



Sermon Growth Guide

July 11, 2021

What Great Love – Love Beats Sin

1 John 1:1-10

Key Verse: 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Big Idea: We are forgiven through faith-filled confession.

Foundations

What did the apostle John know about the love of God? Perhaps we could do no better than to quote John himself: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1)

Today we enter into a new five-week series that focuses our attention on the great love of God by looking at John’s first epistle. Pastor Tim writes that “the love of God is not just a feeling. It is a power that transforms us! God pours out His love over us like sunlight that makes us grow and flower.”

Tim’s first sermon in this series centers around the sure knowledge that in Christ we can confess our sin to our faithful and fully forgiving Father God. Instead of being met with condemnation, we are met with the overwhelming force of God’s love. God’s love includes Jesus’ atoning death, by which we are cleansed from all unrighteousness when we place our trust in God alone.

It isn’t easy to let go of the so-called wisdom of the world that offers all kinds of fictitious alternatives, but through cultivating a heart of contrition before God we learn to walk as His beloved children. Pray that God will guide and guard your Life Group, growing you each this week by God’s Great Love into an even purer reflection of the beloved Son.

Understanding God’s Word

The word “fellowship” appears in our text four times throughout verses 3, 6 and 7. Hold a rich discussion on what we learn here about Christian fellowship with God and one another.

Verse nine is our central verse today. In many ways, the gospel can be summed up in this verse. Discuss what 1 John 1:9 means to you now that you’ve heard Tim preach on it, as well as what this verse has meant to you over the years.

Applying God’s Word

We are forgiven through faith-filled confession. Is there anything in your life that you need to confess to God? Is there anything you need to confess to a party that you have wronged? Are you walking in biblical accountability? Pray for and encourage one another to live out faith-filled confession.

Witnessing God’s Word

Integrity matters. We are called to walk in the light (reread verses 5–8). You may recall these words from Brennan Manning: “The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.” Encourage and pray for one another, that your lifestyle witness of Christ would be a clear witness to all around you.

This week is Vacation Bible School. For years we've been praying that the Lord would send us hundreds of kids. Well, this year the Lord answered those prayers. We have 500 kids coming tomorrow morning that the Lord is trusting us to get down on our knees with and show His great love. We haven't had this many kids at Vacation Bible School for as long as anyone can remember. If you haven't found a way to help out, please jump in! When you come to volunteer with VBS, you will get a nametag. My nametag can say all kinds of things. "Tim." "Dr. Tim." "Reverend Doctor Timothy McConnell." That's what one boy in the church likes to call me. But that's not going to fit on a name tag.

Today we start a new series called **What Great Love**, and we are walking through 1 John together. This is the same John who wrote Revelation we studied last month, and the same John who wrote the Gospel according to John. And when he wrote that Gospel, there was only one word he allowed to go on his name tag, only one thing that mattered to him, only one way he wanted to be known and remembered forever. That word was "beloved." John never used his own name in the Gospel, but only referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The Beloved. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1) That will be a key verse for us through this series; a good one to memorize. What great love God the Father lavishes upon us that we might be called children of God—and that we are! We are beloved. The love of God absolutely transforms our lives as He pours it out over us, as He sheds His love abroad by the Holy Spirit, as He shines His love down on us like warm

sunlight and under it we grow, under it we are healed, under it we blossom and flower. What Great Love!

Eugene Peterson wrote, "The two most difficult things to get straight in life are love and God. More often than not, the mess people make of their lives can be traced to failure or stupidity or meanness in one or both of these areas." Love and God. Two things you kind of need to get figured out. At least pursue your questions with resolve and intention. The claim of Scripture, and one of the main themes of 1 John, is that these two are linked. They are connected. God and love. If you want to deal with God well, you need to learn more about what love is. If you want to love better, you need to learn more about what, or who, God is. Love and God are bound together. Jesus reveals who God is. Jesus reveals what love is. Jesus is the intersection where we learn both God and love.

John's letter is an intimate writing. There are none of the formalities of the classic ancient letter. He jumps right in. It's almost more of a sermon. John ministered from Ephesus to surrounding cities and he was probably away at one of these other sites when he wrote this letter back to the church at Ephesus. The church was struggling to remember the reality of what they had experienced in Jesus Christ. John reminds them, these things were real. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). We heard Jesus. We saw Jesus. We touched Jesus with our own hands. Did you know the first challenge to the early church was not



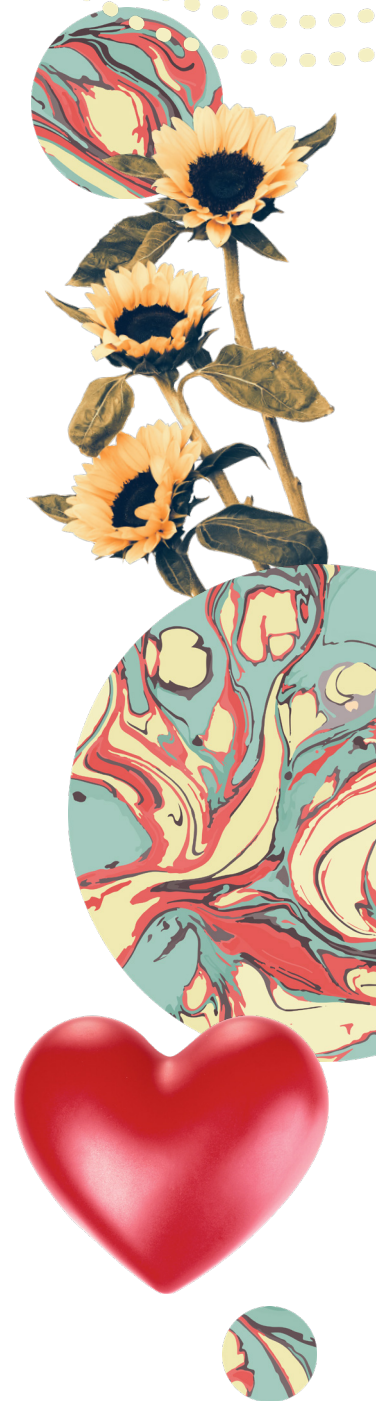
convincing the world that Jesus was God? Those people had seen Jesus do amazing, divine things. The challenge was convincing people that he was human! It was hard for people to swallow that Jesus was just one of us. Jesus was real. He wasn't a legend or a myth or a fairy tale about a magical creature. He walked and talked and ate and slept and cried right here with us, says John. But, as He did, He was also something very beyond normal. To look at Him, and interact with Him—it was life itself. "The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us" (1 John 1:2). John said similar things in his Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind" (John 1:1, 4). Then, the famous one, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). All that God is, all of God's grace and truth, all of God's light and life, it all comes forward and is revealed in this Jesus. It wasn't a glowing spiritual presence or an ethereal vision. It was a man. "I knew him," says John. I know Him. Jesus was the demonstration and the full representation of the love of God.

John says the life appeared. The life. There are two types of life in the New Testament. There's the word "bios" which means biological life, simple living and breathing and eating and carrying on. But then there is "zoe." This is the fullness of life, the eternal life, the life that is truly life. And that's what Jesus revealed. That's what Jesus is. That's what we come to know in Jesus, the life. The life appeared. So,

says John, that's what we proclaim. We want to tell you about it so you can also know it and feel it and experience it. Something profound has happened: Jesus is life.

But how can we connect with this life? The life is communion with God. This life is intimate love and relationship with God. Look at verse three: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). We know the same relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. We enter into the love that exists between God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. How can you enter into that kind of a family? That love is pure and holy and perfect and complete. You and I, if we're honest, we are insecure, inconsistent, unable to keep up with even our own standards, let alone attain the type of holiness and purity and perfection we can imagine exists in the love between the Father and the Son. How can you and I find a place in them? It's only by the blood of the Lamb.

The reality we need to contend with is something the Bible calls sin. John says that God is light. "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Light reveals things, light exposes things. When you turn on the lights suddenly everything is visible. When we turn on the lights in our own lives, we see good things and we see bad things. We see great victories and successes, and we see regretful mistakes, heavy burdens that, if not dealt with, become buckets of shame. Some of us live in a gravity of shame we can't escape, revolving around the



great pull of the mistake we made. That's not life. That's not the eternal life God offers. And so God, who resolves to bring us into His family in love, deals with this sin. Love beats sin. The love of God moves out to contend with our shame, to empty the bucket. And this is what Christians celebrate and proclaim over and over again, that out of a great love, God sent His Son into the world to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins, to pay a debt we could not pay, to fix a problem we could not fix, to rescue us from a far country where we could not find our way home. God did that when He sent His son Jesus Christ to die for us on the cross, and He declared it finished when Jesus rose from the dead and opened the gates to eternal life for all who would follow him. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). It's a simple message. I imagine you've heard it before. But have you felt it? What great love.

John says that to share it with others doubles the joy. That's his motivation for sharing Jesus. There is no manipulation in it; no personal gain. There is nothing selfish or guilt-ridden or power-gaming in it. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete" (1 John 1:3-4). There is a very active movement on podcasts to deconstruct the faith among 20-somethings. You see after we have experienced the love of God's children, we start to forget it. This movement argues that the camp experiences, the church experiences of your childhood, the Vacation Bible School moments when you felt the love of God, these

were all emotional manipulations intentionally constructed by adults who wanted to control your life and bend your mind. As someone who has put on many of these events, well, for one thing, I can tell you none of us who put these events on have enough smarts to manifest a false experience of the living God. But I truly understand. That's what John is saying. We forget the experience of the love of God. But don't you remember what it felt like? Don't you remember how pure, how clean, how bright and lovely and warm and good the embrace of God felt? That's not false.

Some people divorce emotion from intellection or devotion from doctrine. They say, "I don't want to study about God. I don't want to learn knowledge of God. I want to feel something." But for us as Christians, we don't divorce these two things. We feel what we know. Imagine a child wandering off from her parents in a park. Suddenly you see the mom panicked and frantically searching. She's running here and there, asking everyone, "Have you seen my girl?" Now the girl has been told a thousand times she is loved, she is cherished, she is part of the family and will never be left behind. But the mother finds her and sweeps her up in her arms and squeezes her tight, embracing her, kissing her face and saying, "Oh! How I love you! Where have you been? I was so worried! Don't you know I love you and I will go anywhere to save you?" The little girl knew all this before she was swept up in her mother's arms. It isn't new knowledge she is receiving, but the knowledge seeps down into her heart and starts to transform her very being. It's the same with God. We don't leave doctrine to feel emotion. The doctrine seeps into our hearts



hearts and inspires the devotion. The knowledge produces the joy. Oh, what great love! "What great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).

But back to the problem of sin. Sin breaks the connection between what we know and what we feel. Sin leaves us feeling numb. We can pretend there is nothing wrong. We can convince ourselves that that disturbed feeling in our heart is a chemical overload, or a false psychological response, or the product of faulty messaging and faulty parenting and faulty community and faulty government and faulty education and faulty consumerism and faulty ... whatever else outside of us. When we do that, John says we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. This is the most common way. But there's this other way. Take a hard look at yourself in the mirror, assess your decisions, own with responsibility the mistakes that you have made. Humbly confess them before the Lord. We get so confused we don't even know what sin is. But the Bible reveals it under God's own authority. The Word of God declares what is holy and right, the light of God reveals right and wrong. When we assess our own lives before Scripture, the lights go on and we see our trespasses and sins. We confess. But God is not condemning you for these things. God is not judging you for them. God sent His Son to take on the condemnation and receive the judgment on Himself, so that you could be forgiven and redeemed.

So don't fool yourself. Don't pretend perfection and integrity and completeness and wholeness and health. When in your heart there is an aching that declares something is

wrong and needs to be fixed. There is something wrong. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9). Confess our sins before the Lord and know that God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Notice that John, even John, who followed Jesus so nearly, who loved him so deeply, who gave his very life to serve the Lord, even John knows that he is himself a sinner in need of the grace of God. He doesn't say, "You confess your sins and you be forgiven." He says we. We. All of us.

There is life in Jesus. There is purity and light in the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. You can know it today. When you stop fooling yourself and you humbly confess before the Lord your God and you receive His forgiveness. From the beginning we proclaim it. This is real. We heard Jesus. We saw Jesus. We touched Jesus. You have felt the love of God in Jesus Christ. Don't doubt it. Don't make up false claims about it. Receive it. Be forgiven and transformed by the love of God. **What Great Love.**

