

John 1:14-18 (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning and happy Mother's Day. I do hope you have a copy of God's Word with you this morning and that you'll join me in John chapter 1. Our text for today will be, again, John chapter 1, verses 14 through 18. And yes, we're doing a part two expositional sermon on Mother's Day.

Because, yep. Last week we began a look at verses 14 through 18, which we didn't quite complete. So today we have the privilege of setting our minds once again on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It's not just a thing to be done at Christmas time. The word incarnation originates in Latin and means literally in flesh.

It is most regularly used to speak of the embodiment of a deity. Christians most regularly refer to Jesus' incarnation as the incarnation.

Because it is not understood to be one amongst many, but to be the only time that deity took on humanity. Last week I hope that I clearly established that the errors concerning the incarnation are plentiful.

[1 : 21] Which means that this doctrine is incredibly important to the Christian faith and to understand its nature accurately deserves our careful attention. We had time last week for the first two of three points.

And they were the reality of the incarnation. And secondly, the witness to the incarnation. And considering the first point I read to you, the Chalcedonian Creed, and then issued six summary points from it.

We thought together about the nature of what it means for Christ to indwell flesh. So quickly those six points. Jesus Christ is one person with two natures.

And the important phrase here is he is truly God and truly man. Some people will say fully God and fully man, which is roughly equivalent.

Not half God and half man, but fully both. This is often referred to as the hypostatic union. 100%, 100%, 100%, dwelling in one.

[2 : 34] The divine nature was not diluted by the incarnation, nor was the human nature abstract or incomplete. Secondly, two natures united without confusion, change, division, or separation.

His divine and human natures are distinct, yet united. They're not mixed, not divided, not reduced into some kind of third nature.

Thirdly, the human nature was fully assumed. Jesus had a real human body, mind, soul, will.

Everything essential to true humanity.

He really hungered. He really thirsted. He really got tired. He was really tempted. Fourth, the divine nature remained fully intact.

In the incarnation, Christ did not in any way lay aside his divine attributes. Fifth, the person of the Son is the subject of both natures.

[3 : 42] Hear me here carefully. Jesus is not two persons or a split consciousness. The eternal Son is the acting subject of both divine and human experiences.

So, like I said before, hungered as a man, forgave sins as God, yet always the Son of God. And then lastly, the incarnation was for our salvation.

It was purposeful. Jesus became man, not merely to reveal God, but to redeem sinners through his substitutionary death and victorious resurrection.

The unity of his person ensures the efficacy of his work. It means that the thing he came to do was, in fact, accomplished because of who he is.

And we'll have more on this in today's concluding point. Then, in considering the second point, we took a brief look at John the Apostle's insertion in verse 15.

[4 : 48] Translators put it in parentheses, so it's a parenthetical insertion. When John the Apostle wrote his gospel, there was still a group that claimed John the Baptist as the Messiah.

John makes clear in verses 7 and 8 that John the Baptist was not the Christ. And he does so again here in verse 15, but this time in John's own words.

John the Baptist said, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me. John the Baptist acknowledged the supremacy of Jesus Christ and boldly proclaimed so by appealing to his eternal pre-existence.

In some small measure, this catches us up. So, let's read our text in its entirety and turn our attention to the final point, which is the accomplishment of the Incarnation.

What is it that the Incarnation set about to accomplish? And John tells us here. So, this is John chapter 1, verses 14 through 18.

[6 : 01] Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good, that we might believe its promises, obey its commands, have affection for its author.

May we hear it and respond accordingly to it. John writes, And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness about him and cried out, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me. For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side.

He has made him known. So, let's think together about the accomplishment of the Incarnation that we find in verses 16, 17, and 18.

[7 : 12] Remember that verse 15, right, is that parenthetical insertion. So, John at the beginning of verse 16 is continuing his thoughts from the end of verse 14.

There he said that Jesus is full of grace and truth. In verse 14, John uses the adjective full in describing Jesus.

Full. That is, he is filled up with grace and truth. The Greek word translated grace in these verses is the same word that we get charity from.

Grace is undeserved benevolence. It is kindness shown where kindness cannot be expected.

This word only exists in John's gospel in this paragraph. Once in verse 14, twice in verse 16, and then once again in verse 17.

[8 : 21] Although it is only used in this place, the repetition of it suggests that we should not neglect it as it is an important idea in the framing of John's account.

Right? Grace comes through Christ. He is full of it. He is filled up with grace. Now, the word truth is used very often in John's gospel.

It brings together the Hebrew and Greek concepts of truth. The Hebrew word for truth represents firmness, stability, steadfastness, or trustworthiness.

John's Hebrew readers would have understood the Greek word. John's Hebrew readers would have understood the Greek word he uses, *aletheia*, in the same way as their Greek translation of what we call the Old Testament would have used this very same word.

So they understood it as firmness, stability, steadfastness, or trustworthiness. Among Greeks, the word *aletheia* denotes that which really is eternal reality as revealed to men.

[9 : 42] So as John is writing to both audiences, he is pulling those two ideas together. Don't lose the significance of John stating that Jesus is full of grace and truth.

Jesus is the ultimate reality, the steadfast, the trustworthy, the kindness of God expressed to mankind. Now, in verse 16, he uses the noun fullness.

So verse 14, he is full of grace and truth. And then the following idea is that it is from his fullness.

The noun fullness to speak of his previous explanation of the character of Jesus definitively. He is now giving him, in some sense, a title.

He is the fullness of grace and truth. That is to say, right? He is those things. He cannot be separated from these qualities.

[10 : 52] Perhaps you are seeing just a little of why it is proper to get the incarnation right, to understand the nature of Jesus.

Understanding it correctly is the foundation on which our salvation sits. And so it is so very important. John goes on, for from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.

Grace upon grace. What a beautiful term that is. Grace upon grace.

Grace upon grace. The idea of this phrase is that as soon as grace is received, there is a new, a fresh supply of grace to be received.

So it is received and supplied and received and supplied and received and supplied. This is inexhaustible grace. Right?

[11 : 58] Kindness of God shown to us in Jesus Christ, overflowing abundantly for all who believe in him. The grace comes and it comes and it comes.

Right? Undeserved benevolence. Kindness shown where kindness cannot be expected. Again and again and again and again.

Another place that we can see this is in Ephesians chapter 2. And so I would invite you to join me there. We'll look at a few verses and then come back to our text.

There Paul writes, You were dead in the trespasses and sins. Dead. Spiritually dead. In which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air.

That's Satan. The spirit that is now in work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

[13 : 11] Paul is dividing mankind into two categories. And he's speaking to these Ephesian Christians about who they once were. He characterizes them in various ways.

Dead. Walking in sin. In the way of the world. A worshiper of God's enemy. Living in passions of the flesh.

And by nature children of wrath. Categorically enemies of God. And therefore deserving of God's due wrath.

But then, the beginning of verse 4, there's a precious, and I think too often ignored, conjunction.

But, even though that is true, even though it is the case that before believing in Christ, you were an enemy of God, God.

[14 : 13] But, God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

Did it. Brought dead people to life. The greatest miracle we see happening today, right? We were once dead, we have been made alive with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved. Undeserved benevolence. Kindness being shown, where kindness cannot be expected.

By that grace, you have been saved. And raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

Why? So that, in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us, in Christ Jesus.

[15 : 17] In the coming ages, immeasurable riches of his grace. That he might put on display his graciousness. Grace upon grace.

If you're in Christ this morning, this is why you are in Christ. God is showing himself to the world to be a gracious God.

And he supplies it in plenty. Now, the astute watcher of me, probably notices when I come up with another book.

So here it is. I read to you from it last week. This is the Pilgrim's Progress. Aside from the scripture, it's my favorite book. If you don't get it, spend some time with me.

I'll convince you otherwise. Or I'll try it very least. I don't want to read to you just a little excerpt from it. This is to speak of this term, grace upon grace in the life of a Christian.

[16 : 17] What does it look like? And there's a little picture as the main character, whose name is Christian, goes to the house of the interpreter. And the interpreter takes him around the house and teaches him some things of what it means to follow Christ.

And so this short little bit. Then I saw in my dream that the interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a room where there was a fireplace.

The flames from the fireplace grew larger and hotter, even though there was someone continually throwing water on it to try to quench it. Then said Christian, what does this mean?

The interpreter answered, this fire is the work of grace that God accomplishes in the heart. He who throws water on the flames to try to extinguish it is the devil.

But as you see, the fire burns higher and hotter despite his efforts to put it out. Now, let me show you the reason for that.

[17 : 22] So the interpreter took Christian to the other side of the wall where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand from which he secretly funneled oil into the fire. Then Christian asked, what does this mean?

The interpreter answered, this is Christ who continually with the oil of his grace maintains the work already begun in the heart.

No matter what the devil tries to do, the gracious work that Christ is doing in the souls of his people only increases. You saw that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire?

That is to teach you that it is hard for the one being tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul. Whether or not we acknowledge it to be true, if God has begun a good work in you, he will bring it to completion at the day of Christ.

That's Philippians 1.6. Grace upon grace. Immeasurable, abundant grace is received from Christ.

[18 : 29] The fullness of grace and truth. John, to further exalt this work of Christ, underscores it with a comparison in verse 17.

A comparison to the law of Moses. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The law was given through Moses. It's what we often refer to as the Old Covenant. That covenant that was God would be Israel's people if they would keep his law.

Much of the Old Testament's aim is to show us that they did not keep his law and that they were not able to keep his law. The law's ultimate purgifies that law that is written on our hearts so that when we are confronted by it, we cannot flee to frail excuses.

The law is an exposor of our sin. It is an accuser. It's meant to serve us in this way. It's to show us our deadness.

[19 : 43] We're walking in the way of the world, not in the way of God, that we would flee to Christ for our salvation. I read to you last week, kind of in a sweeping, hurried summary from Galatians chapter 3.

I'll do so again to make the point. There Paul writes in verse 23, Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

The law was given through Moses. It does not set us free, but rather makes us captives. If you try to justify yourself before God by the standard of the law, on your own, you will miserably fail.

You have failed even probably in the moments you're sitting here. Praise God, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on in Galatians 3, verse 24, So then the law was our guardian until Christ came.

[20 : 58] And the picture here is of a schoolmaster or of a person hired to oversee a young man while he's being taken to adulthood.

Kind of a tutor, a guardian, until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.

declared righteous by faith. He goes on, But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

Now, let's not lose sight of the fact that John is still talking about the incarnation. incarnation. I have argued that it is of vital importance to get the incarnation of Jesus right as a foundation for our salvation.

I said, the unity of Jesus' person ensures the efficacy of his work. Maybe you'll remember me using that word. But how so?

[22 : 10] Why make such a fuss about all of this? Why have Christians throughout the history of the church contended for a proper view of the incarnation of Christ?

The nature of the embodied Son of God matters because of the nature of God the Father who, in his simplicity, is always just blessed and always merciful.

Now, when we speak of God's simplicity, we don't mean simple in that he's dumb. It's not at all what we're referring to at all. In another sense, we could speak of God's great complexity not even to be understood.

His ways are above our ways. What we mean when we talk about God's simplicity is that he doesn't change. He is always who he is at all times.

We've developed this a lot even in John chapter 1. We're becoming he is not. He is. Always what he is at all times. He can't set aside part of who he is at one time and then another.

[23 : 24] He's always just. He's always merciful, gracious, kind, loving. All at the same time.

So, if God, the Father, is going to forgive sin, he has to be who he is all the time when he does it. So, when he forgives our sin, beloved, he doesn't merely pass over it and forget about it. He doesn't cast it off to the side because if he does, then he'd be betraying his justice, part of his very nature. He must punish sin. It's right and proper that he does so. There's a trend right now amongst parents.

It's often called parenting with grace or you might hear gentle parenting is sometimes the nomenclature. And the suggestion is that we can teach our children something of the gospel by forgetting about their infractions against us, which is not a display of the gospel at all.

[24 : 38] A proper display of the gospel if even one of my sons disobey and I'm telling that they disobeyed, I snatch one of their brothers and I give them the punishment that is due them. I maintain justice in the home while also being merciful.

God cannot stop being who he is at any given point. And frankly, he would cease to be God if this was the case.

So God has to punish our sin. Has to do it. He has to maintain his justice as he's being merciful. So how is this accomplished? He sends his very own son. Jesus Christ. Fully God and fully man. Now, it matters, his humanity matters, because he needed to step into our place, be a propitiation for us, bear God's wrath on our behalf.

[25 : 41] He has to be a substitute for us. We're going to read a text that speaks about this in just a moment. Further, for him to die and pay the penalty for our sin wasn't quite enough.

Hear me out. Don't clip that. Hear me out. We also need to keep God's law. Remember that Old Testament covenant that I quickly mentioned before?

God will be our God if we keep his law. The law has a function. It serves in our lives as a guardian to bring us to Christ because we need righteousness to be before God.

Having our sin canceled brings us up to zero. We now have nothing in the account, but we need perfection credited to us.

A thing we cannot do. We can't accomplish it. We've proven that we cannot accomplish it. And so Jesus, in his humanity, kept the law.

[26 : 45] It's so important. Sacrificial death, perfect life. He did it on our behalf. That's why the humanity matters so much for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How about the deity? Why does the deity matter so much? It's because when God poured out his wrath for our sin, our sin was due infinite wrath.

It was due wrath forever. So how do you pay that penalty? three hours on a cross. It's not something you and I could possibly accomplish.

We don't have the ability because we're not infinite. Christ himself, fully God, is infinite. And therefore he could drink up all of that infinite wrath on our behalf.

We couldn't do it. He had to do it for us. Christ's deity and his humanity must be understood for the gospel to make any sense whatsoever.

[27 : 54] Let me take you to Romans chapter three. You may appreciate being there with me. I'm jumping into the middle of an argument that Paul began back in chapter one and verse sixteen.

So you won't have it in its completion. I'd really encourage you to study this more if it's foreign to you. I'm going to pick up in verse twenty-one of Romans three. There Paul says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

What he's saying is we become righteous not through the law, although the law and prophets point us to the way we do become righteous. We become righteous through faith, verse twenty-two, in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Verse twenty-three, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We did not keep, right? It's impossible. Every single one of us have sinned and we fall short of that standard, the righteousness of God through the law.

[29 : 25] Praise God, it's been manifested apart from the law. And are justified, verse twenty-four, justified, declared righteous, this is a judicial term, justified by his grace.

There it is again, grace upon grace, grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins, that is he was dealing with Israel patiently, they were hoping in a future promise. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier, merciful, just and merciful, of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Right? So righteousness, right, apart from the law, in Christ because he kept the law and he was put forward as a sacrifice on our behalf. I think you can maybe see why I gave you a clearer, simpler explanation before reading this text.

[30 : 46] Verse twenty-seven, then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. We bring nothing to the equation, we have nothing to boast in.

I can't boast in my faith, God has saved me. To what end? The glory of God.

The glory of God. Back in our text and verse eighteen, there John writes, no one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side.

He has made him known. When we behold Jesus, we behold God. John's gospel records Jesus making this case again and again.

[31 : 53] Do you want access to God, Jesus says? Come to me. Colossians one and verse fifteen, there Paul declares that Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

He has made him known. Some translations say he has explained him. That's because the Greek word here is where we get our word exegesis from, which is the way we try to preach, open a text, explain to you what the text means.

So think of it in those terms, right? Jesus Christ has explained to us God, shown to us God's character in the saving of a people for his praise.

So in closing and briefly, there's three things to be thinking about applying in this coming week.

First, I want to strongly encourage you to behold God in the Bible.

This book is where we get to take up and see the life of Christ. both Old Testament and New is pointing us to him, that we might behold him and have our affections turned toward him.

[33 : 18] Be regularly in this book. If you have the spirit of Christ, he is very pleased to exalt Christ as you take up this word and read.

It's not enough. Perhaps 40. It's not enough. This is the broadest way that the church can be disciplined. It's extremely important.

Coming together and opening God's word together is central, but it can't be it. You need to be regularly in this word, taking up and reading, beholding God, meeting with him in the text on a regular basis.

I've told you before, most of the counseling that I do, I ask the question, how regularly are you reading the Bible? And the regular answer is not very much. Not very much.

Let's start there. Take up and read. See how it shapes you into the image of Christ. Secondly, behold God in the church.

[34 : 21] And by that I mean the local assembly of those who God has saved. If we will have the proper eyes for it, when we come together, there are myriad, lots of pictures of God's saving work.

God's work all around us. So many people are seeking for experience when they come to church. Should church be lively? Should it be compelling?

Sure. Any of those things. But is the point that we put on a show that you come and consume? No. No. Who is in this room together matters.

Because as you are members of our church, most of you are your pictures of God's grace. You see the way that Christ has worked in you across time, in this past week.

It matters that you come and participate in the worship of God. It naturally grows his people, day in, day out, practicing these types of habits.

[35 : 28] And then lastly, behold God in your proclamation of the truth. We need to be sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Our affection should be high for him and we should want to talk about him. And we're either going to experience seed sown on good soil that bears fruit, seeing the spirit of Christ change the hearts of people, see them turn away from their sin, turn toward, embrace Christ, faith in him, or we're going

to suffer for the name.

People are not going to want to hear what we have to say. They're going to want to go the way of the world and they're going to hate us because Jesus has called us out of the world. And either way, we get to see God as we go forth and share this good news of Jesus Christ.

So behold God in the Bible, behold God in the church, behold God in your proclamation, and let's be sure that we get the incarnation right. Let's pray.

Thank you.