

The Purifying Hope, Part 3

Scripture: 1 John 3:1-3

Code: 62-24

We return tonight to our study of 1 John. So glad you're here. I'm always aware of what has become an American icon, Superbowl Sunday. And I remember back when Allister Begg(?), had first come to the United States from Scotland and taken a church, his church in Cleveland. He asked me to come and preach there on a Sunday night. He didn't realize, nor I at the time, that that Sunday night would fall on Superbowl Sunday night which would put the game at the very time of the evening service. And if I remember correctly, the Cleveland team was playing in the Superbowl and there was a blizzard. And so I ministered to his family that night. That was a bizarre evening. There were two cars in the parking lot, mine and his. I'm glad you're here.

First John chapter 2 and we're just looking at the final two verses and then the first three verses of chapter 3 under the title, "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 practices 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 and it has not appeared as yet what we 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."

Now that particular portion of Scripture, even though it spans a chapter heading, is tied together by references to His appearing and His coming and this hope. The hope that we have in the return of Jesus Christ is what ties this portion of Scripture together. I reminded you before that as Romans 8:24 says, "We are saved in hope." And what that says is that our salvation promises future benefits that are wonderful enough, glorious enough to cause us to make whatever necessary sacrifice must be made in this life. We set aside all of the elements of normal desire and personal ambition and personal fulfillment, personal satisfaction, all of the enticements of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, all the allurements of the system around us. We set aside what is normal expression of human longings. We set that all aside to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ and the promise that it will deliver to us a far greater fulfillment in the life to come. That's what it means to be saved in hope. We, in the words of our Lord as we've seen in Luke chapter 9, are called to totally deny ourselves and thereby to follow Christ, denying all that this world would offer us now for all that God offers us in a future we have not seen and thus we live in hope.

First Peter chapter 1, I think, gives us a magnificent look at this, starting in verse 3 in the form of a benediction, a doxology. First Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And here is that hope, "To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." That is our hope. We are guaranteed that hope because verse 5 says we are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. We are then born again unto a hope that lives, that hope procured for us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That hope involves an inheritance which cannot perish, cannot be defiled, cannot fade away, is reserved in heaven for us and us alone and we are protected by the power of God through the means of our faith unto the final salvation to be revealed in the last time. This hope is so glorious that we greatly rejoice in it, verse 6, even though now for a little while if necessary you have been distressed by various trials. We take whatever we have to take in this life, never sacrificing the future on the altar of the immediate. We willingly endure all kinds of trials in the light of that future hope.

This, in fact, this testing and this enduring is the proof of our faith, says verse 7, which is more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire. So that in the end we may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's what we look forward to and when we finally get to the fulfillment of our hope, and we get to the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be filled with praise and joy and glory because it will be far more than we ever expected, right?

It was this very hope that caused Paul to say, 2 Timothy 4, "I'm ready to be poured out as a drink offering, I'm willing to give my life as a sacrifice. The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing. I live in the light of His coming. I live in the light of His appearing. I make all the necessary sacrifices."

Paul writing to the Colossians said, "We thank God," verse 3 of Colossians 1, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which you have for all the saints because...here's the reason for his thanks...because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of which you previously heard in the Word of truth, the gospel which has come to you." The gospel is the gospel of hope. It delivers to us this message of an eternal hope. Paul gives thanks to God that based on that hope they put their faith in Jesus Christ and lived in the light of that glorious promise. It is then where we live in the realm of hope.

Romans 5:2 says, "We stand in grace and we rejoice in hope and therefore we also exult in our tribulations because tribulation produces perseverance, perseverance produces proven character, and proven character enhances hope and hope does not disappoint." We live in hope, in the hope

that cannot disappoint, in a hope that is not diminished by trial but it is embellished by trial. It ignites our hope. It inflames our hope. The more difficulties You throw at us in this life, the brighter our hope becomes. So this is the hope in which we live. That is why, as I pointed out earlier in this little look at this particular section, you can go back to 1 John now.

One's view of the Bible is so critical because you base your hope on what is written here. I heard a sweating, stomping, raving, screaming preacher on television recently, as frenetic and frantic as one could get, screaming at people and telling them what to do and repeating it over and over again until literally the saliva was running down the corner of his lips. He was screaming with the intent of getting people to do what it was that he was asking them to do. I was not at all compelled by what he was saying, however. It irritated me so I turned it off cause I cannot build my life on his opinion, on his viewpoint because it is so unbiblical. I cannot put my trust in men and their opinions. I cannot build my future hope and make the necessary sacrifices in this life to gain that which is eternal on somebody's opinion. I can only build that on the truth of God's Word. So the Apostle John wrote this epistle, 1 John, to provide objective truth, to encourage true Christians that they are indeed justified by faith in Christ and can live in hope, the hope of heaven and the hope of eternal life and that is the purpose of this epistle as indicated in chapter 5 verse 13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life and this is the confidence which we have before Him."

If I'm going to live my life in hope, I'm going to have to have some confidence that it's true. I want to know that I really do have eternal life. And so this wonderful epistle has been written to affirm to us that we can live in hope because we do possess eternal life and John gives a series of tests by which we can measure that. The tests for true Christianity had to be given to these people because these people were under the assault of false teachers. And false teachers were giving people false hope. False teachers teach a false way of salvation and they give people a false hope of heaven. That was happening to those who were addressed in this epistle. This epistle needs to be continually reread to those people who are also exposed throughout all of the era of the church since. You will notice in chapter 2 verse 26 is a statement of purpose that also directs us to why John wrote. "These things I have written you concerning those who are trying to deceive you." They were trying to deceive about who was really a Christian, who had legitimate right to a hope. They were saying, for example, that you could deny your sin and still count on eternal life. They were saying it in these terms, that we can have fellowship with God and still walk in darkness. We can be headed for heaven and deny that we have sin. We can be headed for heaven and hold on to the hope of eternal life, even though we say we have not sinned. We can say that we're headed to heaven and have a life of disobedience to the commands of God. Anybody who says, chapter 2 verse 4, "I have come to know Him, I have a right to that eternal hope, and doesn't keep His commandments is a liar." They say that they're headed for heaven, they say they have a right to the eternal hope, but they hate people rather than love. In verse 9 of chapter 2, "If he says he's in the light and hates his brother, he's in the darkness." Verse 11, "The one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, doesn't know where he's going

cause the darkness has blinded his eyes." That is to say his sins are not forgiven, they're not even acknowledged.

And then there were those who came along and said, "We have the hope of heaven, we're going to heaven." But they denied that Jesus is the Christ. And so in verse 22 of chapter 2 he says, "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is the Antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son doesn't have the Father. The one who confesses the Son has the Father also."

So there were moral tests of behavior. And there were doctrinal tests, one's view of one's own sinfulness and one's view of Christ. And so, John is writing because false teachers are coming and they're deceiving people about who has a right to the hope of heaven. John wants the true believer to know that he or she has eternal life. And John wants to deliver us from the deception of those who would say we can know we're going to heaven, even though we deny our sin and deny the reality of Christ and even though we live in disobedience to the commands of God and without love toward others. And there's one other element too there in chapter 22, anybody who loves the world doesn't have the love of the Father in him.

So we're back to the whole basis of having this hope. If you're legitimately going to have the hope of eternal life, if you're going to know that you have that hope of eternal life, you have the right view of your own sinfulness, you have the right view of Jesus Christ and His provision, you have the right animosity toward the world, you have the right heart toward obedience and loving others. You will, as he's pointing out in the passage I just read in verse 28, not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming because you will have lived a life, verse 29 says, that practices righteousness. So as true Christians, we live in hope, but only true Christians live in hope, only those with a right view of sin, that is a right anthropology with an understanding of sin and a right Christology, understanding Christ and His person and work, and right conduct manifest righteousness which demonstrates itself in obedience to the Word of God, and love toward others.

This hope then in which we legitimately live is the anchor of our lives. When things go as bad as they can go in life, we hold on to hope, don't we? We're going to a world where there will be no more sorrow, no more crying, no more tears, no more death, no more sin, no more temptation, we cling to that. We cling to it. We concern ourselves with laying up treasure in heaven, not on earth. We hold lightly to the material things of this world. We want only to use them in ways that advance the Kingdom of God. It's a small matter to us, as Paul put it, what men think of us because they don't have the final verdict. It's a small matter to us what we think of ourselves, we're not in to self-esteem, self-fulfillment because even when we know nothing against ourselves, that doesn't justify us. We're committed, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:5, to wait for the day when the Lord will reward us based upon the true intent and motives of our hearts. We long for the day when all of the debilitating realities of our fallenness will disappear forever and we'll enter in to the fullness of God's glorious preparation

for us. But in the meantime, I love what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:9, in the meantime, he says, we have as our ambition whether here or there, to be pleasing to Him for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be recompensed for deeds done in the body, whether they're good or worthless. In fact, all our works one day will be tested by fire and that which is wood, hay and stubble, that's not sin that's just the stuff that didn't have any eternal value. That will be burned and we'll be rewarded eternally on what's left...the gold, silver and precious stones. So we live in the light of Christ's return.

Now going back in to our text, as John pulls us in to this marvelous reality, he gives us five features of our hope...five features. We've looked at the first couple. Feature number one, it is secured by abiding. "Now, little children," verse 28, "abide in Him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." In other words, the people who legitimately have a claim to hope are the people who remain faithful to Christ. People who have for a while a quote/unquote relationship to Christ, who have a temporary faith in Christ or around the church for some period of time, they don't qualify. Chapter 2 verse 19, "They went out from us, they were not really of us. If they had been of us they would have remained with us. They went out in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." They didn't remain, same verb, *meno*, and that demonstrates that they weren't real. If you have that hope, it is verified and justified by your abiding. As long as we persevere and endure to the end, we give evidence of the fact that we have a right to that eternal hope.

Secondly, it is secured by abiding and manifest by righteousness. Verse 29, "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." If you have been born again, if you have been regenerated, if you have been given the life of God, if you have the new birth, if you then are a child of God, you will manifest the life of God that is in you. One who claims a right to the hope of heaven but does not practice righteousness is a liar and we have noted that all through chapters 1 and 2. Righteousness is the result of the life of the righteous One in us...in us. Verse 29 ends with that reference, "...is born of Him." The new birth is one of John's themes, I won't take time to go all the way back into John's gospel, but just do a little click in your mind that John 1:12 and 13 very, very foundational in almost every presentation of the gospel you hear this, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe on His name who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." There is the introduction by John to the new birth, being born of God. And, of course, you remember in John chapter 3 Jesus says to Nicodemus, "If you want eternal life, if you want to enter the Kingdom, you must be born again."

The language of the new birth is also in this epistle. We haven't run into it until here and then again in chapter 3 verse 9, "No one who is born of God continues in an unbroken pattern of sin." Chapter 4 verse 7, "Beloved, let us love one another, love is from God, everyone who loves is born of God." And again in chapter 5 verse 1 refers to being born of God and born of Him, verse 2, then calling us

children of God down in verse 4, and repeats it again, "Whoever, or whatever is born of God...verse 18...we know that no one who is born of God sins." So this is a familiar concept to John. He uses it repeatedly. If salvation is seen as new birth, regeneration, the old life is gone, new life comes. The believer is a new creation in Christ. New life principle comes in and manifests itself in behavior that is consistent with that divine life. And so, people who have been regenerated, been given new life, manifest that new life. Since it is righteous life, the life of God, it produces righteous behavior.

So we say then that our hope is secured by abiding, faithful. It is manifest in behaving righteously. Now let's take the third and we'll finish up, I hope, the other two. The third element in our hope, it is established in love...it is established in love. And this is where John gets swept away here in verse 1. "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 doesn't know us because it did not know Him." John is astonished and amazed, thrilled with the reality that we are the children of God, overcome...literally...with astonishment when contemplating the amazing grace of God that makes sinners into children. He starts by saying, "See!" an exclamation, "Look! Behold!" Calling for close attention and scrutiny. And then I love this, "How great a love." "How great" doesn't do justice to the Greek. "How great" is *potapen(?)*, in the Greek, it's classic Greek for something foreign, something alien, something that is inexplicable in known terminology. It really says, "Look, there is a love that is utterly unknown to us. It is not at all like human love. It is alien, it is a love that human experience doesn't know. It's a love that's outside of us, above us, beyond us."

The same word is used in Matthew 8:27 when Jesus stilled the wind and sea, they said, "What...what kind of man is this? Is this an alien? Is this man from another planet?" That's the same term. It's also used in 2 Peter 3 I think it's verse 11. Yes, since all these things are to be destroyed in this way in the future when the Lord destroys the universe, "What kind of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." We have one who has come, a man who is foreign to any human being, the God/Man. We have a God who loves us with a love that is foreign to anything we would know, calls us to live lives that are alien to all those around us. Unearthly, astonishing *agape...agape* is the word for the love of the will. It's not the erotic love. It's not the affectionate love that is elicited by a friendship or by love between a man or a woman or friends. It's not the family kind of love that's normal between parents and children. It's the love of the will. It's the love that basically loves because it chooses to love. It's the love of choice. It's spontaneous, it's self-giving. And its greatest expression, Jesus said, is this, "No man has demonstrated greater love than that he would give his life for his friends." It's self-sacrificing, it seeks nothing for itself, only to give itself away for the benefit of someone else, freely and spontaneously without that person necessarily being worthy of such an expression.

John looks at that and says this alien love, look at it, this love the Father has bestowed on us. And there he answers his question. If the question is...what kind of love is this? Where did it come from? The answer is, it came from the Father, it is alien, it is foreign, it is not earthly. The source and the origin is heavenly. God is the initiator of this love.

In looking at our Christian hope, we then understand that we live in hope because we have been made children of God, we have been made children of God because we were born of Him. We were born of Him because He chose to love us with a saving love. This love is foreign to anything we know about. And this love, he says, is bestowed on us and he uses a Greek verb which expresses a generous kind of giving, we could almost say lavished on us. This is the love that God has given to us. Chapter 4 verse 9, "This love of God was manifest in us in that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him, and this is love not that we loved but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It was a free, uninfluenced, undeserved, unmerited, spontaneous and sovereign love from God that has no human explanation, nor does it have a human counterpart cause there was nothing in us whatsoever to elicit that love. He loved us because it was in Him to love us. And He loved us so much that we should be called children of God. He brought us as close as we could get, He brought us into His family, children of God. Not just friends, not just co-workers and co-laborers, although those elements of our relationship to God are certainly celebrated portions of Scripture, not just members of His Kingdom, but family, adopted as His own beloved children. And John struck by this says we should be called children of God and we are...he says...and we are. All of this is affected by God's sovereign love. We have this hope because He loved us into this hope.

That's very encouraging and that's very comforting to me. He loved me when I was a sinner and undeserving. He loved me when I was a stranger and a foreigner. He loved me when I was alienated from Him. He loved me when I was His enemy. And He made me His child and if He loved me and gave me this marvelous hope and made me His child when I was His enemy, will He not sustain me now that I am His son? We shall find later how God is love because John will discuss that in chapter 4. We won't say much about that now, except to say keep it in mind that God's attributes are not segmented in Him. Most people think that when the Bible says God is love you find some places where God loved, but the rest of the time He might not be love, or when God is acting in judgment, God is therefore angry and wrathful and vengeful and just and at that time He's not love, as if His attributes were sort of isolated from each other and plunked like keys on a piano playing one note at a time. The truth of the matter is God is lovingly holy, God is lovingly omniscient, God is lovingly just. God is lovingly vengeful. God is lovingly gracious. God is lovingly holy. And God is wholly loving and so forth and so on. They are all mingled in the person of God perfectly.

Love is intrinsically in the fabric of God so that every attribute of God is pervaded by every other attribute of God. God loves us with a special love. Yes He loves the world, He loves the world. We've discussed that through the years here. God so loved the world. It tells us in Mark 10 that He looked at a rich young ruler who was lost and damned and rejected the way of salvation and it says, "Jesus looked at him and felt love for him." God loves the world. Jesus loves the world. This love, however, is general, this love is universal, this love is indiscriminate. It results in common grace. It results in compassion for the lost. It results in warning as men are called to repent. It results in gospel

presentation. Yes He loves the world. But His love for us is different than that. It's different. It is a saving love. It is a complete love. John 13:1, "He loved them to the end, to the max, to the full." Zephaniah 3:17 says, "It's a renewing love." It is presented in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 as an eternal love. In John 13:1, as I said, is a perfect love. In Romans 9:13 to 15, as an electing love. In Romans 5:8 as a saving love. In Romans 8:38 and 39 as an unbreakable love. Ephesians 5 as a protecting and purifying love. In Hebrews 12:6 as a chastening love. It is not a general love, it is not a universal and it is not an indiscriminate love, it is special, particular and discriminating. It is a love that only believers know. The song writer put it years ago, "The love of Jesus, what it is. None but His loved ones know." None but His loved ones know. It is the bliss of being loved into eternal hope and fulfillment when you don't deserve it.

And so, John says as we think about this hope, we must remember that it is essentially the gift of sovereign love. I wish I could take the time to illustrate that. Read Ezekiel 16 and you find in Ezekiel 16 the sovereign love of God depicted in the most graphic terms as he picks up a little discarded baby thrown out in a field that had just been born with its umbilical cord still attached, and picks up that discarded throw-away child and cleans her up and raises her and marries her. It's all a magnificent imagery of Israel. Then goes on to talk about how Israel betrayed all that love, how Israel entered in to prostitution, unfaithfulness to God. And yet at the end of the chapter there is this incredible re-statement of the undying, ultimate, saving love of God for Israel. It's that amazing kind of love that's illustrated there. It's that love that's expressed in Romans 8:28 to 39, nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ. We have been loved into being children of God.

And then he says, and I think it's wonderful in verse 1, "Such we are. For this reason the world doesn't know us because it did not know Him." That is a very, very helpful statement. Actually "for this reason" is "therefore," or "consequently." Because we are the children of God by His sovereign, saving, supernatural love, having been transformed, the old life is gone, we walk in newness of life, we are new creations in Christ Jesus, the world does not know us. That is true. That is true. The unregenerate cannot comprehend who we really are. Why? Because Romans 8:19 says, "The glorious manifestation of the children of God hasn't happened." You know, when you go into a restaurant and sit down, they don't have any idea you're a child of God. They don't have any idea that the Spirit of God, that is the Creator of the universe lives in you, you are the temple of the Spirit of God, He lives in you. They have no idea that literally in your soul is the life of God. They have no concept of the fact that you are fitted for heaven. Have no idea that beating in your mind and your heart is the hope of eternal life. They have no idea that you have direct access to the throne of heaven and from that throne are dispensed to you all the things that you need in life, answers to your prayers, peace, joy. That available to you is the fruit of the Spirit in all its fullness. They have no idea that sent from heaven dispatched to your aide are all of the ministering angels of God doing His will and fulfilling His purpose and protective concern for you. They have no clue who you are. We possess a veiled life from above. They had no clue who Jesus was either.

And that's what he says. They didn't know Him...if they didn't know Him, they for sure won't know you because you're not going to do what He did. Even when as we saw this morning in Luke, they looked at all that He did and they said, "This is the greatness of God, this is the majesty of God." Even though they said that, they still didn't get it. There were a few of them, Peter, James and John, who went up the mountain when He was transfigured and they saw it...they saw who He was. He was unveiled for them in the transfiguration. But the people in the crowds certainly didn't know who He was and ultimately they executed Him. And what did He say on the cross? "Father, forgive them for they...they don't know what they're doing." Why? What did He mean? They certainly don't know what they're doing as reflected in the fact that they're doing what they're doing. They obviously don't know who I am. They didn't know who He was. They don't know who we are either. We have loved into being God's children. The world is clueless as to who we are.

We're not on equal footing with anybody in the world in any other religious system. We have the true life of God. We have the truth. You know, that doesn't sell well in this climate today, does it? The attitude today is all religions are just varying options of one and the same human need, reflecting a sort of inner desire to connect with the power of the universe. The truth is, they don't know who we are, but we are the children of God. That shouldn't make us proud, that should humble us, shouldn't it? Because the truth of the matter is we're not any different than they are in terms of our humanness, except for the marvelous grace of God. Some day they will know who we are. That's one of the reasons I'm so committed to the millennial kingdom. Some day they're going to know who we are when we all come back in our glorified form, we're going to be taken to glory, transformed, come back with Jesus when He sets up His Kingdom. We'll reign with Him on the earth and then the world will know who we are. That is what Romans 8 talks about is the glorious manifestation of the children of God. Our day is coming. That's one of the reasons why I'm not an amillennialist. I think there has to be vindication. There has to be a glorious manifestation of the children of God. The world will see who we are in resurrection glory. But until then they just have to take what they get. And with a twinkle in our eye, we look at them and say, "You have no idea who you're looking at. You don't know that the sovereign creator of the universe before time began wrote my name in His private book and I was born as a result of His purpose and that purpose unfolded in bringing me to the knowledge of Jesus Christ by which knowledge I was transformed so that what I was I am no longer and I am a new creation in Christ Jesus. I now belong to God, the life of God is in me, God has transformed my inner man so that I am now a citizen of heaven and I am an alien here." You talk about aliens? We're all aliens, folks, all of us. But they don't see it yet. Some day in the glorious Kingdom of Christ they will.

So our hope has these blessed features. It is guaranteed by abiding. It is manifest in righteousness. It is established by love. Fourthly, and I don't need to belabor this because this is obvious and we've already discussed this to a great degree in previous lessons. It is fulfilled in Christ's likeness...it is fulfilled in Christ's likeness.

I don't know what you think about when you think about heaven. People think about really stupid things. They think about sitting on a cloud and plucking a harp. When you think about heaven do you think about doing something? Do you think about heaven, if you're like some people, well what am I going to do? If I don't ever go to sleep, if I don't ever get up? If I don't get up, you know, there's nothing sort of new. I mean, if you could just try to catapult yourself to heaven on human terms, it could sound like it was not very interesting. There's something wonderful about going to sleep and burying a day, and starting over, isn't there? But there never will be that. And if everybody is perfect, what use will I have, who will need my advice? You know. And if nobody has a need, who will I help? And if nothing's broken, what will I fix? And for me, if nobody needs any information, what will I say? How can I have a conversation with anybody if they already know everything? What do we do, just sit around on that cloud, pluck that harp? Talk about being superfluous. Somebody says, "Well, I hope there's golf courses up there." To which I answer, "Well if there are, everybody will make a hole in one every time and that's no fun."

Think about heaven...if you get caught up in all of that, you're going to get a very shallow view of it. Think about heaven like verse 2 tells you to think about heaven. "Beloved, now are we the children of God." We just said that. Now not future, we're God's children right now even though the world doesn't know it anymore than they knew He was the Son of God. We are now the children of God. "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be." Okay? It hasn't appeared yet what we shall be. We're headed to the realization of a kind of personhood, a kind of incorruptible, imperishable personhood described in 1 Corinthians 15 that is not apparent. We know that and here's the key way to view heaven, "When He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is." There is what makes heaven heaven. What makes heaven attractive is when I get to heaven I'm going to be like Jesus Christ. I can't imagine that Jesus Christ is for a moment bored. I can't even imagine what it would be like to be like Jesus Christ. I would be glad to go into heaven like the prodigal son who came home, you know. Just let me serve somewhere, just give me a mop. I mean, there's got to be some spot around here that I can clean up. I don't need to be exalted. Just to get in the gate, you know, just get me in the gate, I'll even be one of the homeless, I'll just hang at the gate, I don't even need a room. I'll just hang at the pearl. I'm glad just to be in there. What kind of magnanimity is it?

No, not only are you going to get in the gate, you're going to get in the gate all the way to the Father's house and I'm preparing a room for you. And better than that, you're going to be made like Jesus Christ. When you think about heaven, think about that, that you're going to be like Christ.

Truthfully, I know you folks fairly well, that's a stretch for me to imagine what you would be like if you were exactly like Jesus Christ. But if it's hard for you...for me to comprehend that about you, it's absolutely impossible for me to comprehend that about me. But it is...it is a wonderful, glorious component of my hope. Paul said, "This is the goal," Philippians 3, "this is the goal of my life, this is the prize of the upward call to be like Christ, this is the goal of my life." We are now the children of

God, that's explicit, clear. You can go back to Romans 8 where that is delineated in verses 14 through 18. We are now, present tense, sons, children. Not yet is the full manifestation taken place. When that full manifestation does take place at His appearing, and it doesn't happen till He appears because that...if you die before then, the fullness of our transformation doesn't occur till He comes, right? The dead in Christ rise first, they're changed, 1 Thessalonians 4. But when He appears, at the time of His Second Coming, then we receive our glorified bodies. First the believers in the church, then the Old Testament saints at the end of the time of Tribulation when He comes to set up His Kingdom, at that point then we are made like Him when we see Him just as He is.

Why did God do that? Why? Because God wants to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ through us. It's just an absolutely staggering reality. Romans 8:29, and I know you love the eighth chapter of Romans, every Christian does. So many things are there unfolded in unique ways. But Romans 8:29 is one of the peaks of this chapter. "For whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son that He, the Son, might be the *prototokos*, the premier one among many brethren." We're going to be conformed to the image of His Son. What does it mean? The only way I can say it is as much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, we'll be like Jesus Christ. Do I deserve that? No. Will I be glad just to get in the gate and hang there? Yes. Do I need a...do I deserve a room in the Father's house? No. Do I deserve to be made like Jesus Christ? Absolutely not...absolutely not, but this is what heaven is. I will be conformed to the image of God's Son, I will be made like Jesus Christ. I don't know all that that means but I know it means holiness and righteousness. I know it means I will be a supernatural person, both physical and spiritual, as Christ is, in a glorified kind of physicality. I know why we'll have in the fullest possible capacity of my glorified humanity the mind of Christ so that if nothing else awaits me in heaven, I will have full, pure capacity to worship and glorify God forever and if that has satisfied Jesus forever, that will satisfy me, too. If the Son delights in the Father forever, and no diminishing of that joy could possibly exist, then all heaven has to be for me is the undiminished worship of God coming from my Christlike person. That's how our hope is fulfilled.

And then one final thought. There were so many other verses I was going to give you on that...well, I don't have time. One final thought. Our hope is guaranteed by abiding, realized in righteousness, established by love, fulfilled in Christ's likeness. But here's the practical aspect. Our hope is characterized by purity...is characterized by purity and that's verse 3. "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, on Christ, purifies Himself just as He is pure." If your hope of heaven is to be like Christ, that's what he's saying, if your hope of heaven is to be like Jesus Christ, He's your Lord, He's your Savior, He's your model, He's your example, He's the one who sets the pattern, He's the one you press after, in the words of Paul. He's the goal of life. If that's true, if you really want to be like Christ, if that's...if that's your heavenly hope, then that will become your passion in time.

When you think about heaven then, don't think about clouds and gold streets and limit your thoughts to that. Think of this. When I get to heaven I'm going to be like Jesus Christ, that is God's ultimate

purpose for my salvation. That's why He foreknew me. That's why He predestined me. That's why He justified me to conform me to the image of His Son eternally, to make me like Christ. That's where I'm headed. That's my hope. That is heaven to me. And if that is my hope in eternity, then that becomes my desire in time. And so as I look at pure Christ and as I long to be like Him in the future, I'll find that longing realized in the present. If you fix this hope on Him, not on a place, not on activity, but on a person, that in itself becomes purifying...purifying. I cannot gaze at the glory of Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18, I cannot gaze at His glory and have a heart that longs to be like Him so that I can perfectly serve and worship and praise God as He does without that leaking in to my life here. I can't have a passionate longing to be like Christ in the life to come without it affecting the life I live here. So when you think about heaven, fix your hope on Him and see how it purifies your life here. Living in this hope is absolutely life-transforming.

Father, we thank You for our time tonight. We have so many more things that should be said, so many portions of Scripture, Philippians 3:21, to talk about. We'll have some day a body like unto His glorious body. First Corinthians 15:49 again saying the same thing, and incorruptible, powerful glorified body like that of Christ. We know that the day will come when we will see Jesus Christ in His glorious appearing in the Rapture of the church. In that moment we will be transformed into His image and forever we will be like Him. What joy. Not so much like Him in external features, but like Him in virtue, character, service and worship offered to You and to Him. This is our hope. It is to this hope that we cling and for its realization in Christ's likeness that we long and longing to be like Christ we purify ourselves even now. We know this pleases you because you desire our sanctification as well as our glorification. May these great truths be ever rich to our hearts, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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