

1 John 3:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

I am finding this a hard passage to leave. I keep coming back to it and seeing more of its depth and beauty and help in living the Christian life.

This morning most of the focus will be on verse 3. Because verses 1 and 2 are not given to us as truths on their own. They are not separated from the day to day mundane Christian lives we live. No, they are the **rich fuel** that enable us to do the difficult things we need to do in the Christian life.

We have a flow of thought here that leads to a kind of living. And that kind of living is core to discerning who a true follower of Christ **is** and who is an **imposter**. We see the tests in 1 John over and over. John does not even hesitate to proclaim that the Christian life is a changed life, a transformed life. It is that **of necessity**.

How in the world could God do what verse 1 tells us **He has done**. And have **in store for us** what verse 2 says He has in store for us. And have that have no effect in our present lives? That is impossible.

I am convinced that we fail so often in our trials and temptations because we allow the **influence of the world and the flesh and the devil to limit our scope**. We become fixated on this thing that is in front of our noses to the exclusion of all of the truths that scripture continually calls **our focus** to.

And scripture does not say **kind things** to us when we do that. It calls what we do "unbelief". And that is what it is. No one who is acting upon belief in what God has said would ever decide to **knowingly sin** or **knowingly fail a test**. Something must happen first for this to be the result.

Suppose you were offered a Snickers bar today. And it came with the condition that if you do not eat that Snickers bar today, you can trade it in for \$10 million tomorrow. What rational adult would, if they believed the promise, eat the Snickers bar? None of us would. The only way we would eat the Snickers bar would be if we did not believe the promise.

The point is, if we believe what God has said about **who He has made us**, and if we believe that **we will receive what He has promised us**, we cannot help but have changed behavior as a result of that belief.

John tells us that God has put His **new life in us**. We are told in other places in scripture that we are **adopted** children. **That** explanation focuses on the fact that **God chose us to** be part of His family.

But what we have seen in this text is a different explanation. We have been **born of God**. We have had a spiritual birth caused by God. And now we are something **new**, something **supernatural**. This truth is worthy of stepping back and gazing upon its beauty. It is colossal grace.

Then we are told by John **what we will be**. And all the details aren't in yet, but we are going to be **like Christ**. So when we see Christ there will be **another** whopping change done to us. And we will live in that state forever in fellowship with Christ and the Father.

Now we arrive at verse 3. Look at it closely. What is the first word? **AND**.

And is a **connecting** word. It means that verse 3 is connected to verses 1 and 2. In fact the reasoning in the rest of 1 John is that if 1 and 2 are true, it is impossible for 3 not to be true. They are not options. They are explanations of reality.

There have always been bad theologies circulating that describe holiness as an **option** in the Christian life. You can take the **high road** which means you obey God and enjoy the blessings of that. But you really don't **have to**. You can also choose to have this world and not worry too much about doing what God says. Both ways get you to heaven. But with one you get better seats. John dispels those kinds of heresies. You cannot be a believer and remain unchanged. It simply is impossible, given the enormity of what scripture says happens to a believer at rebirth.

Now we have just been to a spiritual **high place** in verse 1. We were at a **behold** place, a place of **wonder and awe**. Then verse 2 tells us the glorious outcome of what is revealed in verse 1. Can you think of a place in scripture where the disciples had a similar experience?

Luke 9:28-42 (NKJV)

28 Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He (Christ) took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.

30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah,

31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about

to accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.

33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said.

34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud.

35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

36 When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

Here was a "**behold**" event for the disciples. They saw behind the curtain. They saw the reality of the identity of Jesus. And they were taken back by it. And look at **their first impulse**, their first reaction, the first thing that came to their minds. **Let's build a building**. Let's put a box around this thing so we can live this life basking in this reality. Just **Moses, Elijah, Jesus and us**. Let's keep this **behold** moment to bask in and to live in. But we do not need to get back to the mission. We do not need to worry about the millions who need a savior. No, let's allow this to be **all that we need** of spirituality.

That is the human response. Maybe it is even the fleshly response. It is all about Jesus and me and what Jesus can do to enrich my life.

But look at the rest of the passage.

37 Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him.

38 Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child.

39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams *at the mouth*, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him.

40 So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."

41 Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here."

42 And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed *him*. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.

Look at this. This is **the next day**. No break. No basking. No seclusion of this **superior spirituality**.

Immediately they were thrown right back into the day to day reality of **broken people** living in a **broken planet** experiencing life in all of its brokenness. And Jesus comes from the **Behold** experience and gets to work with doing the real business of spiritual change in the life of hurting humans. My point is this, the **Behold revelations** are given to **prepare us for greater usefulness**, not to distract us into **self serving spiritual gymnastics**. There is much work to be done before we get to live in the reality that has been revealed to us. The behold reality is real. It is a true vision. It is amazingly rich. The world around us won't get it. But for right now, we have work to do. Now lets look at our text again.

³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Martyn Lloyd Jones says that the extent to which I have really **grasped** the teaching of **verse 2** is proven by the extent to which I **implement** verse 3. We can put it this way: it is what **we are** and what **we do** that really proclaims our **belief and our profession**.

I know we all know this. And it preaches well. But who of us are really gripped with the tragic revelation when we live badly? Who of us really believes that **what we have done** reveals something about ourselves that is truly **wicked**? When we quit trying to purify ourselves, when we give into the temptation in front of us, no matter what it is, who of us consider all the implications of that moral failure? Isn't it more like us to just chalk it up to, oh yes. I know I am a Christian. My failure really isn't any evidence of anything. God will forgive. He really does not expect me to live obedient in this thing. He knows how hard it is for me.

No matter how much we respond this way, this is not what this verse says.

³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Look at your life this morning. Are you purifying yourself? Does your sin bother you more this year than it did last year? Are you more sensitive to violating God's Word this year than last year? Is purity growing in your life, or diminishing? These are important questions.

Note how this verse is worded. It does not say if verses 1 and 2 are true you **ought** to purify yourself. No. We have here a logical necessity. If a and b are true, c is the result 100% of the samples. That is the idea here.

Then why do we fail so much? It is because our belief is defective. The problem isn't how we are wired. The problem isn't that the temptation is too

strong or the trial is too hard. It is that **we do not trust the words of our Master**. It is really that simple. The problem with us is not so much with what **we do** or **do not do**. The problem with us is what **we believe** or **do not believe**. Our primary focus in our lives cannot be on living up to some conduct. The conduct is the symptom. We must focus most on what we, in our heart of hearts, believe to be true.

The more we focus all of our attentions on achieving a certain behavior, the more likely we are to fail at it. But if we start where scripture starts, we start with **who we are**. Then we move to where we are headed. If we keep those two items in the forefront, behavior will follow as it should. If **reverse the focus**, we will fail, even if we are behaving morally, because we will allow our pride to take all the credit for the success.

Can you see the place that **doctrine** takes here? There are always movements in Christianity to disassociate mental cognitive content from true spirituality. The cry is, don't give me doctrine. Just give me Jesus. The problem is that teaching about Jesus is doctrine. It is laid out cognitively. It must be understood in the mind to have any lasting effect. What John is telling us here, too, is that **doctrine** is absolutely necessary for Godly living. In fact Godly living is **absolutely dependent** upon believing and understanding good doctrine. So if a person hopes to live a godly life sheerly based on spiritual experiences and God zaps, that person will fail. And they will fail because the hope that a person has is a direct result of clear doctrine.

³ **And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

Our belief in good doctrine results in hope, and the one who has this hope lives congruently with the hope if it is true belief.

I would make another mention here that **hope** is **always future**. It is an earnest expectation, it is a wildly looking forward to something to come. I suspect that we rob ourselves of much of our **fuel for faithfulness** when we focus on the here and now and do not fix our attentions on eternity.

We in America may have a **disadvantage** here. Most of our circumstances are actually pretty good compared to the rest of the world. When is the last time you went hungry by necessity? When is the last time your cupboard or refrigerator had no food in it? When is the last time you had to face life naked because you had no clothes? When was your house not a protection from the cold? When did you last fear being picked up by the police for posting something spiritual on facebook? When is the last time you feared the government would come in and take all your possessions or kill you because you did not agree with them?

Do you see what I mean? We have **dream lives** compared to a large portion of the world's population.

So when we face difficult circumstances we see it as an **anomaly**. You can tell by how bent out of shape we get to life events. It is as if we think that with just a few of **God's tweaks** we could have a wonderful life here and now. Our brothers and sisters in places like Syria have no such misconceptions. The only real focal point they have for improved living conditions is **future**. Many of them have a better grasp on the **need** for hope and the **power** of hope than we do.

Every day I live I become more convinced that if our minds are not focused on how God will make our faithfulness **pay off in the future**, that we will live powerless Christian lives, bobbing and dipping with all the oncoming waves of life. **Hope** is the thing that provides a deep seated joy beneath all of the unhappiness we experience. It does not **remove** grieving and sorrow. But it **outlasts it** and it **outperforms it**. Hope is the quality that tells us that every cost we pay is worth it. We are not being stupid to pay the cost. We are being smart. That is the preaching of hope.

Now the next thing to notice is that this hope inspires intentional action.

There are, again, all kinds of errant doctrines out there that teach that what we need to do is let go and let God. It says that the secret to spirituality is passivity. We must surrender passively and let God do all the things needing done in our lives. While this approach seems ultra spiritual, it is not biblical. Certainly we must surrender our lives and decisions to God. He is Master, after all. But all through scripture we see that true spirituality **acts**. If we look at the parable of the talents we find that the one who was **most passive** was condemned. If he had belief and trust in his Master, he should have gone to work with the money. No. Passivity was condemned. I have said often and will continue to say it that **true spiritual growth** requires **mental disciplines**. It requires examining what we think. It requires tracking bad thoughts down and replacing them with true thoughts. It is **action**.

The person who has this hope PURIFIES HIMSELF. It does not say he waits for the Holy Spirit to zap him with purification. He is not left reliant upon an outside force to initiate change. No. He is to count on the Holy Spirit's **presence** doing that which scripture promises the Holy spirit will do.

Now there is something interesting here.

In 1 John 1:9 it promises that if we confess our sins God is faithful to forgive our sins and cleanse us. But in our text we are to purify ourselves. Martyn Lloyd Jones says:

To cleanse is to deliver, on the surface, from evil and pollution and all that is unworthy. Purification, on the other hand is something that happens within, in the spirit and in the mind and in the essential nature. Therefore to purify means, in a sense, not only to get rid of the tarnishing effect of sin upon me, but also to avoid sin in my whole nature and my whole being, so what I am told is that, as a Christian I inevitably purify myself.

What this is talking about is living in such a way as to please God. It isn't focused only on the technicalities. It wants to please God at the core of who we are. We don't want to do those things that aren't technically against the law in a way that violates that which is most important to God. While it may be lawful, we seek to do that which is the **best** and the **highest**. That which will please Christ.

Obviously I am borrowing much from Mr Jones this morning. But it is only because what he says is so good.

He says that the one that is seeking to purify himself ultimately says this: **I want my nature to be such that I shall love the light and hate the darkness instead of loving the darkness and hating the light. I want my whole being to be a positive desire to be like Christ and to be well pleasing in His sight. That, according to John, is the feeling of the men and women who truly understand this promise of the glory that yet awaits them.**

And how do we do such a thing? Well everything about it is active, not passive.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Notice here we cleanse ourselves. This verse is saying what John is saying. And look at what Paul said in Colossians.

Colossians 3:1-5 (NKJV)

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth:

fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

We see the same mindset as in 1 John. Since God has already raised us from the dead, since we were born anew, since this is true, then change your perspective to an **eternal** perspective. Look out at the horizon to gain perspective. Think about where you are headed. Think about your final destination. Keep that continually in your mind. Reckon that into every decision you make. How will this affect me in eternity?

Then Paul reaches his “therefore”.

Put to death your members which are on the earth. Remember Jason Van Dorsten’s talk. Kill sin or sin will be killing you.

We can see from scripture that this stuff will **not just happen** by itself. We must 1- identify it for what it is. And 2. Do everything we can to respond according to faith and not flesh.

This is a whole lot like raising kids. If we expect that our kids are going to be obedient by nature, we are **not** going to be prepared for what is ahead. But if we believe what scripture says, we won’t be surprised when they gravitate to the negative. We will expect that **raising** them and **loving** them means disciplining them until they get the point. It is a continual struggle for which we must be **always vigilant**.

Well we are just like that. We gravitate to idolatry. We gravitate to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life like a duck takes to water. We cannot trust any of our natural inclinations. We have to check all of our reactions against what scripture says. We have to double check all of our statements for truth. We need to continually examine our motives for selfishness. The job is relentless. If we are not doing this, we are probably failing. Our old man is truly that persistent.

Paul also said:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NKJV)

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Do you see how eternity is always woven into the solution for our current state. We really must train our minds to think ahead. We have no **fuel** for our minds if we do not. We will give in if we do not do what scripture says. We must develop **eternity thinking, eternity** reactions, **eternity** evaluations, if we are to live life properly here and now. If this life is all there is, we have no

motivation to live a Godly life. If I am the same person I was before the day I called out to God, I have no power to live the Christian life.

But since all of the promises of God are true, scripture tells us we have everything we need for life and Godliness.

2 Peter 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

Here we see it again, **eternity** woven into the thinking that we are to appeal to **now**. Where do we get all the things we need to live a godly life, to live a life victorious over sin and self? It comes through **knowing Christ** and **trusting the promises** that He has made to us. Our victory is contingent upon us believing those promises. As we believe them and live accordingly, we become partakers of the life of God, the divine nature. And we show ourselves to be new people, overcomers in this life.

How much do we factor in eternity in what we face every day? Maybe some of our failures are a result of not seeing our lives from an eternal perspective. What are you obsessing about? What do you not go through a single day without thinking about, without talking about? Where is your thinking about eternity? How does it factor in?

It really is **that important**. In fact it is vitally necessary. To live the Christian life the way it is to be lived is to **factor in** eternity in everything we do. We ought to be an oddity to the worldlings we rub shoulders with. Because the things that would destroy them may sadden us, but they never knock us off stride. Our focus is further out. We are not living for what we **can have now**. We are pilgrims and sojourners. We are strangers in the land just hanging out for a while. But our minds are set on real estate that we don't have to buy. Our hearts are set on a retirement that is eternal. Our hope is set on Jesus Christ Himself.