

Truth Community Church

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The Cornerstone of Joy

1 John 1:5-7

GraceLife: 5/17/2009

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Good morning graceLife. This morning we are coming back to our study of 1 John and I am very excited and very much looking forward to what the Lord is going to do in our hearts this morning.

Providentially, today is a communion Sunday at Grace Community Church and those of you that will be attending second service will be enjoying communion around the Lord's Table in the next hour. Here at Grace Church we treat communion seriously because the Bible does. And the reality of communion fits in so perfectly with the reality of what we are going to see in 1 John today because the Bible makes it clear that as we approach the Lord's Table, we are to examine our lives before we take in the bread and the cup.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-28 it says this:

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself and in so doing, he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Beloved, what that means for us is that as Christians, we must take the time to think about our souls. It is not just at the communion that we do this, but we examine ourselves regularly as a regular part of our spiritual lives, not in a sense of morbid introspection where we are always looking inside and cross examining every single motive and all of that. But taking an honest, healthy look and asking ourselves, "Where is my soul at, where is my heart at, over these past days and these past weeks, does my heart evidence the fact that it is growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." That is to be a regular part of our Christian living.

Now beloved, rightly done, that kind of self-examination is not a pleasant process because the reality of the holiness and the great character of God, the reality of the lofty nature of the Christian life, the reality of the lofty demands that the Bible puts on our lives are like a doctor that pokes and prods during a physical examination. This is not a matter of light indifference or a superficial approach. What happens when you truly examine yourself is that you inevitably see a gap, for some of us is like this, for others is like this, but we see a gap between the character of God, the biblical standards of holiness and where we are actually living our lives. And when you see that beloved, it is not meant to simply be for your information that you see those shortcomings and the Holy Spirit brings those things to mind. That gap is to be the point of your personal repentance before the throne of God. We don't take the Christian life superficially; we don't take it lightly because we realize that God is a holy God who reigns over the universe. His

holiness is absolute; His perfection is complete without any diminishment or any detraction from it.

We recognize that the glory of the Son of God going to the cross to shed His blood on our behalf, that He would take our sins in to His body in order that we might be forgiven. Those things and a thousand more like them require us, they morally obligate us to offer in return to God a pure devotion which is worthy of His character and is worthy of the life and death of Christ on our behalf. We don't trade in superficialities; we don't market in matters that are trivial. Christianity is the most noble thing in the world and we want our lives to be worthy of that. We want out of love for the God who created us and saved us and will take us to glory, we want our lives to be worthy of Him—that's the heart of every true Christian beloved.

Now as we return to 1 John, we are going to put this in to a little bit of context with that bit of introduction, these things that we talk about are not a dry, sterile thing, they are not a heavy, burdensome thing. Later in 1 John we are going to see that the apostle John clearly states that the commandments of God are not burdensome. For the true Christian, this is not a burdensome thing that we would rather not do. This is something we embrace, this is something we want. We want to purify our souls in pure devotion to Christ, we want to understand how to do that. The more that we can live a holy life, the more we please God, the happier we are. In the midst of the process of self-examination and repentance and holy living, as a byproduct, God dispenses to our hearts unspeakable joy that is full of glory. And as John writes this epistle that we are going to be studying more over the summer, look at 1 John 1:3 as we get ourselves back in to the text after being away for several weeks. John in this introduction states what his purposes are in writing. And for a Christian, this purpose rings like something very attractive and something that we want to have in our lives. He says in verse 3:

What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you also, so that (here is his purpose, he tells us right up front why he is writing) I am proclaiming 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.

He says, "I want to share the joy, the knowledge, the security, and assurance that I experienced as part of the apostolic fellowship, the true knowledge of God, founded in the Lord Jesus Christ, that and distribute it to you as broadly and widely as I possibly can." And as we come to the scriptures today, 2000 years later, that is still God's intention, that is still God's purpose in the proclamation of His word is to extend that sense of participation in the life of God to those who would hear and respond—it's glorious, it's not a burdensome thing, we wouldn't begin to look at it and say, I don't want that. No, we say, "This is great; you mean I can have fellowship with God? Tell me what it takes; tell me so I can have that, I want that. I want to know Christ better and fellowship with Him." John says, great, that's why I'm writing to you. You could say this is an invitation to glory.

And then in verse 4 he goes further and expands his explanation of his purpose, he says:

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These things we write so that our joy may be made complete.

Our joy, John's and ours. He is writing inclusively, he is saying, I want my joy to be complete, I want your joy to be complete, I want our joy to be complete. He wants Christians to be joyful.

Now, I want to stop here and give you an opportunity to do something here. If you are not interested in joy, you are free to go and I won't take offense. You can get up and go if you are not interested in joy. I will assume if you stay that joy sounds attractive to you and is something that you want. No takers—good. I'm glad everybody is staying because I want your joy to be made complete too along with the apostle John.

Beloved, John writes for this very purpose that our joy may be made complete. He is writing to promote something in your heart, a sense of gladness, a sense of settled contentment, a sense of deep love and reverence and worship for the living God that spills over in a sense of holiness and assurance and absolute confidence that life will be good in the end because it culminates in being in the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says in 1 John chapter 3 (we will look at that in weeks to come) he says:

We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is.

That will be the culmination of joy when we see Christ.

Now, having established those purposes in verses 3 and 4 beloved, here is what you have to see, this is absolutely essential. He says, my purpose is that you would know joy, that you would know fellowship with Christ—simple observation beloved, simple matter of communication. Having stated his purpose so clearly (follow me on this) whatever comes next is designed to further the purpose for which he writes. Everything that he says that follows is designed to promote your joy. It is important for you to have it settled in your mind because as we see what he writes in the words that follow, that painful process of self-examination comes in, that painful process of a sinner coming to grips with the holiness of God is going to inject itself. But you have to keep in mind that the ultimate end of this, the ultimate purpose of this is joy. You all said by staying that that is what you wanted, and so beloved, everything that we say here this morning is designed to promote your joy.

If you want to know joy, here is what you need to see, it starts with a simple observation, and yet, it is so very profound, a simple observation, one that apart from the Bible you

would never guess or think because we approach joy circumstantially, arranging our circumstances so that they are to our liking, John has none of that.

Beloved, there are three points that I am going to unfold for you this morning. First point of the text this morning is this, and I encourage you to take notes even if you normally

don't. You are going to want to be able to go back and review this in the days to come, this is not a 60 minute message that is in and out and you are done with it, this is going to provoke and stir you heart for days to come I trust, so write these things down.

1. Christian Joy Starts with the Holiness of God

Christian joy starts with the holiness of God; that is the fundamental starting point. Look at verse 5, John says (and in the original language, he starts with the word “and” he is connecting verse 5 with verse 4. In verse 5 he 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.

He says, I am writing to make your joy complete and this is the message, God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. Beloved, see the inseparable link between joy and the holiness of God. John says, I want you to know joy and then he immediately launches in to a discussion of the character of God. Beloved, that is not incidental, that is fundamental to a Christian world view, that is fundamental to living a joyful Christian life is to start with the cornerstone of the holiness and godliness of God Himself.

Beloved, we all need to be awakened on this point. The start of Christian joy, the start of Christian thinking is not, is not, is not, is not the pursuit of your own needs and desires and happiness. If you put your own desires and your own happiness as the primary goal of your life, you will be separated from the Christian joy as the Bible defines it. You do not start with what you want even when you want good things. The cornerstone of your Christian mindset is absolutely, fundamentally, without exception the holiness of God. Christian joy starts with a settled recognition of the holiness of God because it is the holiness of God that makes the true Christian rejoice.

Let me state this as plainly as I can and as gently as I can because beloved, I have been rebuked mightily in my own soul through the preparation of these things over the past couple of weeks. And so I say this as a sympathetic pastor and not as one wagging a criticizing finger, I say this to help you beloved to recognize the issue. If you suffer a chronic (by which I mean an ongoing settled) if you suffer a chronic lack of joy, beloved you are not rightly thinking about the character of God. If you are suffering from a chronic lack of joy, trust me as I explain the scriptures to you, you are not thinking rightly about the character of God—that is the starting point to correcting the drifting that you feel in your spiritual life is to come back to the character of God. Forget about trying to change the people and circumstances around you, come straight back to the throne of God until you get these things settled in your mind and then you will find that the entire perspective has changed.

When I was last in GraceLife, we discussed what John meant by his statement “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.” I will just review it briefly. When John says that God is light, he is referring to God’s holiness with the particular emphasis on the truth of God and the holiness of God, and you can see that by tracing the statements that

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follow after verse 5. What he talks about in verses 6-10 give us an understanding of what he means by God is light, what does that metaphor mean. As you read on in verses 6-10, you see John contrasting light with deception; he is contrasting light with sin. And so truth opposes deception, holiness is the opposite of sin. And so as John is speaking about light, he is talking about the truth and holiness of God—that's the idea. And so, when he says, I want to promote your joy, he says, here's what I've got to say about that—God is light. He is saying, start your thinking right here with the truth and the holiness of God, that is the cornerstone of Christian joy.

Now elsewhere in the scriptures, we could look at hundreds of passages, I'll just look at three or four with you—just a few scriptural references to give us some perspective about the holiness of God. Deuteronomy 32:4:

The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.

Job 34:10:

Far be it from God to do wickedness and from the Almighty to do wrong.

That has echoes of the same theme that we see in 1 John verse 5: “God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all.” It is inconceivable, darkness and sin cannot coexist with God at all. He is totally intrinsically and holy and true. He always does what is just, He is always faithful; He is always righteous and upright. Far be it from God to do wickedness as a matter of objective reality. And beloved follow me here, as you think about your life and as you think about the character of God, as you think about His holiness and His truth, far be it from entering our minds that God has ever dealt unjustly or unrighteously with us. Far be it from God that anything in our circumstance is an expression of unkindness from our heavenly Father, an expression of His failure to control circumstances. Far be it from us to entertain a thought that God has acted unrighteously toward us because we believe in the sovereignty of God, we believe in the providence of God, we believe that our circumstances unfold in a way that God has sovereignly prepared for each of our lives.

And beloved, when those circumstances involve going through deep waters, when those circumstances involve sorrow and heartache, the fundamental cornerstone of your response and your thinking has to come right back to the holiness of God and say “God is always holy, He is always righteous, He is always just, He is always dealing with me as a Christian as a heavenly Father, and I am going to trust Him and I am going to banish from my mind any accusation against Him of anything unworthy motivating what He is doing in my life.” Absolutely beloved, that is where you as a Christian have to take your stand. I say that gently beloved, I say it with great pastoral sympathy for some of the heartaches that you are going through—some of you right now. Beloved, we are simply looking at what the Bible says about joy. We start our thinking with the holiness and truth of God and we affirm that in our minds no matter how much circumstances may scream at us to think to the contrary—that's the starting point of joy.

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In one of my favorite books of the Bible, Habakkuk 1:13, prophet said to God:

Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and you cannot look on wickedness with favor.

Beloved, that is the heart of joy; that is the center of joy to the Christian; that is where joy starts. We view life from the first principle of God's holiness that is the governing dynamic of everything, the universe that is the dynamic of everything in our lives and we work out the implications and difficulties from there. I have said this in the past, but you cannot say it enough, your starting point in this kind of thinking determines the outcome. You start with God's holiness and then assess your circumstances. You do not start with your circumstances and then try to make judgments and assessments about the character of God—that is completely backwards. And when you live in a sin fallen world with sin fallen judgment, you are always going to come to wrong conclusions about God if you try to estimate His character based on what is happening in your life right now. You have to discipline your mind; you have to convict yourself in your heart that says "I will never contradict the holiness of God in my thinking about the way the world operates."

Beloved, any other starting point than the holiness of God will short-circuit your joy as surely as wearing wrong prescription eye glasses will distort your physical vision—it's inevitable. There must be no question in your mind about the goodness and the rightness and the holiness of God whatsoever, you are not permitted to question Him in that way. You are His creature, a sinful creature at that, living under His grace, it is not your prerogative to question His character. Quite to the contrary, you affirm it as the first principle of life. God is holy, God is true, God is righteous, God runs the universe, and I will view everything from that perspective—that's the starting point.

See beloved, God created you, your purpose as a human being in this life much more as a redeemed Christian, God's purpose in your life is that you would glorify Him and enjoy Him for ever as the West Minster Confession states, and to do that, that begins with the proper estimation of His perfect and flawless character. He is intrinsically righteous and He always does things well.

Look, I know most of you have been in Grace Church for a long, long time. You might be tapping your foot a little bit impatiently and saying "I know this, come on, let's get on to new ground here." I understand beloved, I understand that theoretically in your mind if I came up to you and said "Hey, Paul, do you believe in the holiness of God?" "Yes pastor, I believe in the holiness of God, absolutely. Yes pastor, absolutely, central to my world view, holiness of God." Okay, good enough. Theoretically that's were most of us are at. And so as I thought about teaching on this over the past several days, I have come to realize what my biggest challenge is here this morning—it wasn't what I just said so much. My biggest challenge this morning is to help you see the gap (Let me say that again and say it slowly) my biggest challenge this morning is to help you see the gap between what you say and what you are. There is a gap between our affirmations and where we live our lives beloved. The Bible says that we have all sinned and fall short of

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the glory of God—that's in the context of talking about Christians there. And so, stop tapping your foot impatiently and understand that the lack of joy in your life is a symptom of something wrong in your heart. The lack of joy in your life is a symptom that God allows to help you realize the gap between what you say and what you are so that you can do something about that gap.

And if joy starts beloved if the cornerstone of joy is the holiness of God as we said here this morning, that leads us to the second point of today's message and it is this:

2. You May Love God's Holiness Less than You Think

Ouch, but absolutely true. You may love God's holiness less than you think. What you say on the one hand and the difference between what you are on the other demonstrate the gap in your heart affections for the holiness of God and I need to help you see that beloved.

Proverbs talks about how faithful are the wounds of the friend—I'm trying to be a friend today, knowing that what I am about to say will wound you, wound you so that God can heal you and close the gap between your confession and your practice.

To help you see this, we are going to step outside 1 John for a moment and turn back to the book of Matthew chapter 12, I really want you to see this. Matthew chapter 12, and just to be clear here beloved as you are turning to Matthew 12, understand that the last thing that is on my mind is trying to get you to do something different or to do something more or to do something less or to sin less or do something more—that is not even in my mind as I stand here this morning except to deny it as my intention here. We are talking entirely about your heart this morning, talking entirely about what your mission control center, what your soul think about God's holiness and how it reacts to things around you, we are talking about a heart examination here.

Matthew chapter 12, beginning in verse 33, Jesus says something that is very, very instructive, He says:

Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good. (speaking to His opponents there, but here is what you really need to see, the end of verse 34) for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they should give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.

We can go to Mark 7 and see where Jesus says that out of the heart come evil thoughts and adulteries and all of that wicked stuff. Jesus said on more than one occasion that what comes out of your mouth, what comes out of your life is an expression of what is

going on in your heart. What comes out of your life, what you see coming out of your life is a reflection of the true measure of your character, it is the reflection of the true measure of your thinking about God. If you have good things in your heart, your life will bring forth these good things. If evil fills your heart, if questions about the character of God fill your heart, what comes out of your life is going to reflect that beloved. The external things are simply symptomatic of what is going on inside you.

And so, what is in your heart is the question for today. Beloved, this question, what is coming out of your life is what I want you to deal with because what comes out of our lives is the reflection of what we think about the character of God.

Now under this second heading that you may love God's holiness less than you think, under that heading I want to give you three questions to ask yourself today and in the days to come and as you prepare your heart for communion second hour. I want to give you three questions to help you assess the way that you truly, truly esteem God's holiness. These are simple, these are not questions that I want you to answer to me, these are questions for you to answer in the presence of God, in the throne room of your own conscience—this is where you examine yourself beloved. Three questions, there could be others, but these are particularly easy and not easy in one sense, but there are simple and they hit us right where we live. First question:

A. Do your prayers convict your low view of God?

Turn back to Matthew chapter 6, the passage that we spent some time studying couple of years back. Matthew chapter 6, coming at it from the perspective of what we said this morning that the holiness of God is the cornerstone of thinking, cornerstone of joy, you see that expressed perfectly in the way that Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Verse 7 He says:

When you pray, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose they will be heard for their many words.

Going through the same rote, prayers, written prayers, going through the same rote prayer list day after day, week after week, month after month without really putting any thought and effort into it. Jesus said, don't pray that way, that's the way Gentiles pray. He says:

Don't be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Pray then in this way. Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Beloved, Jesus is giving us a pattern for how we pray. It is okay to recite this Lord's Prayer, but the idea is to stimulate in our thinking themes about prayer that would govern the way we pray. Here in Matthew chapter 6 as he says "Pray then in this way," He starts with the character of God, He starts with the will and the desires and the kingdom of God

and He says start here when you pray, affirm the character of God, affirm and seek His kingdom, affirm and seek His will.

In the last half of the prayer, He goes on and teaches us how to pray for our physical and spiritual needs, but in the model that Jesus gives us, the character and the will of God are given the preeminent position of priority. Jesus Himself taught us to put God at the front and center. This is a reflection of having the holiness of God as the cornerstone of our mindset, the way that you pray is simply an extension of that. And as you pray, the extension of the preeminent priority as the character and the holiness of God becomes a preeminent priority for you in prayer—that's the idea, that's exactly what Jesus teaches us here, this isn't even difficult to understand.

Jesus says when you pray as one of my disciples, you start by addressing God, “our Father who is in heaven,” praising God, “hallowed be your name,” O God, I seek the magnification of your name throughout the earth and in my own heart, and seeking the advance of His kingdom and His will, “your kingdom come, your will be done,” Father, the focus is on you, your name, your kingdom, your will. Obvious, isn't it? Okay, you can say it; it's right there in the Bible, you can say that. Only then Jesus says to you, turn to your own physical and spiritual needs. He is establishing in our mind a fundamental approach to prayer. That does not mean that if you are about to have an accident at an intersection and you really need help you say, “Ah, I've got to start with the other stuff.” You can cry out to God in distress—I'm not saying that. The point is, what is your fundamental approach to prayer? What is your settled mindset about prayer?

Beloved, in light of that, how did you pray last week? What was your prayer life like last week beloved? You say, last week was really bad. How about last month? How about the last six months? Beloved what marks your prayer life, your prayer life is a reflection of how you view God—do you understand that? Your prayer life or lack there of, is a reflection of how you view God and you must be honest with yourself, you must examine yourself on these matters beloved.

When you pray, your priorities, what you love, are reflected in what you say first and what you say most beloved. Don't let yourself off the hook here beloved, examine yourself honestly. Where did God's holiness and righteousness rank with your concerns to have your own desires met? Isn't that a fair question in light of what Jesus said to pray, what Jesus taught about prayer?

I believe that Jesus was teaching because He meant it. I believe that Jesus was teaching us on prayer because this is the authoritative way from God to pray. And beloved, I am not talking about how long you pray or what is your prayer list, I am not talking about any of that stuff at all. I am simply asking you to examine your heart, examine your prayer life and say where did the worship and adoration of God fit in to the way that I have been praying lately?

The point is this, especially in light of what Jesus said earlier that what we say comes out of what is in our heart, our prayers demonstrate our priorities. If you are anything like your pastor this morning beloved, you would have to admit that you have spent far less time magnifying the glory of God than you do ask Him to meet your own needs as if He were your servant instead of the other way around. We want God to solve this problem or change that person or alleviate this burden, that's okay in perspective, that's okay in its proper place. But beloved, do you really start with God like you say you do. When I say, "Paul, what's your priority?" "Ah, it's the holiness of God pastor." Okay, good, I'm assuming that reflects itself in the way you pray. That's fair, that's an honest, righteous, fair question for us to ask ourselves because it shows where our hearts are.

But beloved, think about your prayer life in light of the cornerstone reality of the holiness of God. You need to repent of the way you pray—fair question, righteous question.

Now secondly, you can see the gap between what you say and what you are in another way as well and I will address it as a question. By the way, I am not presupposing the answer to anything here. I realize that some of you have great joyful prayer lives—amen, praise the Lord. If you can answer the question and say yes, that is the way I pray, then you should feel the pleasure and affirmation of God on your life. Second question:

B. Does your response to trial convict you of a low view of God?

When I say convict you, I am talking about an objective reality here not what you feel inside. Does your response to trials convict your low view of God, does it expose your low view of God, you can say—that would be an even better way to put it. Does your response expose your low view of God?

Beloved, if you are marked by, if it is your pattern—"You know, we all are going to have moments where we slip." I am not talking about that, I am not jumping on the first mistake that you make, I am talking about patterns here, your life character here. If you are marked by a grumbling or a fainting spirit in the midst of your trials and difficulties, beloved you can be sure that you have lost sight of the holiness of God—you can be sure of it, you have lost sight of it, the reaction is to go back to His holiness if that is you.

Lamentations 3:39-40 says this:

Why should any living mortal or any man offer complaint in view of his sins.

We forfeited our right to complain about the ways of God when we rebelled against Him in the Garden. With Adam as our representative and he fell and we have inherited his guilt since then and by our own way we live our own lives, falling short of the glory of God—we have forfeited our right to complain beloved.

Jeremiah goes on to say in that passage from Lamentations, he says:

Let us examine and probe our ways and let us return to the Lord.

If you are offering complaint, if you are grumbling, if you are fainting in your trials, the biblical call is to examine your ways and come back to the Lord. Examine your ways and come back, return to the God of your salvation. Return to your heavenly Father who knows what you need, return to your heavenly Father who loves you, return to your heavenly Father whose plans for you are always good, come back and submit yourself to His holiness and seek His grace and set aside the complaining spirit.

See beloved, the way this works, when you love the holiness of God, when you are convinced of it and His holiness is the cornerstone of your thinking and it is the dominant priority in your heart, then you know that God can never act toward you in an unworthy way. He can never contradict His holiness beloved. And somehow even the worst trials in life are means by which God is working out His holy purposes for which He appointed us to live in this day and this hour, right here and right now—that's the consequence beloved, that's the implication of the holiness of God.

When you are conscious of your sins, you realize that you deserve greater chastisement from God than what He is actually giving to you, and that recognition silences the complaints and strengthens your heart. You climb up as it were and you say, "I am standing on the high ground of the holiness of God and I will not falter from this position because I stand on the rock and I am confident of His holiness even though I don't understand, I am confident of His holiness even though my heart is broken." We are not critical of people that grieve, we are not critical of people who struggle or don't understand. You will never hear me criticize someone who is weeping tears of sorrow—ever.

Beloved, the point is what is at the core of your heart in the midst of those times. Are you affirming the holiness of God in the midst of the tears? That is the call that you must respond to, not to get rid of the tears to affirm the holiness of God. So beloved, if you are marked by complaining, grumbling spirit, if that is the pattern of your life, I will say it as an imperative, you need to repent because that is not worthy of the holy God that you say that you love and serve. Now third question:

C. Does your indifference to sin expose your low view of God?

We have talked about prayer, we have talked about trials, thirdly, as we expound on this point that you may love the holiness of God less than you think, we have examined our prayer life, the way we respond to trials, thirdly, is your indifference to sin expose your low view of God?

Let's return to 1 John here, 1 John 1, beginning in verse 6. John has said:

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

Here he is talking about people who are not even believers. He says, if you say that you have fellowship with God and your life is marked by an unbroken pattern of sin, you are lying. Don't besmirch the character of God by dragging His character in your affirmations of His holiness in to the way that you live your life. Don't besmirch His character, simply sacrifice the claim that you love Him, that you walk with Him. Give that up so that you don't lie—stop lying about this, that couldn't possibly be true. Because if God's holiness reigns in your heart, it would show up in the way that you live. If you have been born again, if you have been made a new creation in Christ, your life will inevitably change toward more and more conformity toward the biblical standards that are expressed in the Bible about character of loving God.

So John states most plainly that if some one claims to be a Christian but has no change in their spiritual life, they are deceived and lying against the truth because light and darkness are fundamentally incompatible. Conversely, look at verse 7, he states the other side of it, he says:

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.

Beloved, walking in the light does not mean that you are perfect, we understand that. We make no claim that we can be perfect and sinless in this life—that's an unbiblical notion. Walking in the light means to live a pattern of life built around the holiness of God. Later the apostle John will recognize the true Christian's sin. But here is the issue beloved, it is really practical and really simple, you don't need a seminary degree to follow me here. The issue for you as a Christian is whether you tolerate sin in your life or not. Do you make allowances for your wrong attitudes and your sinful lusts and your harsh words and your harsh treatments of others? You make allowances for that and say, "I'm not going to worry about it; I'm not going to deal with that."

You see, true Christians know that God is holy and so they pursue holiness as their life goal even though they fall short some times. In verse 9 John says:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous...

The idea here is that Christians recognize that they sin, they confess their sins, it is not about perfection, it is about toleration. Do you tolerate sin in your life? Because beloved, you can reason back from the nature of your life to see what you believe about the holiness of God. This has to be convicting to many of you if not all of you if there are areas in your life that God is convicting you on and you know are wrong, you know relationships are wrong or you are doing wrong even if it is just in your thoughts and imaginations, entertaining things that you should not be thinking about. Beloved, you can reason back from that reality and see what you really think about the holiness of God because if you treasure the holiness of God, the presence of sin in your life would be anathema, it would be intolerable and you say, "I have to put that to death because I want the holiness of God too much to allow my life to reflect that which would retract from His glory and holiness."—it's obvious, this is not difficult to understand. The problem is

taking your heart in hand and dealing with your life and examining yourself and bringing repentance to bear where that is necessary.

So beloved, what about that sin in your life that you have tolerated—what about it? If you cared about the holiness of God, you would not be careless in dealing with sin, you would not tolerate it and make allowances and excuses for it beloved. Do you need to repent?

Now you say, “This is convicting and is not making me very joyful.” Don’t give up because here is the pattern of the way that this works beloved. A high view of God’s holiness inevitably leads you to a conviction of sin. Where you go from that conviction is that you flee to Jesus Christ. Holiness makes you recognize sin. Holiness makes you esteem the glory of Christ because in His life and death and resurrection, He paid the price for all of your sin and go to Him and you find that what it says at the end of verse 7 is true:

The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

While the conviction you feel is great and you should not just forget about it five minutes after you walk out, you need to deal with the conviction that these things from God’s word is brought in to your life beloved. I mean, you have just got to deal with it and repent. But we can always deal with sin from a position of strength as believers because we can always bring our guilt to Christ. He is the friend of sinners, He is the faithful one who forgives our sins when we confess them to Him. It was His blood that washed away the sins of countless people throughout the ages and His blood can wash away yours as well. Oh, praise Jesus for the cleansing, atoning work of His blood. And as you turn to Christ and say, “Oh, God, I’m so convicted. My prayers have been unworthy of you, my grumbling has been unworthy of you and the sins that I have tolerated, oh I am so sorry. Please forgive me and please give energy to my efforts to change.”

Beloved, that is the key that unlocks joy, it starts with the holiness of God. You are not going to take sin seriously until you take God’s holiness seriously. And you are not going to love Christ seriously until you take sin seriously because Jesus said, “He who has been forgiven much, loves much.” The more you recognize sin, the more you are going to love Christ and realize what a great price He paid, what a great gift He gave to cleanse you from all of your unrighteousness.

Yes beloved, Christ gives joy to repentant sinners who love the holiness of God and trust Him with their lives. Joy can be yours beloved, but it is a byproduct of pursuing the holiness of God. Let’s pray.

Father, we simply exalt your holiness. We confess our sins and we trust the blood of Christ. Give us grace Father to work these things out in our lives. Above all God, give us a love for your holiness and a love for your Son because if you give that to us deep in our hearts oh God, these other things will eventually work themselves out. So father, as you bring conviction on our lives, let it be a conviction unto repentance not unto despair.

Let it be a conviction that sees the light of Christ, the hope of forgiveness in Christ and in response to your holiness lives out a genuine repentance that is worthy of the gospel. Father, please help us to that end we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.