

Born of God: "Got Life?"

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[0:00] Well, this past week, I was listening to a 55-0 old recording between Apollo 13 astronaut Jack Swigert and NASA mission control, Houston.

Swigert, okay, Houston, we've had a problem here. Houston, this is Houston. Say again, please. Swigert, Houston, we've had a problem here.

We've had a main B bus undervolt. And with that, the Apollo 13 mission shifted from landing on the moon to getting these three astronauts home without dying.

The Apostle John, in 1 John, by the way, John is the disciple whom Jesus loved. This is the writer of the book of Revelation. He would have been in his 80s when he wrote this epistle, 1 John.

So if you're not there yet, please turn to 1 John. Well, he's writing to a group of churches in what's present-day Western Turkey. These would have been a lot of the same churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

[1:11] Ephesus, Sardis, Philadelphia, Phrygia, Laodicea. And he's writing to these Christians in the late first century.

And he's saying, okay, churches, we've got a problem. The essence of the problem was false teaching. Now, if you're in 1 John, let me show you.

In 1 John 2, verse 26, look what he says. And now, little children, oops, I write these things to you about those.

This is verse 26. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. And look at chapter 4, verse 1. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

For many false prophets have gone out into the world. So there was this influence on these churches in Western Turkey at the end of the first century of these false teachers.

[2:11] In the false teaching was running along three different lines. We see it in chapter 3, verse 7. Little children, let no one deceive you.

Whoever practices righteousness is righteous as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil. From the devil has been sinning from the beginning. So here's the lie that was going on.

The lie was going, hey, you can be a follower of Jesus and do whatever you want in your lifestyle. It doesn't matter. That was the lie. That was the deception. You can do whatever you want, whenever you want, with whoever you want.

It doesn't matter. The second line of deception we see in chapter 2, verse 9. Whoever says he's in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

If you claim to be a follower of Jesus, walking in the light of God, and yet hate your brother, whether that's some kind of flat-out denial or some kind of downplaying, it's a lie.

[3:15] What we'll see as we move through 1 John is we must be loving one another, those born of God. So that's the second lie. But the primary root falsehood we see in chapter 4, verses 2 and 3.

We read, By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus has come in the flesh is not from God. The root issue, the falsehood that was the kind of the headwaters of all these other lies, was a denial that Jesus had come in the flesh.

A denial of the incarnation. Okay, churches, we've got a problem. Today, there is a downplaying or denying even of the need to live moral, holy lives in obedience to Jesus.

Today, there is a downplaying and even a denying of the need to love all who've been born of God. And certainly today, there is a denial of who Jesus truly is, whether that's that He's fully God or fully man or both fully God and fully man.

[4:38] Then there are denials. I mean, that's why we have cults. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Jesus. In the first century, the Apostle John writes into this problem.

That's why we have this epistle, this letter. He's writing to all these churches. It's a circular letter. He's seeking to pastor them through this problem. But it's more complicated than what I've told you, because look at chapter 2, verse 19.

They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out. The church had been splintering.

People were leaving over these issues. I don't know about you, but if I was living in the first century and seeing this happen in my own church, with people I love, I'd be discouraged, shocked, questioning whether this whole Christianity thing is true, and questioning whether I was truly born of God.

John writes to assure these Christians in these churches in the first century and us of who Jesus truly is and what it means to belong to him, which now brings us to verses 1 through 4.

[6:05] In 1 John 1, 1 through 4, John starts this letter seeking to convince these churches of this one truth. Jesus is our life.

Five points. You can see it in your bulletin. Five points to help you see the case John is making, that this Jesus is our life.

You got life? You got Jesus? First point. This Jesus is fully God.

Notice where John begins his letter. 1 John 1, that which was from the beginning. And we got to ask, well, which beginning is this beginning?

And it is the beginning. As in Genesis 1, 1, in the beginning. John begins this letter by starting off at creation.

[7:04] Why start there? Look at the end of 1, 1. Concerning the word of life. That which was at the beginning concerning the word of life.

Remember John 1, 1? The gospel of John? In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. That word, word, is the Greek word logos.

Ultimate expression. The full and final communication of reality. It's a reference to Jesus. He is the full and final expression of God. And notice, at the end of verse 1, it is, he is the word of life.

That word life is repeated a few times in these first two verses. And what's being said here is that Jesus is the full and final expression of God, the eternally existent, second person of the Trinity, and the source of eternal life.

And not just length of days. Quality of life. I have come, I came, that they might have life, and might have it abundantly, John 10, 10.

[8:29] What's interesting about Jesus in that little phrase, eternal life, is how he defines it. If you flip back in your Bibles to the gospel of John, to John chapter 17, in verse 3, Jesus is praying a prayer to his heavenly Father.

It's the high priestly prayer. And he defines eternal life for us. And this is eternal life. That they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

That they know you. What is striking about this definition of eternal life is that he defines eternal life as in terms of being in relationship with God.

To know God. And Jesus. Through Jesus. So in chapter 1, verse 2, we have the word of life, which is the eternal life.

Did you see that? Let testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life. And this eternal life was with the Father.

[9:42] Distinct from God the Father, yet fully God. We're in the deep end of the pool. Verse 3, we learn that the word of life is not only distinct from the Father, but he goes by a name.

Jesus Christ. John starts his letter in the beginning showing us that Jesus is fully God. Apparently, the late, great coach Vince Lombardi started every Green Bay Packers season with a team meeting at which he would hold up a football and say something to the extent of, this is a football.

And what he would be saying is it all starts with this. This ball is the object of winning or losing the game.

The Apostle John is pointing to the eternally existent second person of the Trinity, the Son, Jesus Christ, and he's saying it all starts with Him.

Do you know what it would mean for your salvation if Jesus was not fully God?

[11:08] Your sins would not be forgiven. Because we sin against a holy, eternal God, we must pay a just and eternal penalty. And the only payment to satisfy God's eternal wrath is an eternally just and satisfying payment.

What John will later say, you'll use the word propitiation for that. But because Jesus is fully God, His payment on the cross for your sins and mine have completely satisfied God's eternal wrath.

there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Because God's wrath has been paid in full. This Jesus, He is fully God and this Jesus is our life.

Point two, this Jesus is fully man. Not only is Jesus fully God, He is fully man. If you're part of King's place, totally God, totally man.

Remember, this was the issue at hand in this region in the first century. There was heresy saying that Jesus who had not come and was part, became flesh.

[12:36] So look what John explicitly does in chapter one, verse two. The life, the word of life, was made manifest.

And we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. That little phrase, that verb, made manifest, is saying something really important.

this eternal life which was with the Father has now been made manifest to us. The us, of course, if you're wondering, is the apostle John speaking on behalf of all the other apostles sent out by Jesus who had seen Him, touched Him, sent out by Him.

But what is this made manifest business? John is taking his apostolic bazooka, loading it up on his shoulder, setting his sights on it, and he's taking a Christological doctrine missile, dropping it into his bazooka, and this thing is a powerful cluster bomb of truth that he's going to aim at this false teaching of there not being an incarnation and he's going to eradicate it from these churches.

Look how he does it. There are seven statements in this passage in which he makes a case that there is in our incarnation.

[14:13] Look how he does it. He starts by saying that which was from the beginning which we have heard with our own ears, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have touched with our own hands.

That word touched, the way to think about it is imagine a blind person going up to someone to feel their face, to delicately touch in order to know and to identify.

It's that kind of intimate touching. You're familiar, you know to touch concerning the word of life.

The life was made manifest. We have seen it. Verse 3, we have seen and heard. That gets at what this made manifest means.

It's the second person of the trinity, the eternal word of life breaking into time and space and taking on flesh that can be seen, heard, and touched.

[15:19] What John is talking about is the incarnation. John is claiming, this is part of his case, that he himself had personally sensory experience with the eternal word of life made manifest in the flesh.

John didn't hear about Jesus through a big game of telephone. He had first-hand experience. He had heard and touched and saw the incarnate eternal word of life, Jesus.

And the emphasis here is on sight over and over again. Seen, looked, saw. It's an eyewitness.

Now, if you wanted to get credible testimony in a court of law to make your case, you're going to find a reliable eyewitness. And John is that.

So what exactly had John heard, touched, seen? Let me remind you of some things. John had heard all of Jesus' teaching.

[16:36] John was with Jesus at the beginning of his three-year itinerant ministry. He heard everything that Jesus taught and he saw people marvel at his teaching. Do you remember at the cross what Jesus said to John?

first he says to Mary, behold, this is your son and to John, behold, your mother. That's the John writing this.

He heard that. Just think about what John had touched. According to John 13, it was John who had leaned against Jesus at the last supper.

Tender. It was John who Jesus spoke to after his resurrection and said, see my hands, my feet, that it is I myself, touch and see.

This John had touched the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. Just imagine what John had seen.

[17:48] Miracles, Jesus' death, burial, Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' ascension. And could you imagine what he had seen?

He's writing 50 years afterwards and what's in his mind is as clear as day. he had heard and touched and seen.

Remember that Vince Lombardi quote? This is a football. John is pointing to Jesus and saying, this Jesus is fully God and fully man.

It all starts with him. If Jesus were not fully man, do you know what that would mean for your salvation? salvation, it would mean that he would not have been able to fully represent you as a perfect, sinless representative on the cross.

It means he would not be able to identify with you in every single way. It means that his perfect life of righteousness would have been a sham. You can't impute that to someone now.

[19:01] He lived a sinless perfect life because he was human. He could give it to us. The fact that Jesus is fully God and fully man makes him the perfect mediator between God and man.

He is alone the perfect savior of sinful men and women. There is therefore salvation in no one else. Because this Jesus is fully God and fully man. The eternal word of life was made manifest in the flesh to be our one and only savior.

This Jesus is fully man. This Jesus is our life. Which brings me to point three. This Jesus is who we proclaim.

He is our message. What do you tell people? What are you telling people? Where are you telling them to find life? Do you notice in chapter 1 verse 2 life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life.

[20:24] John Stott helped me see this this week. That word testify means to have a personal experience and you tell somebody about it. So maybe you're thinking right now well man I haven't seen Jesus in person.

I haven't heard his audible voice. I haven't touched him. I don't have personal first hand experience like that. Well maybe you don't but if you have bowed your knee to Jesus you have had a personal experience with Jesus.

you are not the same of what you were before coming to Jesus. You've been radically changed. You have a personal experience. You've got something to say because he's changed you.

That word proclaim carries a sense of commission of being sent out. You may be saying well I'm not an apostle like John but you have been sent out by the risen Jesus by virtue of the great commission.

Go make disciples. We're all sent out. You have experienced him and you've been sent out by him. That's why we don't proclaim ourselves but him.

[21:39] Fully God fully man who was sent to die in the place of sinners. That's the message of the apostle John and all of the apostles. That's the message entrusted to us that we proclaim to others and call everyone everywhere in light of that Jesus.

That Jesus repent and believe. The main verb of these four verses shows up in verse 3.

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you. Proclaim. Announce. We proclaim Jesus.

Why? Why him? He's the life. The eternal life. The word of life.

And he is the hope of all nations because he alone offers eternal life both in terms of length and quality. Salvation is in no one else.

[22:40] Remember John 17 3. Salvation is talked about in terms of relationship to God. We announce Jesus to people to repent and to believe so they enter into a right relationship, a saving relationship with the

living God through the Son.

Eternal life is a personal relationship with God through Jesus. So let me ask you a question. What are you telling people? Who are you talking about?

Who are you telling people to go find life in? Flip back in your Bibles to 1 John 5.

Maybe this will make it all the more clear. 1 John 5 11 through 13. And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life. And this life is in his Son.

Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

[23:55] This Jesus is who we proclaim. He is our message because he is the life. This Jesus is our life. Point four.

This Jesus is who we share. in verse three we have the first of two what's called purpose statements. We see them in the words so that.

Look with me. Verse three. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that for the purpose of you too may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The purpose of our proclaiming Jesus is fellowship according to this verse. So what is fellowship? It's the Greek word koinonia and it's describing a kind of relationship.

A kind of relationship with someone else that is deep and meaningful and aimed. It's deep because when you have koinonia with someone you're getting down to what matters most.

[25:02] What's most important and it's meaningful because not only are you sharing what's most important. People are sharing with you what's most important to them. It's so good. It's so meaningful but it's also aimed.

What matters most aims you. Let me give you two examples of this from this past week in my life. Thursday night I had dinner with a brother and if you walked into the restaurant and saw us sitting together you'd be like what are they doing together?

Different ethnicity than me. Wears different kinds of clothes. Speaks different than I speak. He's from a different part of the country. He's experienced all sorts of hardship that I have never dreamed of.

But you know what we had in common? The word of life. Jesus. Jesus. And all of those differences were petty little differences because we got to fellowship and together.

He encouraged me. I encouraged him. So here's this person that I would have no business with outside of Jesus. And here we are sharing a meal together.

[26:26] Talking about Jesus. another example. Yesterday morning at 625 AM I'm doing my devotion. I'm writing 2 Corinthians 12 9.

Talking about his grace is sufficient for you. For in weakness his power is made perfect. I'm writing that bling bling bling to my parents.

Hey mom and dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad. I got their DNA. I grew up in their home. Went on vacations.

There's things I do because they built them into me. These are some of the closest people in my life. We've got a lot in common but you know what we got to talk about? Jesus.

What means most to me about my relationship with my parents is that they love Jesus. I don't take that for granted. And so here we have in the span of 48 hours me fellowshiping with a man it makes no sense outside of Jesus.

[27:42] And then here I am fellowshiping with my mom and dad. We could have talked about a whole lot of different stuff. There's so much in common. But what matters most is Jesus.

When it comes to fellowship Jesus is the life center of our relationships. And in this passage there's a horizontal dimension so that you too may have fellowship with us.

So we experience a degree of fellowship based upon whether either of us are loving Jesus. And there's also this vertical component and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship in verse 3 is the way John is talking about salvation. We have a relationship with God and His Son.

That vertical fellowship is a salvific relationship, fellowship. And it flows out into our relationships with others.

[28:55] So our fellowship with one another begins with our fellowship with God our Father through the Son. And as we go through 1 John you're going to notice that this fellowship is spoken of in familial terms.

Father, Son, children. we're one family in the Lord united with Jesus our life.

So what are you focusing on when you get together with other Christians? There's a place to talk about football. There's a place to talk about food, family, stuff going on at church, things going on politically in the country.

Of course there's things to talk about like that. But what are you getting to what matters most? Are you getting to Jesus? What He's doing in your life? Are you finding your time with other Christians building you up in the Lord?

Or is it a missed opportunity? How do we do this together? Well it begins with us all each abiding in Jesus.

[30:02] That's where it all starts. Going deep with Jesus in prayer. Receiving meaningful words from Him about Him and lining up what matters most to His mission.

And when we're all doing that together we're going to fellowship in Jesus. This Jesus is who we share. This Jesus He is our life.

Five. This Jesus is our joy. Our joy producing life. Second purpose clause is in verse 4 and we were writing we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

The our in verse 4 is John's joy as well as the Christians in all of these churches in western Turkey in the end of the first century. Their joy.

It's an all together our joy. A shared joy. What is joy? Helpful distinction is talking about happiness as a gladness that's dependent upon your circumstances.

[31:20] As your circumstances change so does your happiness. Joy is a gladness that's dependent on Jesus. Jesus and because Jesus is the same today yesterday and forever it's possible to find fullness of joy in Him regardless of how hard or unhappy your circumstances are because your joy is in Jesus.

In John 15 Jesus talks about Him being a vine and we are the branches if we abide in Him and Him in us we will bear much fruit.

He goes on to talk about how that fruit glorifies the Father in Heaven. If you would turn to John 15 verse 11 I want you to see something what comes of abiding in Jesus.

Verse 11 these things I have spoken to you I am the vine you are the branches if you abide in me and I in you you will bear much fruit. These things I have spoken to you that purpose clause my joy my joy Jesus joy may be in you and that your joy may be full complete full and complete joy comes as a result of abiding in Jesus the eternal word of life made manifest in the flesh which means this no one can steal your joy but you can shoot yourself in the foot we can believe lies for example if you believe that Jesus is somehow less fully God or less fully man you will have diminished joy because fullness of joy is believing in who Jesus fully is fully God fully man if you think somehow that obedience to Jesus in all areas of your life is somehow optional you can do whatever you want whenever you want to do it you will have diminished joy because true joy fullness of joy is fully obeying

Jesus in all that he commanded his commandments are not burdensome we love him with our obedience if you are not abounding in love for those born of God it will result in diminished joy because our fullness of joy is to love others as Jesus for the joy set before him loved us by giving himself for us that's the these things he's writing about believe all truth about Jesus fullness of joy obey all the commands Jesus has called us to obey fullness of joy abound in love for all those born of God through the blood of Jesus fullness of joy this Jesus is our life he's our joy the apostle

[34:49] Paul or John is basically saying okay churches we've got a problem there's a false teaching there's another Jesus being preached so he says this Jesus I preach is fully God this Jesus is fully man this Jesus is whom we proclaim this Jesus is who we share and this Jesus is our joy Christ the King Church this Jesus is our life let's pray God in heaven would you do a work by your spirit in us and that we see Jesus

fully that we obey him and all that he commands that we love one another
regardless of what each of us looks like or do or live with an abounding
love all for the glory of Jesus and the joy that's in him in your name we
pray amen