? The word "sins" here in 1 John 1:9 pictures specific sins. Not just sin in general. Not just, "God, I know I'm a sinner. Forgive me for my sin." No, it's, "God, I've sinned in this specific area." Take the time to examine your heart. "I've sinned this way, that way, today, this week." Remember, God is light. Part of the purpose of light is to expose darkness. The closer we get to light, the more clearly we will see areas of our lives that are dark or are otherwise hidden.

Whenever my family and I go to the coast, one of our favorite things to do is crab hunting at night. We'll go out on the shore when it's dark, turn on our flashlights and all these little crabs are everywhere. Our five, eight, ten and twelve-year-olds start pursuing those crabs, scurrying in all directions. The light follows them.

This is the picture. We need God's light—the light of His Word—to shine on our hearts and our minds and our lives and our relationships daily, in ways that expose darkness and lead to honest confession before God. When we confess our sin, God is faithful, God is just, He forgives us our sin and He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. You might think, "Well, didn't that happen when I became a Christian, when I first put my faith in Jesus?" Yes, it did, but the problem is—and this is the point in 1 John—we're still prone to sin. It's why Jesus taught us to pray, "Father, forgive us our sins, our trespasses." It's necessary for ongoing fellowship with God.

I think about my kids. Every once in a while they disobey me. What if they never express sorrow for that, never ask forgiveness for that? Well, they'd still be my son or daughter, but that would certainly have a negative effect on my ongoing relationship with them.

So confess sin honestly. I know that in a room this size there are many people who right now are trying to hide sin from God and others. I just want to encourage you to stop being so foolish. See the foolishness of trying to hide anything from God, especially the God Who loves you and desires to cleanse you of all those things. Don't hide sin.

You think, "Oh no, it would be better for me to hide it." No! It's like drinking sea water. The more you drink, the more it will starve your body and eventually it will destroy you. Confess sin honestly and as you do, find the way open for the good life. The devil has convinced you that your sin is the good life. Don't believe it. He desires your death. He desires your destruction. He desires the destruction of your marriage. He desires the destruction of your family. Don't believe him. Believe God. Walk in the light of God.

So confess sin honestly, then secondly—and this is the best part—as you confess sin honestly, receive grace happily. I wanted an 'h' word and "happily" seemed like a good one. That's the beauty of this text. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sins. God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. First John 2:1, *"If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ the righteous."*

Here's a separate concern I have. As pastor, just praying through how I can best serve you with this word today, I'm thinking, "There are people hiding sin; there are people who are dull and desensitized to sin. At the same time, there are others who are so prone to despair over sin and who beat themselves up over the sin in their lives." We're supposed to feel sorry for sin. We're absolutely to hate it and want to run from it. But as you run from it, don't forget Who you're running to. You're running to God, Who has made a way for you to be totally forgiven, totally cleansed of all your sin. Do you ever think, "Ah, I can't go back to God and say, 'It's me again and it's that same sin again'"? You just get tired of it, don't you, and you start to think, "God is tired of this too."

I was having a conversation with my 12-year-old one night this week. He'd gone to bed a couple hours before and I was up late. He came and we had this long conversation. He said, "Dad, I've just been thinking in my bed about the sin in my life. I feel like God is angry with me and I'm kind of afraid of Him in that way." So we talked about a healthy, right fear of God. Then I said, "Buddy, when you disobey me, certainly I'm disappointed. But do you know that I love, right?" He's like, "Yeah." I said, "Buddy, God's love is so much greater than mine. He loves you so much. He's your Father. You can go to Him." So we talked about that. He said, "It makes you think how amazing grace is." I said, "That's right."

The Bible called Satan an accuser. When we sin, he says to us, “You’re not worthy. You can’t go before God.” And in that moment, , based on the Word of God, I plead with you to not believe that lie. You can absolutely go before God. If anybody sins, 1 John 2:1 says we have an Advocate with the Father—literally, a Helper, a Defender Who stands on our behalf.

Picture being in a courtroom and Satan is accusing us of what we’ve done wrong. Jesus stands up as our Defense Attorney and says, “I’ve already paid the price for that.” Satan says, “Objection, Your Honor.” God the Father says, “Overruled. This is My Son. Justice has already been paid.” That’ll make you happy. You’re sitting with the defendants, saying, “Walk in the light of God, knowing you’ve been forgiven by God Himself.”

Remember that great hymn?

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea;
A great High Priest, whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart;
I know that while with God He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb!
My perfect, spotless Righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace.

One with Himself, I cannot die;
My soul is purchased by His blood;
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Savior and my God.

[Before the Throne of God Above by Charitee Lees Bancroft]

Yes! Confess sin honestly. Receive grace happily. And then flowing from that, obey the Word humbly. First John 2:3, *“By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.”* Verse six: *“Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”* We confess sin, we receive grace, so we want to obey. We want to walk in the light, obeying Him humbly. We’re not perfect. John clearly is allowing for sin in the picture here.

We’ll talk about this at different points throughout 1 John, but I want to encourage you to think of holy direction, not holy perfection. There is coming a day when there’s not going to be any more sin, when we’re with God in heaven, when we’ll be perfect. That’s coming and we’re looking forward to that day. But until then, we’re moving in the direction toward that. We’re becoming more and more and more like Jesus. Knowing that sin still remains, we want to grow in obedience in this way. And in the process, we want to grow in our experience of God’s love. Remember, that’s the whole point. *“I write these things...that you may know that you have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13). The good life is found in obedience to God’s Word. I guarantee it.

As your pastor, I long for you to experience walking in the light of God. Then as you do, here’s the second massive exhortation.

Exhortation #2: Witness to the Love of God

According to 1 John 2:2, Jesus is the propitiation for our sins—but not just for our sins. He’s the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

For the last four years, I have had the privilege, as many of you know, of leading an organization called the International Mission Board. It represents tens of thousands of churches, supporting and serving thousands of missionaries all around the world in places where the gospel has not gone. During these years I have grown to love and thank God for these brothers and sisters and for the privilege of leading them in that way.

At the same time, over the last year, God led me by His grace to be a part of this body and be part of shepherding this church alongside other pastors. So I’ve been transitioning out of the IMB leadership role which will become official a couple weeks from now. I’ve had people ask me, “Why would you leave? I thought you were passionate about missions? Why would you leave a missions organization to be a pastor in a church?” The ultimate answer is God led me. He directs our lives in different ways at different times. He’ll lead somebody into that role. He leads each of us to all kinds of different roles and vocations in His sovereign goodness.

But when it comes down to it in my own heart, I can’t escape love for the local church and the conviction in my heart that God has uniquely designed the local church for the spread of this good news to the whole world. Mission organizations can and should exist to help organize and facilitate missions,

but it's local churches together saying, "We want to make the good news—the best news in the world—known all over the world."

Four years ago I stepped into that role with a zeal to leverage whatever part of my life I've got left to be about getting the gospel to the nations. As a pastor, that zeal is no less today than it was four years ago. It's even greater. I thank God for the privilege of being able to partner with you to discover how we can make this best news known in Metro Washington DC—among the nations here—and then from here, throughout the world. Global mission is not just a program in the church—it's the purpose for which Jesus died, therefore it's the purpose for which we live as a church.

I was praying for Turkey earlier this week. There are 80 million people in the country of Turkey and do you know how many Bible-believing Christians there are in Turkey? They estimate there are about six thousand. There's twice as many people today who will gather together as McLean Bible Church than there are Christians in all of Turkey, out of 80 million people. So we need to witness of the love of God to the world and we want to be a part of changing that reality in Turkey. And it's happening from here in all kinds of ways. We have a team in Ethiopia. We've got a team going to the Dominican Republic this week, as well as other places.

One of the other highlights of this last week was the privilege of being in Birmingham where we were celebrating a ten-year anniversary of a ministry. It all started when, by God's grace, I was preaching Psalm 67: *"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations."* Three guys in that service said, "We want to take the blessing of God in our lives and make His glory known among the nations." So they started a water ministry called "Never Thirst" that is aimed at getting clean water to the people. They've gone to places everywhere from Chad to India to Myanmar to Cambodia, doing it all with the gospel through churches. So this was the celebration of a half million people who now have clean water today.

I walked away from that anniversary, praying, "God, I praise You for all You're doing through McLean Bible Church around the world right now. May it just be the beginning of fruit being born over the next 5, 10, 15 years around the world to the glory of Your name, through Your Word penetrating hearts and causing us to say, 'This news is too good to keep to ourselves. We're not hogging this news in Metro Washington, DC. We're making it known in the world.'" Because that's the purpose for which He died.

The exhortation is this: let's walk in God's light, confessing sin, receiving grace and obeying God's Word. As we do, let's witness to the love of God. Let's tell the world that God is light and God is love, so that more and more and more people might have fellowship with Him and with us. May it be so.

Let's pray.

O God, we praise You. You are light. In You there is no darkness at all. You are perfectly good and we praise You. We gather together today to give You worship. If we did nothing else today but just sit here for an hour and a half saying, “You are good. You are good. You are good,” that would be more than appropriate. We praise You for Your goodness.

So we pray that You would help us, by the grace You’ve offered in Christ, by His propitiation for our sins, help us to walk in Your light. Help us to make Your love known, right here in Metro DC and wherever You lead us in the world. God, may it be so, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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