

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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The Choices We Make

1 John 1 - Part 2

Prayer: *Father, we just want to come before you this morning to thank you for again the same opportunity that you've given us week after week. And we continue to thank you for the gift of your Son, we thank you for the gift of your word and we pray again for the presence of your Holy Spirit, Lord, guide us and guard us, walk us into your word and give us the ability to make it of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, I mentioned last week that I believe my job description entails or what it entails and I said that I believe my job is to help you fall deeper in love with Jesus Christ. We're going to be studying 1 John and we're going to studying with the hope that it helps you do two things: One is to fall deeper in love with Jesus Christ; and number two, live the life that Jesus taught us to live, the life that he taught us to live and not because you have to but because you love to.

This is how John introduces his letter. He says: *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—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.

A lot of words, a lot of thoughts right there and John is basically saying, understand something, this Jesus is someone we heard, we saw, we touched him with our own hands. It wasn't a ghost. It was a real flesh-and-blood person. John goes out of his way to say by the way, we didn't just experience a physical Jesus, we didn't just see a body, we saw something much, much bigger, we saw the person, we saw the life, we saw the ministry, we saw the glory of who Jesus was. We saw Jesus on the micro level as a real physical person and on the macro level as God the Son who was there at the beginning with God as the author of all of creation. And then John states his purpose in writing this letter. He says: *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.* John says this is but one

way to make your joy in this life and the next complete, and really the only way to do that is through fellowship of his Father and through his son, Jesus Christ.

And before we go into this I want to first say something about joy. I mean as most of you know, we buried my niece, Cynthia Parker, last week. Cynthia died at age 30 after an heroic battle with an immune system that could no longer protect her. She loved the Lord Jesus, and her funeral service reflected that. She was one of a family of seven sisters and two brothers. And our family took turns speaking of the joy that she had brought into their life, the pain of her going, and the love that she had for Jesus. I just -- I don't -- I can't imagine how people do this without Christ. I just don't. I don't understand it. I profoundly respect people who are able to but I don't get how they can, because there at that funeral in the midst of profoundly deep sorrow there was also a pervasive and an extraordinary expression of joy. It's one of the most amazing qualities of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians kind of lays out what they are, it says: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* And of all the fruits of the Spirit, I really think that joy is one of the hardest once to grasp.

A while back I spoke about joy and I said that our world can't seem to separate the idea of joy from the idea of happiness. This is the way the dictionary defines "joy." It says -- quote -- "The emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying." I couldn't disagree more. My working definition of joy has always been that joy is a sense of contentment, a settled sense of contentment based on knowledge that God is good and that he's in control. Well I revised my definition when I came across what I think is an even better one by Kay Warren, and this is what she said, she says, "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation." Well, that joy is precisely the aroma that pervaded Cynthia's funeral. I mean the pain was real and it was deep indeed but so was the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right for one reason and one reason only, that's because Jesus Christ has paid the price of death itself.

The brother who preached at Cynthia's funeral, he quoted from a story by Donald Grey Barnhouse that sums up where that quiet confidence comes from. Barnhouse's first wife had died from cancer and he was driving with his three children, all under 12, to the funeral that he was about to preach for her. This was the story

itself in Barnhouse's own words -- quote -- he says: "I was driving with my children to my wife's funeral where I was to preach the sermon. As we came into one small town there rode down in front of us a truck that came to stop before a red light. It was the biggest truck I ever saw in my life, and the sun was shining on it at just the right angle that took its shadow and spread it across the snow on the field beside it. As the shadow covered that field, I said, 'Look children at that truck, and look at its shadow. If you had to be run over, which would you rather be run over by? Would you rather be run over by the truck or by the shadow?' My youngest child said, 'The shadow couldn't hurt anybody.' 'That's right,' I continued, 'and death is a truck, but the shadow is all that ever touches the Christian. The truck ran over the Lord Jesus. Only the shadow is gone over mother.'" Well Cynthia's family knows that only the shadow of death has taken her while the truck of death itself slammed into Jesus. I mean their pain is very real and it's very deep but they know with absolute certainty that they're going to see Cynthia again, and in that sense nothing, nothing can steal their joy.

And what's unique about genuine joy as opposed to some of the other fruits of the Spirit is that really nothing can take it away from you. I mean you can literally lose your patience, you can be unkind, you can have your peace taken away from you; but genuine

joy, it's something that you cling to as everything else falls apart.

The Jews in the book of Hebrews, they knew that very same joy even as their world began to fall apart. These were folks who were rejected by their fellow Jews, persecuted by the Roman government, mistrusted by the Christian community and generally mistreated by everyone else, and yet God makes it clear that they still had joy. This is what he says in *Hebrews 10:32*, he says: *Remember the earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to taunts and afflictions, and at other times you were companions of those who were treated that way. For you sympathized with the prisoners and accepted with joy the confiscation of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better and enduring possession.*

So just picture this. You come home from work one day and you find that the locks have been changed on your doors and you're barred from entering your own house. And there's an official notice from the government that because of your faith, you have forfeited your property. Now that may not be happening here yet but all around the world this is a common experience of those who claim Christ as Savior. Now could you accept with joy the confiscation of your

property? I mean I guess you could say it all depends on your definition of the word "joy." Since losing your possessions could never qualify as something exceptionally good or satisfying, the world sees no way to find joy in that kind of circumstance. But God sees it differently. And so it becomes very critical to understand not only where joy is found but also what joy really is. Life for all of us is going to consist of difficult times where we're challenged by circumstances to believe that God really does love and care for us. I mean Fred alluded to that this morning. Some of you this very week have had that challenge, and each and every time we're challenged like that, we face what the scripture describes as this binary choice. It's described again by *Hebrews 12*. It says: *Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and by it, defiling many.* What God is saying is he's calling on us to make a choice. It's the one that Kay Warren spoke of in her definition of joy, and again this is what she said. She said: "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation."

Well that's the part I want to focus on, the determined choice to praise God in every situation. I mean this is not a choice that

you make in a vacuum. And what God is saying is the choice of grace or bitterness, it represents not only two different pathways but two completely different sources of energy. I mean, anyone who's ever spent any time wallowing in bitterness, you know, you know it is a source of energy. It's a deadly energy though. It's like a toxic form of a sugar high. It may well give you a burst of energy but whatever it gives with the left hand, I guarantee you it's going to take away with the right. Bitterness and self-pity is a poison that can taste delicious as it cripples and kills you. And because bitterness derives its energy from within you, it weakens you as it convinces you it's giving you strength. It's also highly addictive. The more you indulge in it, the more bitter you become. So deciding to choose the grace of God is a choice you make, and it's a choice you make to tap into an unlimited energy resource that also changes you as you use it but for the better. The Parker family made a conscious choice to respond to an awful circumstance with joy. They couldn't change the circumstances that they found themselves under but they could all choose the way they responded to those circumstances. And if we choose bitterness it will suck the strength out of us. If we choose grace, then we tap into God's unlimited source of strength. The Parkers made that choice. They could have just as easily chosen bitterness. The scripture shows us exactly what that looks like.

Scripture records a conversation in Luke 24 that takes place, takes place right after Jesus's resurrection, and it features two believers that are right on the cusp of choosing bitterness or grace. We see the risen Jesus, he's on the road to Emmaus and he's speaking to two distraught disciples who think that he's dead and gone. I don't want to underestimate how truly awful the events were that they witnessed, I mean, they saw their Savior, they saw their Messiah, the one whom they had placed their hope in, they saw him mocked and brutalized and tortured and executed. Worse still they saw him go to his death like a sheep to the slaughter. They're now in the process of starting to choose bitterness over grace. I mean we get distraught over politics. They saw their king, they saw their Lord, they saw their Messiah stripped naked, nailed to a cross and crucified. And if anyone had a strong temptation to choose bitterness over grace, it would probably be these two fellows. This is how it's described in *Luke 24*. It says: *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are*

you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from

their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Well Jesus remarks how foolish, how slow of heart they were. Jesus is actually, he's kind of playing the role of a prosecuting attorney here. He loves these two and he's planning on teaching them a heavy lesson but for now he simply asks a few questions and then he lets them convict themselves. They're only too happy to lay out all the evidence that they ignored in order to pursue the worst possible outcome. Jesus just lets them talk. And they tell Jesus that even though there was ample evidence that their savior had risen from the grave, I mean, the tomb was empty, the body was gone, they had witnesses who described a confrontation with angels stating that Jesus was alive, but it still wasn't enough to overcome their choice to disbelieve. So Jesus castigates them, not for being mistaken but for choosing to be mistaken, for choosing a path of bitterness instead of one of grace. So Jesus lovingly takes them to task, and he says to them: *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" And then beginning with Moses and the prophets he opens up the scriptures to them.*

See what God was doing at the cross was so spectacularly

mind-bending that Jesus himself had to explain to them that the king of the universe had actually won a spectacular victory at the cross rather than suffer what they saw as a crumbling defeat. They saw Jesus only as a man who had bitterly disappointed them, and so Jesus takes them deeply into the scriptures to show them that he was God himself who had come down to earth, taken the form of flesh, lived a perfect life, and then offered that perfect life up as a payment for sin on the cross, so that when we by faith trust in Christ as our Lord and Savior we can now stand before God worthy of heaven because now we have Christ's righteousness instead of our own sin. And so Jesus is showing them that what looked like the ultimate in defeat was actually the greatest of victories. He's showing them that the difference between embracing a path of grace or one of bitterness all centers on what one chooses to believe. The disciples said, *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"* Jesus showed them treasures that previously they simply chose not to see. Because they couldn't see they had been teetering on the brink of bitterness when Jesus physically intervened to redirect their course.

Now we may well think of them as we read this, well how did you miss this? I mean, how did you not see all of these clues that were right there in front of you? Well, we have to realize that

they didn't have the resources that we have. They didn't have the Bible or podcasts or You Tube videos, in fact they had almost no written words at all, I mean, what they had was the Old Testament usually spoken verbally once a week in the synagogue. What Jesus showed them in the scripture, what set their hearts burning with joy within them is something we have access to any time, anywhere in multiple translations, in multiple formats. So our choice to embrace God's grace instead of bitterness doesn't require Jesus instructing us. However, it does require us making a choice.

In our text this morning, it just reminds me of the mindset that these folks on the road to Emmaus had, I mean, everything was grim, everything was awful, everything was darkness. Suddenly Jesus throws open the darkness like a shade and he floods it with light. You know it's extraordinarily easy for us to have that exact same mindset today. We look around at all the darkness around us but then we read in our text this morning: *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.* John declares the message that he received directly from God's Son about God's Father, that God is light, morally, spiritually, and physically. I mean it's a message we can easily overlook just like the two on the road to Emmaus did. You see, it's a message you just won't see in the darkness of this world unless you choose to look for it. I mean I've spoken often

about the two different kingdoms that occupy this world: There's the kingdom of light and there's the kingdom of darkness. We live physically in the kingdom of darkness; it's part of our home address. I mean God actually refers to the realm we presently occupy as the darkness. Matthew describes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry this way in *Matthew 4*, he says: *And leaving Nazareth he -- that's Jesus -- went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles--the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."* We dwell literally in the darkness. It's right outside the door. And we have the privilege of the light dawning on us. But you know, it's a privilege that many people want no part of whatsoever. *John 1:5* says: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* You know, translators struggle with this particular verse, you know some say it says the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it, other ones say "or apprehend it" or "overcome it" or "appropriate it." Well the struggle with words here is to try to capture just how much really the darkness detests the light, how appalled by the light it is and how much it seeks to snuff out the light. And the light is Jesus

himself. *John 8:12* says: *Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* So who wouldn't want that? I mean who wouldn't want to have the light of life? I mean who wants to be stuck kind of stumbling around in the darkness? Well who do you think? *John 3:19* says: *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*

Well here's the bad news about this scripture. It doesn't just apply to those folks who are out there, it applies to all of us. I mean if I'm a thief, if I'm a murderer, if I'm corrupt, if I'm doing evil, of course I want the darkness rather than the light. But here's the problem. You see, all of us to one degree or another, we all love our own individual darknesses rather than the light. I mean I may have no desire to rob, steal, plunder and kill but I still may want the darkness to hide my desires to lust, covet, envy or slander. Jesus says: *For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.* If you don't think this applies to you, how about we take every single thought you've had today and plaster it on your forehead for everyone to read. If that's something that doesn't appeal to you, then maybe you too are hating that light as well. I mean aren't you refusing to come to the light lest your

thinking be exposed? And on the other hand the good things that we do, those things that we're proud of, that we'd love to see put on display, those are things that we want exposed and for good reason. Again Jesus says: *"But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."* So we're quite happy to have the good exposed and quite content to let the bad lay low.

John's epistle deals with this subject of darkness with the unequivocal candor that John often displays, and it's something that just doesn't sit well with our culture. This is how John puts it in verse 6. He says: *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* Just two verses later John adds this, he says: *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* What John was talking about here, he's talking about the problem of self-deception. He points out that you will never deal spiritually with a problem that you don't even realize you have. Jesus told a story about it in *Luke 18*. He said: *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'* But the tax collector, standing far off, would not

even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"

See, both men here were sinners; one knew it, one didn't. One actually lied to himself about his condition, the other treated it honestly. One was a Pharisee in the truest sense of the word, and the other was a sinner saved by grace. And every sinner saved by grace is in this process of what we call "sanctification." This is how sanctification works for believers in Jesus Christ. You see, all of us are on a trajectory that starts the moment that we receive Christ, and it's a path that doesn't end until the day that we die and it continues on into eternity that God goes about the business of sanctifying and perfecting us. I mean by now I'm pretty sure -- at least I hope most of you all familiar with *Romans 8:28*, which says: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* We love that verse. But the very next verse also tells us why. And it says: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.* See every one of us has this unique ability to represent Christ. You can't represent Christ like I can and I can't represent Christ like you can. Like a snowflake, every one of us uniquely represents some aspect of who Christ is that nobody else can represent. And that happens through our sanctification. So how does that happen? Well

it first starts with us recognizing that we're sinners. Many years ago I did a study on the book of James. I found out that he too was quite blunt when it came to dealing with sin and this is what he said in *James 1:19*, he said: *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

Now James is talking there about anger and he was speaking to his brothers in the faith, but he didn't stop there. It didn't stop him from telling them in the next verse: *"Put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."* We say, Whoa, wait a minute. Is James saying that kind of yuck is to be found in us born again believers? Sure is. This is how Paul puts it in *Romans 7*, he says: *I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.* See our sanctification guarantees that for the time we spend on earth we will be at war with the sin within us, and that battle never ends.

Many times I've compared our sanctification to the process of peeling an onion. And you know what that's like when you peel down to a brand new layer of an onion, it's all bright and clean and shiny and new and you set that onion out and very quickly it gets dinged and it gets dirty. Our sanctification is like that onion. God reveals some new truth about some sin that we're dealing with, we understand it, we confess it, we repent, we feel bright and clean and shiny and new, but after that layer is in the world for a while, it, too, starts to get dinged up and dirty until God starts the process of peeling that layer all over again. It may be a layer of pride or lust or greed or any of the other defilements that God is committed to ridding us of. And when we finally discover, remove that dinged and dirty layer we then feel renewed and ready to go, we have no idea that God sees every single one of every single layer and that he saw them all before we were born, and that he is committed to removing them all one by one. Our entire Christian life is spent discovering and removing layer upon layer of stuff that started out fresh and clean only to eventually get dinged and dirty as God starts removing the next layer. The secret of being able to understand that as a blessing is knowing that God has already seen every dinged and dirty layer we will ever present to the world. So no sin that you and I will ever commit has ever been a shock or a surprise to God. In fact God says *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should*

be holy and blameless before him. The joy is knowing that if you're one of his, he chose you before the very foundations of the world to make you holy and blameless in his sight. So all of the remodeling and all of the peeling that God does in our lives is not accompanied by the frustration and anger and disappointment that it would be if it were an earthly parent who was sanctifying us, I mean, there's no time and no place and no way ever that God does one of these, rounds the corner and says, "Oh, look what he did now." That's not in God's plan at all because he's seen it all, he's seen it before you were born. That's why I've always described it as it's so necessary to hold these two truths equally: Number one truth is that God loves you, and number two truth is you are full of it. And "it" is just what you think it is. Paul called it "skubalon." It was defined as one source as: "The excrement of animals, offscourings, rubbish, dregs of things worthless and detestable;" nasty stuff for sure. And when God looks at us through the lens of his omniscience, he sees all that skubalon, every single ugly layer of the onion all at once. He sees what James sees when he tells us to *put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

So the good news is that God loves us even though we are still full of it. And it's absolutely critical you hold both thoughts as

equally important because if one or the other becomes dominant you will become spiritually sick. See, if your dominant thought is only "God loves me" you will become a self-centered, self-absorbed 21st century North American evangelical. That's not a good thing. But that has become the gospel that many evangelicals preach and the world hears, I'm a living, breathing human being, therefore God loves me. I mean we all know God is love and because God is love, he loves everybody everywhere indiscriminantly. That's not what the Bible teaches.

What about the other extreme? I mean if your dominant thought is only, "Oh, I am full of it," you can easily become the victim of what's known as "worm theology," where you see yourself as lower than pond scum. I mean listen, it's a jarring shock to learn the extent of our own personal wickedness. We can use that information to either lower our assessment of ourselves and our sin or raise our assessment of our Savior and the price he paid for that sin. And if that knowledge doesn't lift up the love of Christ, it will only bring down our view of ourselves and we will despair, begin to doubt that God could ever love someone as full of filthiness and rampant wickedness as us. But if you hold both of those truths equally, then you know you're loved and accepted completely and totally by the grace of God even though you also know that you're full of it.

So how do we hold both of these truths? Well, you just trust God and his word. *Romans 5:8* says: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* This is the acceptance and the approval that ended in the Garden of Eden, was restored at the cross and is presented to us as a gift. And when we fully understand that we really are full of it, full of self, full of pride, full of blind self-seeking that only wants to worship myself and yet, yet for some wonderful reason known only to God, God has chosen to fix his love on me, well then we truly understand when James says: *Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls,* that he's not exaggerating and he's not using hyperbole. Every one of us is filled with filthiness and rampant wickedness and yet God still loves me while I'm full of it.

When God looks at us through the gift of righteousness that we gained from Christ at the cross, by our faith in him he sees us perfected and holy in Christ, and the filthiness and rampant wickedness as layers of the onion that he will spend the rest of your life and mine transforming. Now a huge part of that transformation is a willingness to give up the lie that we can have fellowship with God while still embracing the skubalon. And that's what 1 John is telling us in these three verses in our text this

morning. 1 John 1:6 says: *If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.* And so instead we openly and honestly do exactly what we're trying to do this morning, that's gathering together, fellowshiping, worshiping and learning how God would have us live. Verse 7 says: *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, purifies us from all sin.* And so whether it's God's word or prayer or the songs that we sing or the fellowship that we have, God insists that we walk in the light, that we face the truth, that we acknowledge our sin, knowing that God sees it far more clearly than we'll ever see it and he still loves us. Knowing verse 8: *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

See, our goal is to allow God's Holy Spirit to complete the sanctification that he began in us at salvation. And here's where we find ourselves back at that word we saw at the very beginning of the message, and it's that word "choice." We started out this message speaking about choosing joy in the face of great pain and suffering. And here we are ending it speaking about choosing once again. And this time the choice is whether or not to be honest to God as he starts pouring out the different layers of our onion that are tattered and torn and needing to be replaced. We can either

choose, like the tax collector did, to acknowledge God's Holy Spirit doing the work of sanctification in our lives, recognizing that his love for us is never diminished from the day we're saved until the day we leave this earth, or, like the Pharisee, we can continue to have fellowship with him while walking in the darkness, not living out the truth. It's not the way I want to live. I mean, Paul described our world as -- quote -- "this present darkness" in Ephesians 6:12, and he was a hundred percent accurate. But we have the answer. It's our text this morning which tells us just how we are to deal with that darkness. It says: *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, purifies us from all sin.* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your letter through 1 John. I just thank you for its appeal to honesty, for its appeal to a lack of self-deception. Lord, we need to do business with you and we need to be able to come before you and recognize that you see it all, there is nothing hidden from you, there has nothing been hidden from you from before the foundations of the world, the very worst that we are capable of, you've already seen and yet, and yet you have chosen to fix your love on us. Lord, we are so thankful for that love. We praise you and thank you for it. We pray that we continue this journey of understanding just how full of it we

really are and being open and honest with your Holy Spirit as he shows us these truths. I pray you would give us the grace to move forward with them, accept them, and deal with them as you would have us deal with them. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.