

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Purifying Hope, Part 1

Scripture: 1 John 2:28

Code: 62-22

First John is our Bible study on these Sunday nights, and I have always looked forward to Sunday night, it's a little more informal time, a little less structure, perhaps, to what it is I preach, but no less critical and important as we glean an understanding of the precious Word of God. And here we are in 1 John, the Apostle John's first epistle and we are looking at verses 28, the end of chapter 2, down to verse 3 of chapter 3, a section that really belongs together, entitling that section, "The Purifying Hope...The Purifying Hope."

Let me read the text for you. "And now, little children, abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practice righteousness is born of Him. See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God? And such we are. For this reason the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God but it has not appeared as yet what we will be or shall be. We know that when He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself just as He is pure."

This is about a purifying hope. It's about the Second Coming, as noted in verse 28, and repeated again in verse 2. We are waiting for His coming, we are waiting for His appearing. And it is this hope that purifies. Purification, holiness, righteousness obviously is the expectation of our God, it is what sanctification is. It is the progressive decrease of sin and increase of holiness. What seems to be missing, however, in our popular Christian culture today is any concern for holiness, any concern for purity of life.

I had a little fellowship this week with a wonderful gentleman, a wonderful theologian and teacher of the Word of God from the U.K., the United Kingdom. And he asked me, "Who are the men whose lives and ministries are particularly defined by holiness?" Who are the men in America? And he wasn't talking about some kind of smarmy sort of self-styled kind of piety, but who are the men who are known for their holiness? Their purity? And, you know, it was a very hard question to answer. If you talk about big picture of evangelicalism and the names of people that are widely know, I'm not sure that you can identify any of them as having particularly an identification with a call to holiness. And yet it is to that that all of us are called. There certainly are enough verses in the Bible to remind us of that, but just in case you may have let them slip from the front of your memory, let me remind you of this. Romans 12:1 and 2, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present

your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship and be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." We are called to offer our lives as a sacrifice without blemish and without spot, a holy sacrifice.

And, of course, the familiar words come to us in Ephesians 5:27 that tell us the Lord desires to present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless. It is the Lord's desire to have a holy church, a holy people. We are identified by Peter as a holy nation. Second Corinthians 7:1 it says, "Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." It was the Apostle Paul writing the Thessalonians who said these words, "God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification and a call to holiness." And then those most familiar words in 1 Peter 1, "But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, 'You shall be holy for I am holy.'" A call to holiness. We are told that it is our responsibility to draw near to God in Hebrews chapter 10, but we are to draw near, verse 22 says, with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. We are called to holiness. We are to be fitted for holiness. We are to be separated from sin unto righteousness.

The obligation is clear, it is repeated again and again and again. We know that the Lord desires and has called to Himself a people to be holy, a holy nation. And there are a couple of motives set forth for us in Scripture, several. One motive to be considered is the motive of fear...the motive of fear. In that very same passage in 1 Peter 1 where Peter says be holy, be holy for I am holy, verse 17 he says, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." If you are calling holy God your Father, then you better conduct yourselves in fear. Fear is a legitimate motive for holiness. Fear of what? Fear of God's chastening, fear that God will have a holy reaction to your unholy conduct.

This is nothing new. Go all the way back to Leviticus and this is established back in the Pentateuch, the original books of Scripture. In the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus it says, "I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord, I am the Lord. Thus...says verse 30 at the end of the chapter...you're to keep My commandments that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you so as not to defile yourselves why I am the Lord your God." And what He's saying is you're going to have to answer to Me.

And then in chapter 19 verse 2, "You shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy. I am holy. I do not look favorably on unholiness." And repeatedly, "I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord, I am the Lord, I am the Lord," over and over again in the chapter all the way through, all the way through. And at the end, "You shall do no wrong, you shall observe My statutes and do them...why?...cause I am the Lord." That is to say, "I am the sovereign

Judge."

In the next chapter, chapter 20, He says, "You shall...in verse 7...consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God." In chapter 20 verse 26, "You are to be holy to Me for I the Lord am holy and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine." Chapter 21 verse 6, "They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. They shall be holy for He is holy." And so it goes verse after verse, chapter after chapter, on through Leviticus.

So the mandate to holiness is clear. And holiness means separation from sin. "Be holy for I am holy." And what that means is not only are we to emulate God, but to remember that a holy God is going to have a holy reaction to our unholiness. And that reaction is defined for us in Scripture as chastening. And even as judgment, if you come to the Lord's table, for example, in an unholy manner, you eat and drink judgment to yourself. You will answer to God for your unholiness. Talking to believers at this point. Be holy because God is holy, and holds that holy standard high.

So there is that fear of God that is a motive to our holiness. Coupled with that is another motive and it is the motive that comes through in this text and that is hope. Fear is connected to hope. We will face the Lord. We have this hope. It is our Christian hope. When He appears we're going to see Him. When He comes, we're going to be joined to Him. And that hope should have a purifying effect. Not only should we have a healthy fear of God's chastening in this life, but we should have a healthy respect for the limitations that our sin will put on the life to come. If you really live in the light of the return of Christ, if you really live in the light of His appearing and His coming, if you really recognize that some day you're going to face the judge and your life is going to be evaluated as to what part of it can be eternally rewarded, if you really understand that much of what your life has been made of, wood, hay and stubble will be consumed in a millisecond and all that will be left will be that which had eternal value and your eternal reward will be based only upon that. If you understand that, that ought to be a motive. You're going to live forever with the eternal reward for whatever level of holiness you were committed to in this life. The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy of that when He told him to preach the Word and he said, "Here's your motive. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead by His appearing and His Kingdom." I'm telling you, Timothy, preach the Word because you're going to stand one day before the judge and your eternal reward is going to be predicated upon your faithful service.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 11, Paul writes, "Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you, and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all men, just as we also do for you." That's part of your holiness, living in love. "So that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." He says, "Look, you need to live a holy life so that when the Lord comes you will stand before Him unblameable in holiness." We're all going to stand before the Lord, we're all going to be there at the judgment seat of Christ and our lives are going to be

evaluated, we're not going to pay for our sins, Jesus will have paid for them, but all the dross of our life, all of the failures and sins of our life will detract from our eternal reward and it may well be as the Apostle John says later on in another epistle to come, "Look to yourselves that you lose not those things which you have wrought but that you receive a full reward." It is possible that your sin not only will cause you not to earn eternal reward, but your sin will cancel out that reward which you had earned.

Living in the light of eternity is not easy in this society. Very few people, even Christian people, do that. We cling to this life with a vengeance. We do everything we can to pack this life with all the good experiences, benefits and possessions that are conceivable. It's a curse in some ways to live in a materialistic society. I'm always reminded of the time when I flew 35 hours into Kazakstan to do a series of meetings with seventeen hundred pastors from central Asia, meeting, gathering together for the first pastors' conference in the history of central Asia. And I was to teach everything about the church, everything that God had planned for the church. Six straight days of teaching these seventeen-hundred people. And the cold and the rain outside was the warmth of the truth of God on the inside. About the third or fourth day, the leaders came to me and they said, "When do we get to the good part?"

This is not what you want to hear. After three days of intense teaching that they're still waiting for something to be good. I said, "What do you mean the good part?"

They said, "The part about heaven."

They didn't have anything. I was staying with a widow, but she had only been widowed a matter of a few months before. There were two of us staying in her home. She was waiting in long lines to find a little piece of horsemeat and a few eggs to feed us each day. There wasn't anything in this world that she was holding to, she was living in the hope of heaven. She was living in the hope for eternal reward and the reunion with her beloved husband.

We in this particular part of the world find it very difficult to live in that kind of hope. Life is very comfortable for us. And everything is dangled in front of us to keep us so well entertained that we have little interest in what lies ahead. But living in the light of heaven is a motive for purity. Living with the realization that you're going to face the Lord and be rewarded eternally on the basis of your sanctification, your holiness is in itself a motivation so that our eschatology, our hope in the return of Christ is not just something to speculate about, it has immense implications ethically and behaviorally.

And so, for John here, this hope is part of the moral test. How do you know when someone's a Christian? How do you know when they're saved? Well John has been unfolding that for us all through the epistle and will continue to do so. He cycles back through these tests. There are doctrinal tests. You have to believe the right thing about your own sinfulness. You have to believe the right

thing about Jesus Christ. If you don't believe the right thing about your sin and the right thing about Christ, you're not a true Christian no matter what you claim.

There are not only doctrinal tests, there are moral tests, or ethical tests, behavioral tests, things like walking in obedience to the Word of God, things like loving God, loving others and not loving the world. And here's another moral test to determine whether you're a true Christian, living in the light of the return of Christ, waiting, as Paul put it, for His Son from heaven. Are we living in that waiting expectation? That is a critical element to motivating us to holiness.

As a young boy, my grandfather recited a poem to me and it was a poem that gripped my heart. It...it was a poem that had so much sadness and pathos in it that I never forgot it and without ever consciously remembering it and I don't think I've even thought about it until just this moment for years, my Grandfather's poem went something like this: "When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ and He shows me the plan for me, the plan of my life as it might have been and I see how I blocked Him here and checked Him there and would not yield my will. Will there be grief in My Savior's eyes, grief though He loves me still? He would have me rich, but I stand there poor, stripped of all but His grace while memory runs like a haunted thing down a path I can't retrace." And then the poem says, "O, Lord, of the years that are left of me, I give them to Thy hand, make me and break me and mold me to the pattern that You've planned."

That struck me hard as a boy. I didn't ever want to stand there before the Lord with just meager offering of my life to receive from Him all the glories of eternity and have shown so little love. This hope is powerful. Yes, we obey out of fear, we don't want chastening. But on the other hand, we obey out of hope, we do want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the full joy. If you've been faithful over little, I'll make you Lord over much."

I don't know about you but I hope...I hope you're not caught up in making the most out of this life and the least out of the life to come cause this one is a breath and it's gone. That one lasts forever.

True believers, says John, believe the right thing about themselves and their sin, they believe the right thing about Christ and His salvation. True believers conduct themselves in obedience to the Word of God and true believers demonstrate love for God and for others and not for the world. And true believers live in hope and are motivated by that hope to purity. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, a very familiar portion of Scripture, says that he was so concerned about this that he says, "I don't care how you judge me, I don't care how other people judge me, I don't care about my own self-judgment." He says, "I'm going to wait...verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 4...until the Lord comes who will both bring to life the things hidden in the darkness, disclose the motives of men's hearts and then each man's praise will come to him from God." And I read that to remind you that God knows the heart. It isn't how many people you've won to Christ, how big your class was, how many people you witnessed to, how much money you gave, it's what was going on in your heart...in your heart.

Now then this is the purifying hope. And it unfolds for us in this text. I know that was a lengthy introduction but I needed to set that in its place. Now I want to look at this purifying hope and just give you five perspectives on it...five perspectives on it. And I'm under no illusions that we'll complete them tonight...which is fine.

The first one is this, and I'm going to give you the features that define our hope. First of all it is secured by abiding...it is secured by abiding. Verse 28, "And now, little children, abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."

When He does appear we want to face Him with confidence. We don't want to shrink away in shame and fear. And the way to make sure that that doesn't happen is to abide in Him, to abide in Him Abide is an old word, it's an Old English word, people don't use it much anymore. It's simply the word remain, or simpler yet, stay, meno is the Greek verb, it means to remain, to stay. And all John is saying is stay in Him, stay faithful. It's a favorite term for John, it's a very favorite term. And I think I can help you to understand its meaning by just reminding you of how John uses it and he uses it a lot.

The fifteenth chapter of the gospel of John is notable for its uses of the verb meno, the word abide, or remain. John 15:4, "Abide in Me, or remain in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, or remains in the vine, no branch is going to bear fruit if it gets cut off, so neither can you unless you remain in Me." Repeats it again in verse 6, "If anyone doesn't remain in Me, he's thrown away as a branch dries up, they gather them, cast them into the fire and they're burned. Verse 7, "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you can ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you." Again the emphasis on remaining. Again down in verse 16, "You didn't chose Me but I chose you, I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain."

What John is saying is, "Stay faithful to Christ, persevere, remain. Now that is expanded greatly in 1 John. Let's go back to 1 John. If you remember, if you've been with us, this has appeared and occurred already numerous times in chapter 2 verse 6, "The one who says he remains in Him, ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walks." If you claim to be in Christ, if you claim to be remaining in Christ, staying faithful to Christ, then you ought to walk in such a way to demonstrate that that is reality. Verse 10, "The one who loves his brother remains in the light." Again the same verb is used. Verse 14, he says, "You know Him who has been from the beginning. I've written to you, young men, because you're strong and the Word of God remains in you." John loves this word, the Word remains in you and you remain faithful to the Word. In other words, there is a connection here that's unbroken. You remain faithful to the truth and the light remains in you. The seventeenth verse, "The world is passing away and its lusts, but the one who does the will of God remains forever." John loves to talk about remaining. And he's dealing with an issue of people who identifies with Christ and disappear, who identify with the gospel and turn against it. And what he is calling for is the real thing.

Real conversion is about staying power, remaining in the truth, remaining faithful. And the truth remaining in you in verse 19, really a key verse, "They went out from us, they were not really of us. If they had been of us they would have...what?...remained with us." Remaining, staying, abiding is the mark of true salvation.

I know through the years this idea of abiding in Christ has been mystified, to be talking about some upper level spiritual experience. It's not that. It just means sustaining your faith in the gospel and the Christ of the gospel. "If they had been of us, they would have remained with us." Verse 24, "As for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning...namely the gospel...if what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in the Son and the Father."

How do you...how do you remain in Christ? How do you remain in a relationship to God? How do you stay there? You stay there by staying committed to the truth. That's what he's saying. Committed to the teaching that you heard, you remain faithful to the truth. Let that...verse 24...remain in you which you heard from the beginning and you will remain in the Son and in the Father." And then down in verse 27, "As for you the anointing which is the Holy Spirit which you received from Him remains in you and you have no need for anyone to teach you but as His anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie and just as it has taught you, you remain in Him."

Don't ever believe in a moment that the matter of divine sovereign salvation does not involve the will of the one being saved, because that's not true. It does. We are called to remain, faithful to the truth, faithful to the Lord of the truth, to abide, to continue. Then in verse 28 he says it again, now our text begins, "Now, little children, remain in Him." Your hope is secured by abiding. It's secured by remaining.

Now in chapter 3 I want to go on with this because I want you to grasp this, verse 6, "No one who remains in Him sins." We'll get to the specifics of what that means a little later, but the idea here is no one who remains in Him has an ongoing, unbroken pattern of sin. If you're one who remains, then you will adhere to the truth and pursue holiness. Verse 9, "No one who is born of God practices sin because His seed remains in Him." Down in verse 14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life." How do we know that? "Because we love the brethren," that's another one of the tests. "He who does not love remains in death." Down in verse 15 he uses it again, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him, staying in him." Verse 17, "Whoever has this world's goods and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God remain or stay or dwell in him?" If you don't have love, it doesn't. And then down in verse 24, "He who keeps His commandments remains in Him and He in him and we know by this that He remains in us by the Spirit He's given." Ah this word is all over the place.

And that's not the end of it. Chapter 4, a few references, verse 12, "If we love one another, God remains in us." Verse 13, "By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us because He's given us His Spirit." Verse 15, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains or stays in him." Verse 16, "And we have come to know and believe the love which God has for us, God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God and God remains in him." That's really amazing, isn't it? And you have similar indications in the second epistle of John, verse 2 he says, "The truth remains in us." Verse 9, he calls and says, "Anyone who goes too far and doesn't remain in the teaching of Christ doesn't have God, the one who remains in His teaching has both the Father and the Son."

It's about remaining. It's about staying faithful. John knows that there are people who are going to identify with the gospel, they're going to identify with Christianity, they're going to identify with the church but they're not going to stay. And the question comes up, were they once saved and lost? What happened? How do we know who's a believer? And John says it's very simple. Eternal life remains in the person who believes the truth and remains faithful to the truth and faithful to the God and the Lord of the truth and the Spirit of the truth. It's about remaining.

True Christians then are identified by abiding. And if someone doesn't, if they go out, reject, deny, they went out because they were not of us, if they had been of us they would have remained with us. This is something like Jesus' words in Matthew 24:13, "The one who endures to the end, he shall be saved." You've asked the question about your children, maybe a spouse, maybe a parent, or friend, relative, yeah there was a time when they made a profession of faith in Christ, there was a time when they quote/unquote went forward, or there was a time when they had some kind of an emotional experience, there was a time when they would have confessed Jesus as Lord. They no longer do that, what's their state? John says it so many times you cannot possibly mistake it, "If they don't remain, they aren't the real thing." It's about remaining. It's about remaining.

Colossians 1 brings Paul into our discussion in most specific terms. Colossians 1 verse 21, "Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He, Christ, has reconciled you in His fleshly body through death in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Then listen to this. "If indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

You cannot draw the conclusion from this that a person can believe for a while and then be an unbelieving believer and still be the possessor of eternal life. "They went out from us because they were never of us." A true Christian remains faithful to the truth, faithful to the Lord, faithful to the Word and God remains faithful to produce and sustain in him fruit, love, joy, holiness, hope, eternal life through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Word. It's about remaining. But this is one of the great wonders of biblical truth that on the one hand we are secure in the eternal promise and purpose and plan of God, but not apart from our own faithfulness. And the warnings and the pleas and the calls to believers to be steadfast, immovable, faithful, loyal, unwavering, continuing

in the faith, abiding in the faith, those calls and those warnings prompt the heart, then energized by the Holy Spirit become the means by which we are secured. That's why you have not only promises of the eternity of our salvation, but commands to remain, to abide, to hold on and be unwavering in our devotion to the truth.

Go back to chapter 2 verse 24. "As for you...John says, and he's talking to, I believe, those who heard and believed the gospel as opposed to the deniers of the gospel in verse 23, those who denied the Son...as for you...assumed who heard and believed the gospel...let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." Hold on to it. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. That is a very important statement. You can't miss the meaning of that. He says your eternal abiding is dependent upon your faithfulness. That is why biblical theology demands not only the doctrine of eternal security but the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. It is the call...I say it again...and the warnings and the pleas and the commands to the believer to remain and abide, heard, believed and energized by the Spirit of God which become the means by which our salvation is secured. You could not be saved apart from believing, right? Even though salvation is a sovereign act of God, even though it is predetermined before the foundation of the world, even though you in your trespasses and sin are so hopelessly dark and dead and blind that you couldn't do anything to awaken yourself or give yourself sight or life, you are in that condition, therefore dependent upon the mercy of God but the means by which the mercy of God comes to you is through your willing response to the gospel which energized by the Holy Spirit becomes the means by which God works the miracle of salvation. It's the same thing. On the one hand we believe in salvation by the sovereignty of God. On the other hand, we know that God only saves those who believe and that all the invitations and calls in the Scripture are calls to believe, not calls to see if you can find somebody who knows whether your name is in the book so you can find out whether you're saved. The same is true here.

In fact, all the great doctrines of the Bible have this sort of inscrutable reality in them that everything that happens to us in terms of redemptive purpose, everything that happens in our salvation, whether it's our justification, our sanctification, or our glorification, all of it depends upon the power and purpose of God and yet not apart from our faith and our abiding and our behaving in a godly fashion. You were saved one day, if you're saved, because you believed. You are being sanctified because you obey. That's why the New Testament is full of commands for people to believe and be saved and full of commands to believers to be obedient to the Word of God. You even when you get to heaven and come to that final phase of salvation, your glorification, are going to find out that what God has prepared for you to be enjoyed forever is going to be a reflection of the level of your faithfulness here. So on the one hand God can say I've given you eternal life and you will abide. On the other hand, He can tell us over and over again, be faithful, be faithful, remain, abide, don't forsake the truth, hold fast, hang on because it is when we hear those calls and hear those commands and our heart cries out to obey, then energized by the Spirit of God working in us those calls and those pleas and those commands become the means by which we remain.

What he is really saying here is prove that you're the real thing. Prove that you're the real thing. Verse 26 he says, "These things I've written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you." Always there are deceivers, always there are deceivers. He's saying don't let anybody deceive you, it's the people who remain who are the real Christians. It's the people, verse 27, who continue to believe the truth because they have an anointing, the Holy Spirit, received from God remaining in them and they don't need human teachers to teach them things other than what the Spirit has revealed in Scripture because the Scripture and the Spirit teaches us all things and it's true and it's not a lie and just as it taught you, you Abide in Him.

It teaches us to abide in Christ, the Christ that's revealed in Scripture. Don't defect to another Christ. Don't defect to another gospel. Don't abandon what you know to be true, what you heard to be true. Back to verse 24, "If you let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning, then you can be sure that you will abide in the Son and in the Father."

Now go back to verse 28. Maybe you understand it better. "And now, little children, abide in Him." Be real. It's emphatic, "And now" is emphatic and introduces a new section. There should be a paragraph there. "And now" introduces a new section. "Little children," *teknia* is John's word for all God's children in general, all who are born of God. He uses it over in chapter 2 verse 12, "I'm writing to you, little children," collecting all believers at all levels of maturity. Now...he says to them...to all of you who are true believers, abide in Him. Be faithful. Be loyal to Christ. Continue to believe the gospel. Continue to obey the Scripture. Continue to love the Lord and one another. And in that continuing you will prove to be the real thing.

Here again we see this profound connection between God's eternal purpose and our responsibility. There's no question that the Lord holds on to His own. Romans 8 says that, doesn't it? "What's going to separate us from the love of Christ?" Is there anything? Romans 8:38 and 39, nothing....nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing is going to change that. John 10, Jesus said, "Look, I have My sheep, I know My sheep, My sheep know Me and My sheep are protected, they're kept by Me and My Father and no man can take them out of My Father's hand." That's the divine security side. And we rejoice in that and we celebrate that. And we're thankful for that. But that doesn't mean we don't have a responsibility. Again I say, the means by which our security is sustained is response, Holy-Spirit energized response to the commands and the warnings and pleas of Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 1:8 it says, "Jesus is coming and to confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, faithful is God through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son." Yes He'll be faithful, yes He'll be faithful. But the means by which He is faithful is our being faithful.

You say, "Well, isn't that just normal for Christians?" No, I think sometimes it's a battle, isn't it? Is it a battle? Do you find it's a battle in your life occasionally to believe the truth of God's Word? Are you

resistant to the Word of God? When the Word of God, for example, comes directly at one of your favorite sins, do you resist that? Are there those moments when you doubt the promises of the Word of God? Are there moments when you doubt your salvation? Or those moments when you may have a fleeting doubt about the deity of Jesus Christ and His provision on the cross? Are there those times of maybe doubting whether or not all that God has promised about the coming glory of heaven is true? Aren't you battling sometimes to hold on to your faith, particularly if you fall into a pattern of sin? And in order to justify your sin you begin to willfully question the reality of the gospel? Sort of get yourself off the hook.

There's a battle going on in every heart of every believer. And we're all called to faithfulness repeatedly in Scripture. We're all called to holiness over and over and over again. And yet, as I said at the very beginning, it seems to be that the whole Christian community nowadays is just absolutely oblivious to this reality. It's like if you prayed a prayer one time somewhere, you know, you're in and holiness has nothing to do with it, and even your theology has nothing to do with it. You can warp the gospel, twist the gospel, pervert the gospel, come up with another gospel. Well that's all right, we're not going to argue with that. Or you can come up with the idea that everyone's going to go to heaven in the end anyway, so there really is no limited gospel. You can sort of live any way you want in your life and it doesn't really matter a lot. Sin up a storm veritably. You can question things in Scripture. You can question the authority of Scripture. You can question sound doctrine and theology, it doesn't seem to matter to some people. It matters to God. Those who belong to Him are faithful to the truth of the gospel. They're faithful to the reality of Jesus Christ and who He is. They have the right Christ, they have the right understanding of their own sinfulness, they have the right understanding of the gospel. They have the right attitude toward the Word of God and it's an attitude of submissive obedience. They have the right attitude toward other believers and the Lord and that is love. And they have the right attitude toward the world and that's they don't love the world. And they live not in the light of this life, but they live in the light of the life to come. They have this hope and they live by hope. This is a hope, John says at the very outset here, this is a hope that is sustained by our remaining. It is secured by our abiding. You can't live in this hope if you're not abiding in Christ. Listen, if you've abandoned Christ, if you've abandoned the true gospel, if you've abandoned the true understanding of who Jesus is, if you've decided to live your own life in sin, you have no right to this hope. You have no reason to look forward to the appearing of Jesus Christ that is coming because it's going to be your terminal judgment. That's what he's saying. Don't kid yourself and don't let anybody deceive you.

This hope, this being able to stand, as verse 28 says, with confidence and not shrink away from a returning Christ is predicated on your remaining faithful, enduring to the end. We will press the duty of abiding, even though we believe in the doctrine of eternal security, even though we believe in sovereign salvation, and a plan from before time began because the Bible presses the responsibility of abiding. I can't live my life as if the decree of God was in my hand and I was just following some pattern that had been established. All I can do is respond to the Scripture. And it says, "Apart from the elective purpose of God, you'll never be saved unless you repent and believe." Apart from the

sanctifying intention of the Spirit of God, you'll never grow into Christ's likeness until you subdue the flesh and follow holiness. And you will never stand before the Lord when He returns to receive His reward with confidence and without shame, having a just hope unless you sustain an abiding faith in Christ and the gospel. Privileges do not cancel obligations, they increase them.

And so, John gives us this very important principle. And it's not really new to the Scripture. It's not really new at all. I could give you many illustrations, but as always, I don't have the time to do that. I can give you a few. I'm thinking of Luke 22, comes to mind. The Lord says to Peter, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." That sounds good to me, right? My guess is that if Jesus prays that Peter's faith won't fail, it won't fail. Right? Because He's going to know what the Father's will is and He's got the power to make sure it doesn't happen. And yet a few verses later Jesus has just said, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not," He turns right around and says to Peter, "Pray that you don't enter into temptation." That seems almost contradictory, doesn't it? On the one hand He says...Look, I prayed that your faith isn't going to fail. And from a sovereign standpoint, it's not going to fail. It's not going to fail because I am interceding for you. It's not automatic, it takes His passionate consistent intercession, but I'm also telling you your part is pray that you not get into a situation of temptation that could devastate your faith. Those are critically important to understand, both of them.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:13, "God is faithful. God will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." God is always going to overpower your temptation, He's always going to give you a way out, that's verse 13. Verse 14 says, "Flee idolatry, get out of there." Why? Because it has implications. It's destructive. But you just said God will be faithful and I'll never have more than I'm able to handle. Oh that's the sovereign side of it and again I say to you, the promises of God are not apart from the obedience of His people.

In fact, in Jude, maybe this is a good place to stop since we didn't even get started, we can stop. Stop at the beginning, I guess. Look at verse 21, it's really amazing...amazing verse. Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Does that startle you? I mean, if you're deep into Reformed Theology, you're looking for an oxygen hose on that one. You're gasping here. What do you mean keep yourselves in the love of God? You have to abide, you have to remain in the place of obedience and the place of truth and the place of blessing and away from the mockers and the scorners and the false teachers and the ungodly lusters and the divisive and those void of the Holy Spirit. You have to build yourselves up, verse 20, in the most holy faith and you have to pray in the Holy Spirit and you have to keep yourselves in the love of God. All with a view to waiting anxiously for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life, looking forward to the future.

Man, sounds like it's all on my shoulders here. Verse 24, "Now to Him who is able to keep you." Isn't that something? He just said in verse 21 keep yourselves. Now he says in verse 24, "Now unto Him who is able to keep you." And He will keep you from stumbling and He will make you stand in the

presence of His glory, blameless with great joy because He is the only God our Savior and He'll do it through Jesus Christ our Lord and to Him we give glory, majesty, dominion, authority before time and now and forever, amen. Wow! That great benediction. He's able to keep us from stumbling, why in the world does He say, "Keep yourselves." Because the God who keeps His people, keeps His people through the energy of the Holy Spirit in response to their will. This is such powerful truth. Grace is not static. It is a dynamic operative power and it works through our lives to keep us in the love of God, to keep us building up our most holy faith, to keep us praying in the Spirit, to keep us away from those void of the Holy Spirit who cause divisions, those who are worldly minded, those who follow ungodly lusts. It protects us from mockers and scoffers and liars and false teachers who would steal our faith. But not apart from our own will. And that is really essentially what all men when he said to the Philippians, work out your salvation. God put it in, now you work it out with fear and...what?...and trembling. No, you don't want to lose this salvation. If you're real, you're going to battle in the strength of the Spirit to hold it fast to the end.

In Titus, one final one, Titus 2, "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men." And what does salvation do? "Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." What a glorious text, isn't it? Just pulls it all together.

God's grace came to us and saved us. And it's God's grace that sanctifies us. And it's God's grace that will bring us our eternal reward. But it is also God's grace that instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, godly in this present age so that we are called upon to pursue a path of sanctification and also to live in the light of the blessed hope at the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. And that should be a purifying hope because the Lord gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.

Let's go back to verse 28 and at least a few final comments. If you abide, you have secured your hope so that, verse 28, "When He appears...when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." He's coming. He's going to appear, phaneroo, He's going to be manifest, He's going to be made visible. This is talking about His return, His Second Coming. And I don't know about you but when He comes I want to be there with confidence. I don't want to shrink away from Him in shame and fear at His coming...at His coming when He is present. I want to stand before Him confident because I have remained faithful, I have remained hopeful. And when He comes my hope will be realized not with shame or fear, but with consummate joy. "Shrinking away." It is a frightening scene. There are going to be people who at the return of Jesus Christ ought to look for a place to hide. On the other hand, those who are going to be confident, literally the word means outspoken, free to speak. It's used to describe the Christian's boldness in approaching God.

It's used that way in Hebrews 4:16, and Hebrews 10:19. First John 3:21, 1 John 5:14, it means boldness in prayer.

Can you imagine that when Jesus comes in all His glory being bold, confident? That's what it says. Because you have remained faithful. On the other hand, there will be those who are ashamed, desperately cowering, cringing and looking for a place to hide before the judgment of God crushes them. There will be no place for them to hide. And we who are confident will enter in to the joy of the Lord.

Father, we thank You tonight for the clarity and the potency of this truth. We know that in the great day to come when our Lord returns, the searchlight of divine wisdom will be turned on and two radically different kinds of people will be revealed...radically different kinds. Some will stand before the face of Jesus Christ with boldness, with confidence. Those who can say with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, I'm ready." Those who are looking for His appearing, looking with hope, eagerness, those who like the Apostle Paul love His appearing, love the idea that He's coming again. They are ready to meet Him. Thank You, Father, that You've numbered us among those...those who will receive eternal reward, eternal joy, eternal bliss. We also know there are others who will be eternally destroyed and cast out of Your presence forever to perish in shame and eternal remorse. And we reiterate what John has said, this is the call...abide, be real, be faithful to the end in order that Your hope may be fulfilled. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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