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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**Five Theological Words**

**1 John 2:1 - Part 4**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just want to again thank you for your grace. I thank you for your mercy. I thank you, Lord, that we've been -- last week we talked about persecuted saints and this week we can thank you, Lord, that the seventeen of the seventeen who were kidnapped in Haiti, that two have been returned. That still leaves fifteen believers, fifteen saints, Lord, that are in the hands of those who could certainly do them harm. So we pray for those fifteen, Lord, we pray that you would release them. We pray that those who kidnapped them would come fully into your kingdom and recognize their need for you. We pray also, Lord, this morning as we again have the privilege of safety and the privilege of your word and privilege of being able to open your book without any fear, I pray this morning, Lord, along with that privilege you would give us the presence of your Holy Spirit as we open up your word, may it be of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well this morning I would direct you to our text which is 1 John 2:1-2, which says: *My little children, these things I write to*

*you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

Now I wonder how many times we've encountered verse 1, I mean, once a month for years now as we prepare for communion we repeat this verse to explain that as believers in Christ we literally have someone in heaven itself speaking on our behalf, sort of like what a lawyer would do if we were to appear in court. And that's actually not that far from the truth because the Bible makes it clear that we stand accused day and night by none other than Satan himself whose name actually means "the accuser." Scripture reveals how he stood before God repeatedly accusing believers. We have an account of one, his accusation of Job in *Job 1:8*. It says: *And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."*

We also see another accusation, this one of Joshua in *Zechariah 3*. It says: *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.* Well after Jesus rose from the dead, having conquered death itself, he ascended into heaven permanently casting Satan out, and we see this explained in *Revelation 12:10*. It says: *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."*

Well, Satan may well have been cast out of heaven where he accuses us day and night but that hasn't stopped him from still hurling those accusations at us. We see Jesus even acknowledging Satan's role here on earth when he's speaking to Peter and he gives him this morning in *Luke 22*. He says: *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat."* So Satan is now firmly ensconced on planet earth where he still seeks to wreak havoc as he knows he no longer has any opportunity to do so in heaven or at least among believers because there he has to face Jesus himself speaking on our behalf. But you know, it's not like Jesus has suddenly assumed the role of lawyer for the defense. I mean, there's no discussion in heaven about our innocence or guilt with regard to our sins. I mean in fact the sins of Jesus' sheep,

they are indefensible. *Romans 3:23* tells us: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,* and *Ezekiel 18* tells us: *"The soul who sins shall die,"* so we all know that there is a death penalty punishment awaiting every single human who's ever lived because every human who's ever lived has sinned. And yet believers in Jesus Christ know that we have this advocate in heaven arguing on the basis of our faith in him, we now have the right to everlasting life. And Jesus isn't arguing that we have some type of extenuating circumstances attenuating our guilt. I mean he's acknowledging we are fully guilty and we are worthy of punishment, but that any and all punishment due to our sins he has already taken on and already paid for. And *Romans* lays out exactly what Jesus is doing now in heaven on our behalf. This is Paul's account. He says in *Romans 8:33*, he says: *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died -- more than that, who was raised -- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

So what gives Jesus the right to intercede or advocate for us? Well again, let me go back to the text we opened up with this morning including verse 2, and let me give you an answer to that. This is John's words. He says: *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. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* Okay. Propitiation is clearly a fancy word. This morning we're going to be looking at a lot of fancy theological words, advocate and propitiation being just two of them, because understanding those words goes a long way towards thoroughly understanding and grasping the gospel.

The first word that we looked at this morning was "advocate." That's someone who speaks on our behalf. Our second word is "propitiation." It's important to figure out what that word means and then we have to figure out what John is saying when he says that this propitiation was for the sins of the whole world. Well, the word "propitiation" means "to appease wrath," and it occurs frequently in the New Testament. In *1 John 4:10* it says: *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* *Romans 3:24* says we: *are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.* *Hebrews 2:17* says: *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

Again so what is propitiation? Well The Gospel Coalition defines it this way: "Propitiation means 'averting the wrath of God by the offering of a gift.' It refers to the turning away of the wrath of God as the just judgment of our sin by God's own provision of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross." Now many of us have actually got a problem with this word "wrath." I mean we associate wrath with anger, with frustration, maybe even rage, but with God wrath is associated not with anger but with justice. And since God is perfect in all of his attributes, perfect justice demands perfect wrath towards sin.

Many people suggest that if God is all powerful surely he can be all merciful. I mean he can simply elect to forgive us unconditionally without making any reference whatsoever to truth or to -- or to justice. But God has told us that his universe is organized around both. I mean for God to be all mercy would be for God to ignore injustice. And for God to be all justice would be for God to ignore mercy and compassion. Both extremes represent a God who is less than perfect. Propitiation represents God's public display of his commitment to both mercy and justice. You see for thousands of years man sinned against his fellow man and against God over and over and over again and yet God rarely interfered. He -- quote -- "*passed over the sins of man*" until one great final day of reckoning occurred some 2,000 years ago. It was a day where

justice and mercy finally met. And this is how God put it in Romans 3:23. He says: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

That's a whole lot of words to say that what God did was he passed over sins that were previously committed because he knew there would one day and in one place, a place called Calvary there would be a reckoning, where God would demonstrate his righteous wrath against sin publicly by putting himself on display on a cross so that he could be the just one demanding a payment for sin and the justifier himself becoming the price of that sin. God's commitment to his holiness demonstrated perfect justice and perfect mercy as he publicly put himself on display before the entire universe paying the price of our sin. Now there's still those who insist that propitiation, that's a primitive, that's an unjust way of seeking justice by trying to appease the wrath of God. As if with a shrug of his shoulders God should be able to unconditionally forgive any and all sin. These folks insist that any attempt to

demand justice, that's not justice they say, that's vengeance.

Theologian Miroslav Volf gives an answer to that kind of thinking and he suggests that only those who live in the comfort of safe suburban places like you find right here in the U.S., only those folks embrace those kind of ideas. You see, the idea of a God who actually can and will inflict divine vengeance, well that's unpopular among such people who have never been exposed to the horrors of man's unbridled evil. I mean to them such a God is primitive, he's violent. And Volf observes how someone who lives with the injustice and brutality that most of the world is subject to, how they would respond, and this is the way he put it. He said: "My thesis that the practice of nonviolence requires a belief in divine vengeance will be unpopular with many Christians, especially theologians in the West. To the person who is inclined to dismiss it, I suggest imagining that you are delivering a lecture in a war zone. Among your listeners are people whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. The topic of the lecture: a Christian attitude toward violence. The thesis: We should not retaliate since God is perfect noncoercive love. Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to



God's refusal to judge. In a scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die. And as one watches it die, one will do well to reflect about many other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind."

And what he's saying is if you've been through the brutality of seeing your village plundered and leveled, your daughters and sisters raped and their fathers and brothers having their throats slit, you can only remain committed to non-violence if you believe in a God who will in fact at some point judge evil. And it's only those who live in safe nonviolent communities who have the luxury of imagining that that kind of justice is a form of vengeance. I mean that's why God tells us in *Romans 12:19*: *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.*

Propitiation is God's commitment to serving both compassion and justice perfectly by God himself being not only the just one demanding the payment but the justifier supplying it as well.

And that leads us to our next theological word this morning. Jesus made propitiation for our sins by substituting his perfect life for our imperfect life through what is called "imputation." Now I know that's another big word, but it's an important word to grasp if you want to understand exactly what is being said here, and one way I

have of making this understandable is through a sports analogy. As probably many of you know, I am unfortunately a New York Giants football fan, and I know exactly where that came from, I mean, it came from my dad. When I was a little kid about eight or nine years old, he used to take me to Giant games in the Polo Grounds and so it was a means for me being able to hang out with my dad, so I became a Giant fan. Now the glory days for Giant fans occurred many, many years ago when they won the Super Bowl and ever since then it's been downhill, it's been quite painful to watch. We just stink at this moment. So why am I going on about professional football? Well there's something unique that everyone does, including me, when their team wins and also when their team loses. There's a word that we all use that when you look at carefully it makes no sense at all, it's the use of the pronoun "we." See when the Giants won the Super Bowl all of the fans were ecstatic and they all were saying "We won! We won!" Now someone could have easily pointed out the impossibility of that statement being literally true. There's only 53 players on a team. There's eleven who play on defense and eleven who play on offense and yet there's literally hundreds of thousands of people saying "We won". Well somebody with a much more sober view of the situation could ask were you one of the eleven that were on offense or were you one of the eleven that were on defense? Or did you put on a uniform? Did you go to the stadium? Did you get on the field? Did you actually

play the game? Because if you didn't, how can you say, "We won?" I mean you could say, "The team won," you could say, "Those guys won," but how can you say, "We won"? Well, you say it by imputation. Imputation means to ascribe, it means to set to the account of. The New York Giants represented New York and as a New Yorker I got to ascribe their athletic performance as if it were mine. They did the heavy lifting, I got to take the credit. We won the Super Bowl.

Now on a much more serious note, Jesus did the heaviest of heavy lifting. He left heaven itself and he took on flesh and then as our high priest he lived out his 33 years on earth perfectly. And as our perfect representative he could at the cross ascribe his perfection to our sin through imputation. Imputation means that you get to take the credit or blame for an action that someone else does.

On the negative side, imputation is why Adam's sin is the original sin that all of us are considered guilty of. As the poem says, "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." I mean we're clearly held responsible for an action that was taken by somebody else. Because Adam represented every single one of us at the very first of creation, when he sinned and became imperfect, all of us became imperfect as well because Adam was our federal corporate head. That means he

represented every single one of us, and therefore when he sinned, we sinned by imputation. I mean I've used this analogy before trying to understand just what federal corporate headship means and why we are held responsible for someone else's actions. Let me just throw this out there.

Let's say President Biden has lost his mind. I'm not saying a word. Let's say President Biden has lost his mind, he decides he's going to bomb China. Okay. And so he does and he starts a war and eventually we lose the war, and God forbid, China comes over and takes over our country. As the soldiers are going door to door, they're assigning us to collect to farms and factories, they get to your house and you tell them, "Oh, no, no, no, you're completely mistaken. You don't understand, I absolutely disagreed with Mr. Biden's choice, and I totally rejected his idea of bombing you all." Trust me, they're going to be highly unmoved by that argument. What they would tell you is that when Mr. Biden bombed us, you bombed us. That's the way it works. As a citizen of the United States, when he did it, you did it. And he as your federal corporate head may have made the decision but you're going to be held just as responsible. Well people think it's grossly unfair to be held accountable for something that someone else like maybe Adam did. They think well, I never ate that fruit, why is God holding me responsible? Well but first you have to understand who God

chose to represent us. I mean understand, Adam at that time was flawless. Our chosen representative was somebody not mired in sin, it was somebody who was never even touched by original sin. Our federal corporate head Adam was someone created by God and then labeled "good," which meant flawless. We had the best possible representative we could have ever had and yet it was he who listened to the serpent and betrayed all of mankind. So we are all held guilty in Adam's sin because imputation assigned the blame of Adam to all of us.

And understand, the idea of imputation works both ways. We're all found guilty in Adam but on the other hand we who place our trust in Christ as Savior are then found righteous in Christ, and again, thank God it's by imputation. Adam's sin is attributed to each of us but Christ's righteousness is attributed to every one of his sheep. It's what Martin Luther described as "the Great Exchange." Romans 5:17 describes it. It says: *"For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."*

That quote, "*One act of righteousness that leads to justification and life for all men*" has a fancy theological name as well. We call that whole thing "penal substitution." Now penal substitution is the doctrine that says that Jesus went to the cross in order to substitute himself for us in order to bear the penalty of our sins. And there are people today who hate that doctrine with a passion. There are people today who view penal substitution as a form of cosmic child abuse with Jesus as a whipping boy.

Alisa Childers writes in her book: "In his book *The Reason Why Faith Makes Sense*, Mark Mittelberg points out that in medieval times, a 'whipping boy' was a slave who was brought in to be whipped when a royal prince broke the rules. The prince's tutor couldn't beat the prince himself because he was royalty, so the prince had to watch while a slave was punished in his place. This would purportedly pay the price for the transgression and discourage the prince from doing it again." Well according to this view, Jesus is a helpless whipping boy who's dragged to the cross by his Father's wrath and forced to pay the price of our sin. These folks think that the doctrine itself impugns both God the Father and God the Son, that it makes God the Father out to be this tyrant who won't be satisfied and won't forgive sin unless he sees some kind of bloodshed. Jesus the son is portrayed as the hopeless victim of the Father's wrath, tortured in order to allay God's

cosmic anger over sin. The issue of justice and holiness requiring a response from God doesn't even register as they feel that God's omnipotence is such that he should simply be able to shrug his shoulders and unconditionally forgive anything and anyone. The cross, they insist, has nothing to do with justice. They see it primarily as a symbol. Christ's crucifixion and death is portrayed not as a just payment for sin but simply instead as the ultimate expression of God's love for sinners. According to this view the cross doesn't do anything. It doesn't satisfy God's wrath because he's not a God of wrath, so they say. It merely demonstrates how much God loves us and how willing Jesus was to speak truth to power, so willing that he went to the cross to demonstrate his love. Well, the problem with that view is that it still leaves the issue of sin hanging because such a display of God's love accomplishes nothing. It's merely symbolic. And someone pointed out that it would be as if God saw all of us in over our heads and drowning and decided that he loved us so much that he's going to jump in the water and drown alongside us. That certainly may be a great demonstration of love, but it's a love that accomplishes nothing. Instead, penal substitution insists that God accomplished the perfecting of his sheep by dying on the cross, substituting himself for us because God is not only perfectly loving but also perfectly just and perfect justice demands a payment for sin, *for the wages of sin is death*. God's perfect justice demands that the

wage be paid either by us or by someone willing to substitute himself for us while he bears that penalty, and hence we have penal substitution, Christ bearing God's wrath for sin. As *Romans 5:8* puts it: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* And God's wrath for sin, it's not anger, it's not rage, it's rather the holiness of God perfectly appropriately responding to the awfulness of sin.

I mean imagine, if you will, a God who is completely indifferent to sin, a God who sees no difference between sacrilege and sacrifice, between nurture and murder, a God who just kind of shrugs his shoulders at evil. Is that the kind of God that you want to worship? See, the wrath of God is really an expression of the love of God. The doctrine of penal substitution insists that Father, Son and Holy Spirit collaborated in finding a way to combine God's perfect love with perfect mercy and perfect justice. And in so doing, Jesus rather than playing the victim was whole-heartedly the orchestrator of his own sacrifice and a willing participant in the Trinity's way of dealing with sin. Jesus himself insisted he was no victim but rather the victor who organized his own sacrifice. In *John 10*, he said: *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me,*



*but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."* So the fact that Jesus submitted himself for us on the cross, that's also attested to in the Old Testament by the prophet Isaiah, and he writes at length about how Jesus substituted himself for us on the cross. This is what he said: *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.* So by his wounds we were also justified.

Here comes theological word number five. So far we've looked at the word "advocate," which simply means somebody speaking on our behalf. That was followed by the word "propitiation," which is the satisfying of God's wrath. And that was followed by "imputation," which is ascribing to one the works of another, which was followed by "penal substitution," which is the payment of a penalty by substituting myself for another. And that's now followed by "justification." Justification is the act of God declaring us as no longer debtors to sin based on the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Again, it's put well in *Romans 5:8: But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much*

*more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

I don't know if you remember but I recently mentioned that justification used to be a banking term and it was used to make sure that your checking account was actually balanced. In the old days you used to have to balance your checkbooks once a month and you'd make sure that the money you deposited matched the money that you withdrew. And when the credits and debits evenly matched, your account was then said to be -- quote -- "justified." It means that full payment for your checks was sitting there in your checking account. Well spiritually speaking, we incur a debt or a debit against us every time we sin. God says *the wages of sin is death*, and every time we sin and refuse to repent that debt continues to grow. *Romans 2:5: But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done."*

Well there's two different ways to pay that debt, I mean, you could pay it yourself in hell for all eternity or you can cling to the cross of Christ, and then on the basis of your faith in his death you can have his righteousness substituted for your sin. Those who have met Christ have opted for the latter payment. God justifies

us the moment we come to Christ by declaring that on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross that the just demands of the law have been fully met. All of our sins represent the debit and Christ's perfect righteous life represents the credit, and God publicly declares that our spiritual balance is justified in Christ the moment he becomes your Lord and Savior. And believe it or not all of these five theological words are involved in the text that we're looking at this morning. Again I repeat, it says: *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. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* Well Christ is in heaven advocating for us because he's the propitiation for our sins, and by imputation through penal substitution, he substituted his righteousness for our sin which resulted in our justification. There you have it.

In addition to all those fancy words that we learned today, there's something else that we're learning or it seems like we're learning. It seems like we're also learning that Jesus has paid the debt of wrath for all the sins of the entire world. But wait a minute, if that's true, then the entire world is going to heaven. There's no longer any need to share the gospel because everyone is headed to heaven. I mean after all, if the sins of the whole world have been

paid for, how could anybody in that world have to pay for them themselves? That would be double jeopardy. Even our courts recognize that as unfair and unjust. Well, clearly we need to understand what John intends by saying what he said. Well, understand first of all that if John is saying that all the sins of the world have been dealt with through Christ's propitiation, then the immediate problem we now have is that the Bible tells us very clearly that there are people in this very same world who are indeed going to hell. *Revelation 21* says: *But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* And *Ephesians 5:5* says: *For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* Well it's pretty obvious that if John meant that every last person in the entire world had their sins paid for by Christ's propitiation, then these verses which clearly state that some people will not inherit the kingdom of God make no sense. So what does he mean when he says he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world? Well again, context means everything. You have to remember who is John addressing and what is he trying to address? I mean he's addressing people who for centuries believed that the gospel was limited to Jews and Jews only. And so

time and again John is trying to broaden their understanding of what it means for the gospel to go to Jews and Gentiles, not just to Jerusalem and the surrounding areas but to hearers, that phrase "to the whole world." John simply means that the gospel is not limit to Jews alone or to the narrow circle that the disciples understood that the gospel itself would go out to every tribe and tongue and nation; in other words, the whole world. Not that the entire world would become believers but that the physical borders of the gospel would essentially be nonexistent. That it would be available to anyone in the world.

Somebody could say, well, you're certainly making quite an assumption there. Well it's not really an assumption. There's another statement that John makes in his gospel that gives clarity to that. Allow me to just set the stage for this statement from John. Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead and the effect of this profound miracle is great. People see Jesus' power over death itself, they recognize him as Lord and Savior. However, the scribes and the Pharisees see it very differently. They now recognize that Jesus does indeed have the power of life and death but instead of seeing him as Lord and Savior, they see him as the ultimate threat and they decide we've got to get rid of this guy. This is John commenting on the Pharisees' response to the death and the resurrection of Lazarus. This is what he wrote. He says:

*Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation -- and now, listen carefully -- and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. You get that last statement of what John is trying to say? He says Jesus would die for the nation and not for that nation only but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Well that's clearly a subset of the whole world; it's not the whole world, and that's exactly what John is trying to communicate when he said of Jesus: *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* I mean, the children of God were scattered abroad were those who represented the whole world that John was referring to. It wasn't every last person on*

the planet. Instead it was every last one of God's children scattered throughout the whole world. And as it is back then, so it is today. Christ is in heaven right now advocating for us because he is God's propitiation, bearing God's wrath for our sins. And by imputation he is making his goodness become ours. Through penal substitution, he's offering to take our place as our substitute, bearing our penalty, resulting in our justification. And all of that is implied in those two verses that we looked at this morning. Every one of those five theological terms represents a crucial aspect of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And it represents it to every one of Christ's sheep who alone can hear his voice. It's a voice that goes over the heads or under the radar of just about everyone who doesn't see the point of reading the Bible let alone studying it like theologians do. But we get it and we get it not because we're so clever but because Jesus has told us that his sheep hear his voice and they follow him. And they follow him because they know if only on an unconscious level how deeply he loves us. *We love him because he first loved us.* I mean I bet you all didn't realize that you're theologians at heart. But none of us realize what a great God we serve. Let's pray.

*Father, I just thank you for the richness of your word. I thank you for the words that we have to stumble across and stumble on to try to grapple with who you are and what you've done. I just thank*

*you that you're our advocate, that you are our propitiation, I thank you for imputation, I thank you for justification. I thank you for all that you have done, Lord, and all of these terms that we wrestle with. Again, I just pray that you would give us the ability to not just understand them on a gut level but be able to communicate them, to be so filled with the love of Christ that we are overflowing, that we can't help but share with others what a wonderful and great God you are. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*