

# The Unforgiving Servant

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Are we good with the volume?

! Last week we started a series in 1 John.

We're going to continue it. Looking at 1 John 1, verses 5-10. But we'll probably bleed over into chapter 2 a little bit. So, you're going to get some pre-look at next week's text as well.

So, be excited. Okay, so anyways. Elizabeth Elliot. Do you guys know? Are you familiar with Elizabeth Elliot? Her husband was Jim Elliot. He died trying to share the gospel to an Indian tribe. She writes, or she talks about a story from her childhood. I thought it was funny and applicable. So, what Elizabeth Elliot talks about is her son, her brother, not her son.

[ 1 : 16 ] Her little brother had a rule. His rule was simple. You have to clean up your toys before you go do something else. So, there was one day when her brother was playing with his toys.

And he wasn't paying attention to time. And sure enough, music lessons was starting now. So, instead of cleaning up his toys and being late to music lessons, he decided to scurry on down to a different place in the house.

Where he would do his music lessons and left his toys all over the floor. So, Elizabeth Elliot's family was a Christian family. And in that era, you know, his music lessons were learning how to play hymns.

So, he was taking piano lessons, learning how to play hymns. His mom noticed that his toys were not put away. And she, like a good mother, interrupted the piano lessons and asked him about his toys.

And he said, Mom, not right now. I'm singing praises to Jesus. And her response was, Son, it doesn't matter if you're living in disobedience.

[ 2 : 20 ] And I thought that was a pretty clever response. But I think also it might be a little too true of our day and age and even my own heart. We want to claim an intimacy with God.

We want to come and we want to sing and be touched. But we harbor areas of sin in our lives. I think what John wants us to know from this text is that our sin, any sin, hinders our fellowship with God and it hinders that intimacy.

And John, as Dave talked last time, was one of the disciples that was nearest to Christ. He spent great intimacy with Christ on this life and served him faithfully until his death.

And so, John is somebody who's very concerned that we enjoy the intimacy and benefits of serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus. And so, he's concerned that we not be deceived.

So, in this time, there was Gnostic teachers within the church. And so, they basically believed that you could kind of separate spirituality from your actual actions. They thought you could obtain...

[ 3 : 24 ] Well, they thought that the body was really just an envelope for the spirit. And so, the things of the body didn't really matter. It was really kind of this spiritual thing that they sought to live in.

And this, as Dave talked about last week, and as we'll see farther on in this series, that this kind of had them had troubles on who Christ was. But it also had them troubles because they believed that they could live in sin in their body and still obtain some spiritual sense of righteousness.

And so, what John is wanting us to know is, hey, that's not true. And so, he begins... Well, I'll read the text, and then we'll begin with John's argument. So, 1 John 1, starting in verse 5.

So, John begins this section on reminding the people...

His congregation, the people he's writing to, about the character of their God. And he says it very simply. He sums up Jesus' teaching, saying, God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. So, biblically, we see light is used kind of in two major ways.

[ 5 : 21 ] Light means the revelation of truth. So, things that are true are considered light. God was revealing his truth to this world. And light also refers to moral purity.

So, we kind of see this double use of the word light within and throughout Scripture. And so, likewise, darkness is ignorance, falsehood, but also evil and immorality.

So, John is saying, if you claim to serve a God of light, but you're walking in darkness, don't be fooled.

That's not fellowship with God, because our God does not dwell in darkness. And so, this is kind of high thoughts. But, on a side note, this is actually, that we serve a God of light is actually a really good thing for us.

So, maybe you're a Christian here, maybe you're not. But the Bible claimed that we serve a God of light means that we serve a God of knowledge, and a God that's always doing what is right. So, it's kind of an easy target now, but with the politics, right?

[ 6 : 29 ] So, we're looking at candidates to lead our country. And how nice would it be to have a candidate that we were confident that was going to dwell both in truth and in righteousness.

This is what our hearts desire. We want a ruler. We want a king that is right and true and consistent. And so, this is the God of the Bible, and the God that we claim to serve, and it's actually a joy and a blessing.

So, John continues his argument. He first highlights the nature of our God that we serve, and then he transitions. And he wants to expose three lies, and he wants to encourage us in three truths.

So, we see this. It says, if you say, and then it says, but if. So, these are kind of the three bucket.

The structure is pretty easy, so we'll hopefully see that. But first, John exposes our tendency to disregard sin.

He then exposes our tendency to diminish sin, and then finally to deny sin. But what he encourages us to is acknowledge sin, confess sin, and then to recognize the sufficiency of our Savior, Jesus, our advocate.

[ 7 : 43 ] So, these are kind of the things. So, he's going to be talking about sin that's not super comfortable all the time. It's convicting when you preach on it, because you've got to think about it for a whole week. And some of this text is pretty illuminating into our hearts.

So, we'll get to it at the end, but John writes this. The purpose of his book is that we may have confidence before our God, and we may hold on, hold fast, and find joy in the things that we have. And John wants us to have fellowship with our Savior. So, it's important that we deal with sin, because it limits that fellowship. But it actually is a joyful process for us to consider the ways in which we're not living consistently.

So, disregard for sin. So, we see this in verse 6. It says, If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

So, John simply points out here that walking in darkness must hinder our relationship with God, with whom there is no darkness at all. And like we said, the false teachers in that time were saying that you could separate your actual acts from your spiritual presence.

[ 8 : 51 ] And John is basically, no, you're claiming a God who is light and does not dwell with darkness at all. So, no part of your claim can be a claim that leads you to walking in darkness.

So, while this teaching isn't super prevalent today, I think we still make the mistake, right? We still make that same mistake. We come to church, and we worship, and we sing, and we praise the Lord, and we enjoy that time.

But we hold on to sins back in other areas of our life. We compartmentalize our lives, and we say, hey, this portion of my life is going to serve Jesus this morning.

And when I go home, I'm going to go indulge in this or that. Or I indulged in this yesterday, and I don't really want to deal with it because I want to keep doing it.

And so we compartmentalize our lives, and what John wants us to know is that is hindering our fellowship with God. That is hindering that deep and sweet relationship that we can have with our Savior that John enjoyed and that he wants us, his church, to enjoy as well.

[ 9 : 56 ] So, you may believe that that quick glance or that hurtful thought or that selfish plan that you are protecting have no bearing on your fellowship with God, with your Creator.

But please know that it does because our God does not dwell in darkness, and John is explicit that we convince ourselves that sin does not matter in our lives. That if we convince ourselves that sin does not matter in our lives, we lie, and we're not practicing truth.

So, every time we try to minimize the effect of sin in our lives, we're actually lying to ourselves, and we're not walking the truth that we've been given. So, my wife and I are new parents.

We have two boys. And what we're learning is that consistency is so important in raising these kids. We want to develop good patterns for their life, and it requires us to be extremely consistent.

So, at home, I feel like I'm just always kind of fighting their sin, their bad habits, just fighting all day, all day, all day. What God really convicted me of this week is, hey, I have a way more consistent approach to their sin than I do my own sin.

[11:01] Because I think, oh, I'm smart. I know how to navigate this world. It's not really important that I build those patterns because I already have healthy patterns, right? But no, the sin in my life affects my family.

It affects my relationship with the Lord. It affects my fellowship with others. And so, it's ridiculous, and it's sinful for me to go apart, pick in and part my boy's sin without having that same kind of or even a greater attack against the sin in my own life.

But we like to lie. We like to say it's not that big of a deal. Oh, you know, how is that going to affect anything, right? I, you know, and John says it does.

It has a great effect on our intimacy with our Savior. So, what does he say? He says, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all our sin.

So, John encourages us to, instead of walking in darkness, to walk in light. So, that means moral purity. But it also means walking in openness. And that's one thing I wanted to highlight here. It's interesting. It says, if you walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all our sin.

[12:11] And so, the call is to walk in openness, to be real about our sin, to acknowledge it before our Savior, to acknowledge it before ourselves, and stop disregarding its effect because it's just destroying us.

And what is the promise that when we acknowledge our sin? That the blood of our Savior cleanses us from all our sin. In an article that I read recently, it was by a secular psychologist.

And he talks about how our secrets destroy us and define us. So, basically, the title of the article is, We Are Our Secrets. And he talks about how the detrimental effect to our own self-worth and psyche when we are continuing to hide our secrets.

And we're not being honest with their effect. And they compound. We lose our confidence. We start to define ourselves by these failures. But what the Bible says, what this says is, hey, acknowledge those things and bring them before your Savior where you are cleansed of all of your sin.

So, whatever, however hard it might be for us to acknowledge our sin and to acknowledge its detriment in our lives, we know that we serve a God who we have ultimate forgiveness from.

[13:27] And we'll get more on that later. But, you know, the idea of the gospel, the idea of this God that we claim and what he's done for us is that though we might find ourselves to be far worse than we ever hoped to acknowledge, we find that his love is far greater.

And we find that his acceptance is far greater. So, it is in this God, this Jesus, that our sins are cleansed. So, we have all the ammunition to be honest about our sin, to be open and say, no, that really was a terrible thing.

And it had a terrible effect on my family. And it had a terrible effect on my relationship with my Lord. But then what else? So, you get a second benefit, right?

You get reminded of your cleansing. But you also, John throws in that we get fellowship with others as well. So, this also is counterintuitive, by the way.

So, my wife and I, we obviously have things in our lives that aren't always perfect. So, there have been times in my life where I have done things that hurt my wife.

[14:37] Things that she's known and things that she has not known. The temptation is when I do something I know is going to hurt my wife that she doesn't know about. My temptation is just to hide it. And in those times, based on God's grace, he's convicted me to be honest and open with her about my sin.

The ways in which I have not treated her well. And you would think that that would hinder our relationship. It would make it worse. It would lead to brokenness in our marriage.

But what I have found is that it always leads to a greater intimacy with my wife. And the reason that is, is because it causes us both to look at our Savior. The only one worth looking at, right?

If my wife is focused on me, it's not going to be that great of a marriage. If I am always focusing on her for my approval, it's not going to be that great of a marriage. But when we both take the time and the opportunity to acknowledge sin and to take it before the cross, take it before our Savior, we find joy and we find hope in exalting the God who was kind on both of our behalves.

And so it's interesting, and Dave talked about it last week, but the biblical principle is that fellowship with God will bleed over into good fellowship with other people. So if you want to have good relationships with others, you seek a good relationship with God.

[15:51] Because in Him, you find all the acceptance and joy and fullness that you need, and then that can bleed over. Until you find that in God, until you acknowledge your sin before God and turn to Him for satisfaction, you're just going to be living as a needy person.

And then your relationships are going to spin off of that, right? You're going to come into relationships needy rather than full and giving. And so it's interesting that the Bible tells us, hey, your fellowship with God will also, hey, if you're open with God, it's going to actually bear benefits in your life.

And we all want friends that way, right? We don't want friends that are holding stuff. We don't want wives or husbands that hold things from us. But it's hard in ourselves to own up to our sin because that's very core to our identity, right?

Who we are. We don't want to be screw-ups. But we're given freedom in the gospel, in the cross, to do that. And it actually leads to greater friendships and better relationships.

So trust God's word. Try it. It's good. The second lie is we tend to diminish sin. So in verse 8 it says, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

[17:08] So the next claim that the false teachers had that John then exposes is a lie that we can be without sin. So when the false teacher in John's day taught that through spirituality they could obtain a state of sinless perfection, John simply says that that thinking is only possible through self-deceit.

And so they were believing that they could be perfect. And John says that you're self-deceived. And so I don't know. I mean, I know that teaching is still around today. I'm not sure if it has a big effect in our cultural context. I haven't really seen it. But I think in other more subtle ways, this is a big thing that we all struggle with.

How often do we take our sin and relabel it, right? So, yeah, I snapped at my kids, but I was tired and hungry, right? And we make all excuses.

We relabel things. And we don't own up to our sin. And that's that whole self-protection that we're looking for. So I think culturally that happens.

[18:15] There's tons of things. You look at – this is something Dave brought up, right? If you look at any big scandal within the media, within the celebrity world, nobody ever actually caused what they did wrong.

They said, I made a mistake, you know? So, yeah, I got caught using steroids, and I got a bunch of world records that were taking me. But, you know, that was a mistake. You know, it wasn't wrong. I wasn't cheating, you know?

I wasn't being a scoundrel. It was a mistake, right? People make mistakes. We all make mistakes. And so I think there's just this general desire within people to relabel sin in neutral terms so that we don't have to deal with it, don't have to own it.

John's saying, hey, that's deceiving yourselves, and that's only keeping you from fellowship with your God, and you're not living in the light. You're not living according to a God who lives in truth all the time.

He goes on to say, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So the truth that he's trying to remind us is, hey, at the core of the Christian claim is confession of sins.

[19:22] We understand that we are broken people and can only find grace through the blood of Christ. And so he's reminding us of the core of our identity. Hey, confess these sins. Acknowledge them. Don't deny them.

Don't diminish them. Don't make excuses for them. Confess them. I was convicted in this. I spend more time trying to make excuses for my sin than I do confessing my sin, right? I do something that's like, oh, that didn't really play out very well.

Well, maybe it was I did it for this reason. Maybe I did it for that reason. No, I spend all this time trying to save face when really I should just be going to my Savior in confession. And what does it say?

When I go, when I take my sin to my Savior, it says, if we've confessed our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So the real question, you're faithful and just, right? So those are two big words.

So one thing we wanted to look at is how can God be both faithful and just? And I think this is where it gets exciting. So here we see that sin is both a debt to be forgiven and a stain to be removed.

[ 20 : 21 ] And in both of these things, God is said to be faithful and just. By saying that God is faithful, John has reminded us that God is both true to his word and faithful to his promises.

In the new covenant, God promises that he will forgive our wickedness and remember our sin no more. It is easy to see why God is faithful in forgiving our sin, but how can he also be described as just?

Justice is associated with punishment, right? Oftentimes it's associated with making things right. So how can our God be both faithful to forgive our sins and just in punishing our sins?

And this is the divine dilemma, right? The judge of all the earth can't take sin lightly because he has claimed that he will punish sin. So we find ourselves in this dilemma.

Well, I'm a sinner. I know that I deserve judgment, but I'm also promised forgiveness. So how does God both forgive our sins and be just in doing that?

[ 21 : 25 ] And the place that this happens is the cross. It's through the atoning blood of his son. His son who lived a perfect and righteous life, the life that we should have. God punished him on the cross to take our penalty, to take our sin.

So all the justice that we deserve for our deceitful lies, for our sinful tendencies, Christ paid for all those on the cross.

And so we can see that God is faithful to forgive because he promises to do so. And we can see that he is just to forgive because his son died for our sins.

And so our call is simple. Acknowledge our sins and confess it before the cleansing blood of our Savior. And what is encouraged here is not simply a general confession of sin.

I think it's easy for us to do that. Yeah, I'm a sinner. I mess up, right? No. What John wants us to do is actually look into our lives and see the areas, the specifics in which we are not living rightly, and bring those before him in confession and find that cleansing blood and find that joy.

[ 22 : 32 ] I'll tell you what, that's where we're going to find that fellowship. That's where we're going to find the intimacy with the Savior when we're actually bringing him the stuff that hurts. We're going to actually bring him the stuff that we don't want to own. And so I think John is on to something when he is writing these things that we might be encouraged in our fellowship with our Savior.

And so finally, the third lie that John is trying to fight against is this human tendency to deny sin. He says, if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. So some Gnostics in John's day went as far as claiming that their level of spiritual enlightenment had rendered them incapable of sinning.

John is clear in his response. A claim like this goes beyond disillusionment or self-deceit, but is actually accusing God of lying. So how does this work? How does that make sense, right?

We don't see a lot of people claiming that they've never sinned in our day and age. I haven't heard that. Maybe you guys have. But I think we see it in our cultural discourse quite a bit, right? We've taken things like abortion.

[ 23 : 35 ] And culturally, we no longer call that a sin. But what we do call a sin is not giving women a choice. And so we have taken, God calls us in his word to protect the weak and vulnerable.

He has told us in his word that all life is important and valuable. And we, in our infinite wisdom as humans, have decided that, nope, that is not a sin. What is a sin is not giving people choice.

You know, and so we have claimed that we are more wise. And therefore, we have claimed God is a liar, right? Because God tells us these things are wrong.

And we claim that our wisdom is greater. We do that in a lot of ways. Sexuality, we're constantly redefining sexuality as a culture. Right? Sex before marriage, right?

There's a lot of people that will tell you, you got to do that. Because how else are you going to know if you're sexually compatible? Right? And so we've exalted our wisdom. It makes sense. Try a lot of stuff.

[ 24 : 34 ] See what works above God's word. And so culturally, we do this all the time. Maybe we do that with our finances, right? The Bible tells us to take care of the poor.

To give to God's work. But maybe we've bought into the cultural encouragement to be financially stable.

You know? And so we are willing to, hey, you know what? I do nothing to take care of the poor. But I'm okay with that. Because I am financially stable. And I am doing all these wise steps towards financial stability. And those are great things.

But I think sometimes we don't take seriously God's claims on our life. Because we make excuses. And we deny him. And say, hey, you know.

The way we see the world is wiser than the way God sees the world. And so we're going to go ahead and just do life as we want. And this is actually calling God a liar.

[ 25 : 30 ] And not a way towards intimate fellowship with him. But what is John's response? Sorry, I got deep.

What is John's response? That was convicting to me, right? I haven't. I talk about giving to the poor a lot more than I actually do, right? So I'm saying these things because they're convicting to my heart.

So anyways. Not just calling other people out here. All right. So what does John go on to say? He says, my little children. So this is in chapter 2.

Or yeah, chapter 2, sorry. And he says, my little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. John couples his final if-then statement with really no conditions on us.

He just tells us to look to Jesus, our advocate. He recognizes that we will sin. He says, but if you do sin, you know, know that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

[ 26 : 33 ] And so all throughout this, John is hitting us hard. Like, hey, check your hearts. You know, walk in truth. Walk in purity. But if you don't and when you don't, turn to your Savior.

And so we've got to remember that John is writing this thing to encourage a church, right? In the first chapter, he says, I'm writing these things so that your joy may be complete, so you might have fellowship with the Father. In here, he says, I'm writing these things so that you may not sin.

It's like he's illuminating the sinful tendencies of our hearts so that we can understand them, so that we can confess them, and so that we can move past them and look to the cross. And look to the sufficiency where we are found not wanting, but we are found full and loved and redeemed.

And so John is writing these things so that we might have joy. He's writing these things so that we might not walk in sin. And he's writing these things so that we might have confidence before the Father that we are indeed his. And so if you find yourself, even though we sin, even though we struggle, if you find yourself being open about your sin, if you find yourself turning to the cross, running to Jesus, if you find yourself walking in good things, be encouraged and take heart knowing that it is our Savior's blood who has given you these desires.

And find that assuring and find that as a confidence boost to continue to run to your Savior, to be honest about your sin, and to put away the things that are worthless.

[ 27 : 56 ] Because the world's going to tell us there's lots of great stuff, but what could be greater than a deep and intimate relationship with the king of the world, the boss of all existence, the one who died for you?

And this is what John wants us to recognize. This is what I want us to recognize. This is what I want my heart to recognize, you know? It's so easy to be, I don't know, tossed by all the things the world throws at us.

But we have real intimacy that we can have with the God of the universe, the God who created this whole world. You know, and so let's be honest about our sin, and let's take it to him and find that healing and find that joy.

So we might, with John's readers, have confidence and have full assurance that we serve a God who has saved us. So, Matt. Thank you, John.

For your words. I'll pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you that you meet us even in the dark places of our hearts. Lord, you give us all the reason in the world to be real about our sin, to be real about the places in our lives that we are ashamed of, that hurt.

[ 29 : 00 ] Lord, and bring them to you where we are not only forgiven, but we are cleansed of all unrighteousness. Lord, it is only through the work of your son, the kind gift that you had for us, that we can claim these kind of truths.

Lord, may we as a church walk in intimacy with you. May we be real about our sin with each other, with you, so we might walk in fellowship, sweet fellowship with you, our Savior.

Lord, that is greater than anything this world can offer, Lord. It can offer counterfeits. But we have a God who has saved us through his life so that we might enjoy an eternal relationship with you.

And so, Lord, we praise you for this truth. I pray that we could all go away encouraged to walk in the good gifts you've given us. Thank you for your word, Lord. It's so good. It's amazing to see your word written long ago has such truth in our cultural context today.

Lord, thank you personally for how it's shown me sin in my life. Lord, may I continue to walk, owning my sin and confessing it and bringing it to you and finding forgiveness and joy.

[ 30 : 10 ] Thank you for this church. Thank you for your word. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.