

TRUTH COMMUNITY

— TEACHING GOD'S PROPER GODS' WILL —

Mercy You Can Trust

1 John 1:5-2:2

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Good morning every one in GraceLife. I trust you are doing well this morning.

It has been a sobering year, I would say for GraceLife, certainly for me as the pastor of GraceLife along with our beloved brother, Phil Johnson. I can't always remember what I say in opening times. I may have alluded to this recently from this pulpit. But in the past year and two weeks, we have ushered 16 different people in to heaven from GraceLife. 16 people, 16 members and friends of GraceLife in just 54 weeks—that's an awful, awful lot of death to have to deal with. I have to tell you as a pastor, I feel every one of them to one degree or another—not the same way that the family does of course, but you feel that as you say goodbye to these beloved friends and you see the grief that they leave behind.

And all of that just to simply say by way of introduction, you feel that and you kind of sigh at it—you sigh at the weight of death. It reminded me this morning of Romans 8:18-22. This is not my text, but I just want to kind of set up my text by looking at these verses and setting it in this context. Paul said in Romans 8:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Now there's a great note, that's a wonderful verse of scripture that all of the things that produce the sigh in this life are not going to be worthy to be compared to the greatness of the glory that will be ours when we are in glory with Christ in heaven. But while we wait for that glory to be revealed to us, we do feel the weight of it and Paul said that as well. In Romans 8:22 he says:

We know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

Not every one thinks like I do on these things. But I like to look at these things and just deal with them face to face head on. Let's just deal with reality and overcome reality instead of denying it and avoiding it and say, well, life really isn't like this—it is like this, there is groaning and suffering that comes with living in this fallen world and the reality of death. And Paul goes on in Romans 8:23:

And not only this, but also we, ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we, ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons the redemption of our body.

We stand here, those of us that know Christ, we stand here, complete in Him, with a perfect salvation. And yet, we look forward to the fact that there is a greater experiential knowledge of that salvation that is to be revealed to us. And it is that hope of glory that undergirds us and gives us the foundation to face this kind of suffering and this kind of sadness head on—it is that which gives us the power to overcome the hope of what is yet to come. It is those foundational truths that sustain you. And in that light, in that spirit, in that spirit of hope despite living in this fallen hostile world, it is in that spirit that we approach our passage this morning which is in 1 John.

We are coming back to the little letter of 1 John, toward the end of your New Testament. I invite you to turn with me, looking at this passage that we are going to take this morning, looking for it to hit those major notes of joy despite surroundings in which we live—this is a wonderful, wonderful passage.

As you are turning to 1 John, just a moment of review here. Last time we saw that the gospel has a transforming effect on us. Those that believe are transformed by the gospel and we see that expressed, we see that transforming effect as John states his purposes for writing in the verses 3 and 4 of the first chapter of 1 John. Look at 1 John 1:3 with me just by way of the briefest of review. John says:

What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you also, so that you, too, may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write so that our joy may be made complete.

“Our joy” meaning John’s joy and our joy, collectively together, he wants us to know this fullness of joy. And so what he is saying in these two verses is that as true Christians, we share in a common life in Christ, that fellowship, that commonality, that participation in the life of Christ promotes a continuing state of joy that is rooted in the reality of our living relationship with our heavenly Father. And that living reality that we know now in part, we have tasted of it, but we don’t know the full banquet yet that will be ours in heaven. That foretaste, that down payment as it were, is going to yield to an even greater joy at the consummation of our salvation when our joy will be made full, our joy will be made complete.

These are wonderful transcendent truths that when you are a Christian, you lay hold of those things and say, “These things transcend all of the deepest sadness and deepest sorrow and deepest hostility that this life could bring to me. I have a transcendent hope in Christ.” That is your attitude as you see these things and that is what keeps us from being overwhelmed despite the ongoing difficulties and sorrows that we face.

What we said last time, and this is just fundamental to an approach to life beloved, what we said last time was when John speaking God's word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when John says I am writing to promote your fellowship, your experiential knowledge of this common life in Christ, when he says I am writing to promote your joy, what he is indicating, what he is showing us here is he is indicating the loving attitude that God our heavenly Father has toward us. This is the attitude of God, this is God speaking through His word, this is what God wants for His children. God wants us to know a truly living joy, a truly living fellowship, to know deep in our hearts that we have a common life in Christ with Him. John says:

Our fellowship is with the father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

We have a supernatural union with Christ that is going to yield itself in to heaven itself. That beloved is the cornerstone of joy is recognizing these things. God loves us; His intentions toward us are good. He saved us to bless us as we bring glory to His name. He saved you to give you joy, He saved you to bring you to glory. Beloved, that is the track we are on no matter what the surrounding scenery may be as the train goes by. You go by with some bad scenery that is not much to look at, that's okay, this train leads to glory—that's where we are going beloved if we know Christ. That's why we can be joyful and confident and hopeful and triumphant despite the surrounding hostility of this world.

Now beloved, keep those thoughts in mind as we read today's passage which begins in 1 John 1:5 where John says:

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all

I am going to read through chapter 2:2, verse 6:

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sin, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if any one sins, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for us sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

That's our passage for this morning, 1 John 1:5-2:2. We won't cover it all, but we are going to deal with it in an overview fashion.

Now, the first thing that I would like to say, if your Bible is like mine, there is a break between verse 4 and verse 5. There is a little heading there that gives a title section to the paragraph that follows or some other kind of indication as if it is a completely different thought. I think that's a little bit unfortunate. When the original manuscript was written, there were no breaks like that. And sometimes when those breaks that are intended to be helpful are inserted, you tend to think, okay, we're breaking and we're moving on and we're talking about something completely different than what we just read before in the prior verses. Here, that tends to make you think that verse 5 is introducing something totally different from what we were discussing in the introduction. And this is pastorally important for your spiritual life to understand. If you take that break too sharply, you miss the effect of what John is doing here in this chapter because it is not the case. Look at verse 3 with me again. Look at how he emphasizes the word "fellowship," in fact, he says this is one of my purposes in writing "so that you may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father..." "We write these things so that your joy may be made complete."

Now, that purpose beloved, here is the matter of just context and elementary biblical interpretation. That purpose from here in these first four verses carries over in to verses 5, 6, 7, 8, and on and on it goes. As John writes here in verses 5 through 10, he is writing to further the purpose of promoting fellowship and joy in verses 3 and 4—that's very, very important and I'm not just making that up. You can see this for sure by looking at the use of the word "fellowship" in verses 6 and 7. He says in verse 6:

If we say we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness...

(Verse 7) If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sins.

All I want you to see beloved is that the purposes of fellowship and joy in those verses 3 and 4 are intimately linked with what follows here. What we are talking about today, the passage that we are looking at today is designed to further those purposes of fellowship and joy. And so, we look at this passage and say, okay, how does this promote fellowship, how does this promote joy—that's the key thing here. There is a continuation of thought that the break that is often inserted between verses 4 and 5 would cause you to miss if you are not careful.

Indeed in the great text, verse 5 starts with the word "and" not all of our more modern translations include those kinds of connections any more. I think that's unfortunate, but that's for another time. Verse 5 literally begins when you read it in the Greek text. In verse 4 he said:

I write these things so that our joy may be made complete. And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you.

It is all connected beloved, this is not a sharp change in thought, change in direction—not at all. In verse 3 he said, we proclaim to you what we have heard, verse 5, here is what we proclaim:

This is the message we have heard and announce to you.

That's the way we see the flow of thought here. This connection is designed to promote your life in Christ and to promote your joy beloved. This passage, chapter 1 verse 5 through chapter 2 verse 2 is a further reflection of God's goodness to you and toward His children, that's the spiritual environment in which we are looking at this passage today.

What we are going to do, we are going to take a big picture look at this passage, may be a satellite view of this passage today. I am going to consciously and intentionally pass over some important points of interpretation for the sake of covering major issues that are the foundation of Christian living. I want you to see the big view here, particularly as it pertains to Christian life because John writes in this section of scripture to strengthen his audience, and us in the process with what he says here and I want you to get it all in your mind in one setting here and not break it up over several sections.

And so, looking to strengthen believers, looking to further his purpose of fellowship and joy, the apostle John starts in verse 5 with the character of God. Beloved, that is where all of our right thinking begins. We step back from the issues that surround us and start with the fundamental character of God—that is the fundamental starting point of truth, that is the fundamental starting point of right thinking and a right approach to Christian life. Look at what he says in verse 5, he says:

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you (here's God's character) that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.

John says this is the message, in my late 80's or early 90's, as I am writing kind of an apostolic swan song, this is what I want you to know and understand, this is the urgent matter, this is what addresses the issues of the day, John says. And what is that great message? What does the apostle tell his flock that will deepen your walk with Christ today? It states it both positively and negatively. He says God is light (positive statement) and in Him there is no darkness at all (negative statement). "At all" he is emphatic as he says it, there is absolutely no darkness in this God who is light.

Now, when he says God is light, he is using a metaphor, he is using a word picture to express truth about God. When he says that God is light, what he is saying is that the character of God is fundamentally and absolutely true and holy. God's character is true. He cannot tell a lie (Titus 1:2) it is impossible for God to lie. He is a God of truth and He is a God of absolute holiness. He is separate from sin, He is morally set apart, He is pure and He is separate.

Now, you can see that that is what John means by the expression “God is light”. You can see that by tracing what he says in the following verses, you don’t have to take my word for it because as John goes through these next several verses, you will see that he contrasts light with deception and sin. So in verse 5 he said:

God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. If someone says they have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, they lie and do not practice the truth.

He says the light and he contrasts it over against lying and deception. He thinks about the importance of holiness, of confessing our sins in verse 9. In chapter 2:1:

I am writing these things so that you may not sin.

That’s because personal holiness in the life of the believer flows naturally and inevitably from being a joined participator in the common life of Christ, of having fellowship with Him. The supernatural power and the great holiness of God have a sanctifying influence upon the one with whom He brings in to fellowship with Himself. Those things are inevitable, those things are the consequences of God’s character and that truth and holiness flow from His character. And so when we see the way that John reasons out the impact of sanctifying influence of God’s character on those who believe, we can reason back and see what he means when he says “God is light” and saying God is true, God is absolutely holy, His character is to be feared. God is to be feared, God is to be revered because of His great character. That’s the way John works out the statement “God is light.”

Now beloved, in order to help you understand what happens in this passage, notice that after verse 5, through the next five verses, every verse starts with the conditional statement, (verse 6 “if we say” (verse 7) “if we walk” (verse 8) “If we say” (verse 9) “If we confess” (verse 10) “If we say” He is making these conditional statements. What he is doing there is just very basic logic in some ways because what he is doing is having stated this fundamental foundational premise, he starts to work out the implications of it. He is working out the implications of that statement in verses 6-10. The implication that God is absolutely holy and true, the implications of that runs through several different aspects of spiritual life. And so John here is alternating negative and positive statements that necessarily flow from the reality of God’s true character—that’s what is happening in verses 6-10.

Now, on the negative side, and I am not going to spend as much time on the negative side here this morning. But I do want you to see the passage in its context. Having said that God is holy and true in verse 5, he says in verse 6, (look at what he says with me).

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

He says in light of the reality of God's holy and true character, if this is true, if someone is saying this, then it is obvious that they are not speaking the truth and it is obvious that they are lying. What he means here in verse 6 is that if someone claims to be a Christian, but has no change in their spiritual life, they continue to live in sin, they continue to ignore the reality of God in the way that they frame their life. They live as practical atheists even though with their lips they affirm the reality of God and that they know Him. John says if some one is like that (there are a lot of them, sadly) some one like that, if a sinner is truly been brought in to a saving relationship with the holy God, spiritual darkness must flee from that life.

And if you see some one with spiritual darkness like I have been describing, sin and practical denial of God, when you see some one whose life is consistently marked by that, and they say that they know this holy God, there is only one conclusion, they lie—not that difficult really to see. Just thinking about physical light, light in darkness in the physical realm are fundamentally incompatible. Where you have light, you do not have darkness. And what John is saying here is that that is true in the spiritual realm, God is light. Someone who says they are a joined participator in the life of God which is a claim that a Christian makes, some one who makes that claim and yet lives in spiritual darkness is lying—that is a natural, inevitable, necessary consequence of the character of God. You can't live an ungodly, unholy life and make a true claim that you are in fellowship with Him.

There is more on the negative side in verses 8 and 10. Look at verse 8 with me, John says:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. (Verse 10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Now beloved, there is another consequence here, he is dealing with another issue here. Some one who has truly come to know this holy God, someone whom the Holy Spirit has opened their eyes and pulled back the blinders so that they see the character of God for what it really is, they see Him in His pristine holiness, some one who truly sees the holiness of God is quickly going to understand that "I am full of sin." You are going to see your own inner life as sinful and falling short of when you truly see the holiness of God, when you truly understand His holiness. That's the necessary consequence of seeing it because you see your own sinful heart in contrast with the pristine holiness of God so that someone who says "I'm not a sinner. I don't have sin in my life. I have never sinned." I have heard people say that. When someone says that, all they are saying is that they don't know God at all because one of the first things that you understand when you come to know that God is light as the Bible means that God is light, is that you are not.

If you will turn back to the book of Isaiah, you will see a practical illustration of this in a very familiar passage, Isaiah 6. One of the consequences of God's holiness is that those

who truly see it, immediately confess their sinfulness. You don't argue your own righteousness in the presence of the pure righteousness of God—that thought is inconsistent shall we say. In Isaiah chapter 6, you know this passage, so I won't spend much time here, Isaiah is writing and he says:

In the year of king Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord, sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood before Him, each having six wings, with two he covered his face and with two he covered His feet and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out while the temple was filling with smoke.

He is seeing an unfiltered vision of the holiness of God as it were. And what is his response? Wow, this is cool! No. In verse 5 he says:

Woe is me, for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.

He saw the holiness of God and the first thing that he saw by contrast was his own sinful heart and his own sinful lips and that was the immediate confession that it brought out of him.

And so beloved, hearing that forward to today, carrying forward what John says here and understanding the nature of God's character and the nature of true spiritual life, any one who claims to know God will see his own sin by contrast. Maybe not as dramatically as Isaiah saw it, but you are going to be conscious of your sin as you reflect on the holiness of God. John is saying here in these verses that some one who denies he is a sinner in light of the holy character of God does not know Him at all—he is a liar and a deceiver starting with his own self deception.

So the reality that God is light, the reality of His holiness and truth as such that some one who has come to faith in Christ is sharing in the life of God, there will be an overflow of the holiness of God that has started to reflect in their moral character. And John works out that theme elsewhere in the letter. There are also going to be that person who truly knows God is going to confess sin. Some one who does not confess sin, some one who believes that they are good enough to go to heaven is by definition not a Christian because of the very nature of the character of God forces us to these conclusions—that's what John is saying. He is working out pretty simple implications of the character of God here. That is the negative aspect of John's argument in this passage, that is the negative thread that deserves more time and I may address it again in a few weeks, I don't know yet.

But the positive thread that is wrapped around in chapter 1, verses 7 and 9 and chapter 2, verse 1, the positive thread, kind of like strands of DNA, wrapped around each other, it is

the positive thread that I want to focus on this morning. It is the positive thread here as we are going to see reinforces, beloved, the sheer, undiluted goodness of God for His children. The positive thread shows forth the glory of Christ as He has brought Himself to His people, the positive thread shows us the unchangeable nature of God's loving purposes toward His children. The absolute unchangeableness of God purposes toward us who know Christ. It is absolutely certain, the outcome of our spiritual life will be that in heaven because of the greatness and the character and the purpose of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So what I want to do in our time remaining is to show you three aspects of the person and work of Christ that guaranty your ability to walk through this life with joy and assurance despite the hostilities that may come our way, despite sorrows that may come our way. These are the outworking of the foundational cornerstone of Christian life and these are the things that promote our conscious participation in the life of God, these are the things that give us a sureness of joy and make joy possible despite what happens. The first aspect is found in this:

1. The Atonement of Christ

When I use the word "atonement" here, I am referring to Christ's death on the cross where He bore God's wrath against our sin. It was at the cross that Jesus made it possible for God to be favorably disposed toward His children because at the cross where the barrier of sin was removed, it was at the cross where the penalty of sin was paid so that God could treat us favorably in His sight because Christ had reconciled us to Him. Look at 1:7 where John says, again working out the consequences that God is light, he says:

If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another (get this) and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sins.

John says if we walk in the light (walking in the light is contrasted with walking in darkness in verse 6) and what he is talking about there is a life pattern that is built around submission to this holy God and a desire to live out His holiness, the desire to obey Him, the desire to honor Him and praise Him and glorify Him with your life, a desire to see His character manifested even in the inner recesses of your own heart. A true profession of Christ, a true conversion beloved, results in a daily walk in holiness and truth, a life lived in light of God's word without deceit or consciously tolerated sin. It is not that we never sin, John makes that clear, because we need this continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus His Son, he is saying this is a continual cleansing that goes on.

So we are not talking about achieving some level of spiritual perfection and that's what walking in the light means. No, walking in the light recognizes the character of God, recognizes my sinfulness, recognizes my need for Christ and recognizes that Jesus has indeed paid it all so that I can be in fellowship with God.

We don't earn forgiveness through this walk. The Bible says in multiple places—Galatians 2:16 for example:

We are justified by faith and not by the works of the law.

But beloved, there is a transforming effect and that's why when we go to our baptism testimonies on Sunday evenings, we will hear people say "This was my life before Christ, this is how I came to Christ, and these are the changes that have flowed as a result of my coming to Christ." It is that changed life that we are talking about here, not a perfect life, but a changed life, a life with a new direction, a new purpose, a new desire to glorify this Christ who has saved us—that's what we're talking about.

John says the blood of Jesus His Son, he is using blood as a collective figure of speech to refer to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins. It was there that Jesus fully absorbed the wrath of God on our behalf as our substitute, took the wrath of God that should have been poured out on us for our sins, Jesus in effect said, I'll take that wrath so that they can go free. What kind of gracious, loving wonderful savior is that? He is a magnificent savior is the answer to that question.

So the blood is referring to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross where He literally shed His blood in the act of crucifixion, God poured His wrath upon Him, Jesus absorbed the full fury of God's wrath against us and gave up His life, His death being the payment for our sins.

Now beloved, here is the deal. Looking at this on the other side of our conversion now, it is on that basis that God forgives our sins on an ongoing, continual basis. Our sins have been fully paid for beloved. God no longer holds our sins against us. If you are a Christian beloved (write it down) God does not hold your sins against you. That is the whole purpose of Christian salvation, it is to bring us the forgiveness of our sins, permanently and eternally, never to be raised against us ever again—that's the point of salvation beloved.

And so if you are truly saved and you come in here this morning, conscious of the weight of guilt, conscious that you violated the law of God this past week, maybe going even back a little further for some of you, understand beloved that in His grace and mercy, God forgives all of our sins in Christ. That means that the door is open for you to go to Him in repentance and confession and have a certain hope, a certain confidence (when I say certain, I mean an unquestioning confidence in your heart) that God will receive you and have mercy upon you as you bring those sins to Him for confession and repentance. He releases us, He has released us from the guilt and penalty that our sins otherwise deserve.

Beloved, look at the end of verse 7 with me again, look at that next to last word, I don't want you to miss it: "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." All sin, beloved, total, absolute forgiveness belongs to you as a believer in Christ. Has God been

merciful to you? Has He been good to you? Yes, He has, yes He has. When you think about it even now as a believer, how sometimes you fall in to a cold-hearted, almost seeming indifference to the living God, your prayers are half-hearted like mine and you realize that God knew all about it in advance and He still sent Christ and Christ still died for us and that He accepts us in the beloved despite of our inadequate spiritual life now, oh, beloved, your heart should be overwhelmed with the amazing goodness of God toward you.

I wish I had the tears in my eyes that that glorious truth deserves. God has been so good to us beloved in forgiving all of our sins even though we don't respond with a full outburst of praise and obedience that He absolutely deserves as a result of it. And yet, He is still good, still gracious and still forgiving toward us—He is wonderful. Beloved, that's an expression of His good purposes in your life if you know Christ today.

So beloved, if you are hear and feeling the weight of sin, go to Christ, trust Him for mercy for your deepest sin. Go to Christ and confess and deal with it before Him in the privacy in your own prayer closet as it were. Go to Him and confess that and trust Him for the mercy for those sinful things that you wouldn't want any one in this room to know about because the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. The door to intimacy with God has been thrown open wide and it is wrong to doubt that, it is wrong to withdraw from that, it is wrong to question that.

No, we believe it, dear Father, we believe it on the authority of your word oh God, we believe it and we come to you and confess our sins—all of them Father, right now and we thank you that the blood of Jesus your Son cleanses us from all sin--the atonement of Christ.

Now my friend, if you are here and you are not a Christian, the answer is the same to you. The offer is open to you to come in full repentance, a total turning away from your sinful life and embracing this glorious Christ and saying "I want to be free from sin. Jesus, come and reign over me, come and save me because I cannot save myself."

My non-Christian friend, God will bring you in to His holy fellowship with that simple heart cry of faith. Come to Christ my friend, come to Christ because that is why He came to earth. Jesus' atonement promises mercy and we thank Him for that.

Now secondly in this passage, if we just wrapped it up there, that would be enough to cause us to give glory to God if John had stopped at verse 7, we would have all the reason we needed to praise and thank God throughout all the days of our life and echoing throughout all of eternity. That in itself would be enough to give us assurance because that in itself is the promise of God that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins—that in itself is enough. But God in His goodness and grace shows us more, He gives us more reasons in this passage to trust Him for His mercy toward us, to trust Him for His good intentions for us, to trust Him unto transcendent joy when you see it in verse 9.

We talked about the atonement of Christ, the second point:

2. The Attributes of Christ

The attributes of Christ guaranty His continued mercy toward us. Look at verse 9 where John says:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

What was the next to last word there? “All” all unrighteousness, cleansing from all unrighteousness, he is saying the same thing that he had just said in verse 7—cleanses us from all sins. The mercy of God upon us is unfathomable, it cannot be measured—you can’t go to the height, you can’t exhaust it in its depth, you can’t exhaust it in its breadth beloved.

And what we see in this passage is that God’s character, the character of Christ Himself, strengthens us to pursue the Christian life undaunted by the sorrows and trials that surround us right now. Undaunted by the crumbling world, undaunted by a crumbling life, undaunted by persecution, undaunted throughout it all, because we know the character of Christ who rules over all and who permits these things for His glory and our good. Look at verse 9 with me, he says “If we confess our sin...” What he has in mind here is the idea, if we are confessing our sin, it is an ongoing pattern of life time confession. The true Christian has a settled understanding, a settled conviction that he does not deny, he does not try to hide, the true Christian openly acknowledge that he is a sinner, that he commits sin, he agrees with what the Bible says in Romans 3:23:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

The Christian gladly holds up his hand and says “That’s talking about me. Even when I stand in this pulpit and I say I am a Christian, and I am, you know a lot about my character from the fact that I say that, and I know a lot about yours too from the word of God.” We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And the true Christian says “That’s true of me personally, I’m a sinner, I need the forgiveness of Christ.” That’s the settled part of his self-understanding of trusting Christ because he is sinful.

Now beloved, what verse 9 is saying to that kind of person, to that kind of confession flowing out of a true trusting Christ, that kind of person, what it says is that the character of God as such to that kind of person, that He always keeps His promise to forgive because He is faithful, because He is righteous, because He cannot lie and He has promised forgiveness to those who come to Christ. We can know based on the character of God, based on His attributes that He will never turn us away in anger—never, never, the contrary thought is blasphemous because beloved, it was God in Psalm 103:12 who promised to remove our sins from us as far as the east is from the west.

It was God who said in Hebrews 10:17:

There sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

He has promised beloved, and the point of this verse is that God is faithful to keep that promise, He is righteous, He is true to His word. And so when you come to Christ and trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins based on the promises of the gospel found in the Bible, the 66 books of the Bible, God says, it's at rest now. All of your sins have been placed on Christ and I am not going to bring them up again in my anger, my anger, my wrath has been satisfied in Christ. Full, free forgiveness by the sheer grace of God, ensured by the promise of His own character beloved, that's what belongs to us as believers.

Once God makes you one of His children through faith in Christ, He does not change His mind; He does not go back on His promise. Beloved, this is glorious; I wish you would write this down. Once you come to Christ, God never stops being your heavenly Father—that's wonderful. God never stops being your heavenly Father. He always forgives your sins when you go to Him in confession.

Now, that's not to say that there might not be serious consequences to your sin, it is not a promise of removal of consequences. I have seen that recently in the life of someone that I care about. It is not an indication that He won't discipline us if we continue in our stubborn ways. But that discipline is always flowing from the perspective of the loving heavenly Father who designs good for His children—that's the point.

So the atonement of Christ, the attributes of Christ enable us to live the Christian life from the position of strength, one more that we could only know through revelation and I'll deal with it quickly.

3. The Advocacy of Christ

Look at 1 John 2:1 where John says:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if any one sins...

He says, although I am writing so that you wouldn't sin again, I realize that you will, I realize that you might. And he says, and if some one finds himself having sinned:

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

An advocate is some one who is called along side to give assistance to another, kind of like a defense attorney in the court room, defending some one against the charge that has been brought against them. The point of what John is saying in verse 1 is that when you sin as a believer, you do not stand alone before the Father to give an account for yourself

because Jesus Christ Himself, after His glorious ascension, Jesus Christ is now continually as we speak, continually in the Father's presence in face to face communion with Him, representing you before the Father's throne—this is unspeakably glorious. Jesus' presence in the throne room of God is a continual testimony that He has met the demands of the law on your behalf. The law no longer condemns you because Jesus met its requirements and paid its penalty. That's why Paul can say in Romans 8:1:

There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, as it were in His ascension, took you up there with Him. He took as your head, as your representative, He went up in to heaven and He represents you before the very throne room of God, before the very throne of the Father saying, Father, I have made full satisfaction on their behalf—all of His righteousness credited to your account.

A perfect advocate and His experienced temptation beloved, understand that the weight of this passage is such that you have to bend the knee and confess and agree with what the scripture says if you are a believer, yes, Jesus loves you, yes He understands your weaknesses, yes He represents you before the Father; that is why He came. Beloved, His intention toward you has to be good in light of all of these things—they have to be good. After the cross, after He saved you by His own perfect character, now in the throne room of God, representing you, beloved His intentions could be anything but most wonderfully blessed beyond all we could ask or think. He deserves your trust and thanks and worship beloved—trust Him, trust Him.

One beloved hymn puts it this way:

And now for me He stands before the Father's throne;
He shows His wounded hands and names me as His own.

Beloved, John deals with this question (I'm wrapping up here) John deals with this question that I am about to state it at the beginning of chapter 2. Do these truths make it easier to sin? If God is so gracious and forgiving and so well intention toward me, why don't I just go out and sin then? There is apparently no consequence to it. Oh beloved, perish that thought. The Bible rebukes that thought all over the place. John says, look at 2:1, "My little children..." there is that term of affection again, the apostle writing with pastoral affection to his readers, God expressing His pastoral affection toward us. He says:

My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin.

Beloved, these things don't enable you to sin and make it easier to sin. The truth of the matter is that these truths break the power of sin. Some one who understands this, looks past the momentary allure of temptation and declares war against it. In light of everything that Christ has done for me, it is unthinkable that I would sin against Him. It changes your heart, you resist temptation not out of a sense of blind obedience to some

external law, but out of a deep-rooted heart affection for Christ who has secured your salvation at such great personal cost to Himself. When you understand these things, you see why John says, this would keep me from sin. If Christ did this for me, I shall not sin against Him –that’s the commitment of your heart.

So Christian, take these truths and trust His mercy through all the hills and valleys of life, the cycles that inevitably come, know that God’s unchanging intentions for you are always good—the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ guarantee it, it could be no other way.

Let’s pray. Our Lord Jesus, we do want to honor you this morning. We thank you for your death on the cross. We praise you for your great, impeccable character. We thank you for your continued intercession at the throne of the Father on our behalf.

Lord, we long for the day, Oh, may it be soon and quick and hurried Lord, we long for the day when you come back for us and receive us where you are. Lord, we long for that day when we see you face to face, we can almost taste it, we can almost touch it now because your word is so clear on these matters, but not yet, in your wisdom, not yet. And so we patiently wait with hearts full of joy, with hearts full of trust, confessing our sin yes, but Father, asking you to spur us on to greater holiness. In light of all of these things we bow before you and worship. In Jesus’ name. Amen.