

1 John 2:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

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.

Let's jump right into verse 28 this morning.

And now, little children, abide in Him

Why? Why should we abide in Christ? Will this result in peace and joy in our lives? **Yes.** Will we get to know Christ better? **Absolutely.** But look at what this verse **says** about remaining in Christ. What is the **ultimate goal** in abiding in Christ? What is the reason here that John gives for abiding in Christ?

He is not at all vague about his answer.

that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

He focuses on the benefit of our future state. The event he focuses on is **when Christ appears.**

The assumption here is that Christ will appear. There is no doubt in John about this fact. It is a certainty. You and I and everyone who was ever born will one day come before Christ in judgment.

In this passage we are given **one of two states** for the person being judged. I think it is only talking of believers. But could be wrong about that. There are two states here. Maybe there are others that he lets out, but there cannot be fewer.

We can face Christ with **confidence.** Or we can face Christ with **shame.**

Ultimately everything a Christian does is reason for confidence or reason for shame when we stand before Christ. I have emphasized previously that I think we will all feel shame for what we could have done for Christ but didn't,

the gift we could have brought to the party, but we didn't. But this verse seems to allow for a different attitude. Confidence.

You and I can easily digress to thinking about life in terms of **here and now only**. We cannot maintain the Christian position with that mindset. It is impossible. We will lack all the fuel we need to face temptations or trials. We will have no reason to remain faithful. We will have no fuel to obey. Because when the Christian life is divorced from the future, it cannot maintain itself. The best things that are going to happen to us are **not** here and now. And if we expect the payoff of **here and now** to make the Christian life worth living, we will live a shipwrecked life.

John is pointing us to the future. And he says, you should abide in Christ **NOW** in order to be ready for standing before Christ **THEN**. We should live **now** so that when we stand before Christ, we can stand with confidence, not that our performance was so wonderful. But we can be confident because we know that **we have been practicing for His presence all these years**. We have been abiding in Christ. We have been actively surrendering to His will. We have been doing things that our flesh would have never chosen. We have been facing trials and counting them all joy. We have been accepting persecution and considering ourselves fortunate people because we are identified with Christ.

Personally, I still think that we will feel shame for all of our failures and faithless responses. But our predominant feeling can be confidence. We can go into that interaction with the firm belief that Christ has saved us and our lives bear fruit of that supernatural event. And we know it because we have been abiding in Christ.

The alternative is shame. You and I are prone to **make excuses** for bad behavior and bad responses. And our experience is that God does not normally strike us dead when we do. We take that **risk**. But that is not the most common response. So we might get the idea that we are **getting away** with our faithless decisions. We might think that God **buys** our excuses of **ignorance** or **powerlessness** or whatever we happen to come up with. But no sin is ever gotten away with. We never get away with our disobedience. It might seem that way today. But it will not last.

If our lives can be characterized by **faithless responses**, if we are truly believers, we will experience a shame that we have **fully earned** and **fully deserve to feel** when we face Christ. Think about it. Think about the people who have faced the terrible things that this life can offer and they chose to **trust Christ**, to **believe in Christ**, to **look forward to His reward**. Think of the people who **really do** count it all joy when they face trials of many kinds.

Think of those who believe in God's **goodness** even when they face life's **hardness**. Do they not **deserve** a better reward for their obedience than we do, when we cannot be trusted to handle the least trial, the least offense? Shame is a bitter option that we can choose. Shame is the alternative of faithfulness.

I say this to encourage all of us to pick faith over shame. We never need to sin. Never ever. We never need to give in to flesh. We never need to believe the deceiver's lies. We never are forced to give into the world, the flesh or the devil. We never need to give into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

When we do, **shame** is the natural result. But that is not necessary.

We have the option of **confidence**. We have the option of obedience. We have the option of faithful responses. We decide. Every day. We decide. I have harped on this a lot lately. And I am probably doing it because this thought is weaving its way into my soul. We never get away with sin. Oh it may not have an earthly consequence. We may deceive our way out of every **immediate consequence**. We can lie to ourselves and others about why we did something. We can get out of every human verdict. We may be able to avoid any punishment or consequence for our sin here and now.

But the truth stands in the light of God's presence. He is never fooled. He knows why we did what we did. He does not believe the lies we tell ourselves. He knows exactly why we did what we did, and did not do what we did not do. So every effort to shield ourselves from truth is energy wasted. It is foolishness in motion. It does not matter if we dodge the correction that others try to give us. It does not matter if we fool them completely and get them thoroughly off our track. Faithlessness is darkness chosen in opposition to light.

And it leads to **shame** in the place where there could be **confidence**. And we are deciding every day which is more important to us. Here and now? Or Eternity.

The point being made in our text is the certainty that Christ is coming again. He will appear again. And we will stand before Him. And we are either living preparing for that day. Or we are living as if that day is not going to happen. But it will arrive, no matter what we decide.

Will we live for confidence on that day?

Now there is something else to emphasize from this text. It is the value of hope. It is that quality of looking forward to that which is sure to come. Look at these passages.

Notice the relationship of rejoicing to hope.

Psalm 146:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **Happy is he** who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose **hope is** in the LORD his God,

Proverbs 10:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ The **hope** of the righteous *will be gladness*, But the expectation of the wicked will perish.

Romans 5:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.

Romans 12:12 (NKJV)

¹² **rejoicing in hope**, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Romans 15:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Now may the **God of hope** fill you with **all joy** and peace in believing, that **you may abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For we through the Spirit **eagerly** wait for **the hope of righteousness by faith**.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and **good hope by grace**,

Hebrews 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the **rejoicing of the hope firm to the end**.

A quick look at the word “rejoice” brings back an interesting result. Generally we find rejoicing directed to just a few things. We rejoice with brothers and sisters when something good happens to them now. We rejoice in them doing well in their spiritual lives. We rejoice in good things happening to us now. And we **rejoice in hope**.

My point is that rejoicing and hope go together. Hope is the fuel that drives our rejoicing when our circumstances are less than pleasant. If you can rob a Christian of his **hope**, if you can distract a Christian to **only focus on present circumstances**, you will rob him of **his joy** as well.

Hope translates our suffering because of its focus. Hope is the reason for a joy that can last, a deep seated happiness that can last, even through the worst of present difficult circumstances. It is a future reality that transcends the present reality. It never lives in denial. It never buries its head in the sand

so it can maintain its optimism. No. It looks at the **real future reality**. And it will not be distracted from its focus.

Now lets move on in our text.

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

We need to keep in mind that every time we see the word “know” John is probably referencing the gnostics who **think they know** something. John always points to **real** knowing.

And here he makes a point that is sheerly logical. If the family patriarch has as His most central characteristic righteousness, His genetic offspring are also going to have that same predominant trait. Children of God are not characterized by their wickedness. No. they are characterized by their righteousness. It is not a perfect righteousness like Christ’s. But it is a **growing righteousness in human frailty**.

Now look at this closely. This is a fact. If we are living no more righteously today than we were a year ago or ten years ago, we have reason to be very nervous. We cannot blow this off. We cannot pretend that this verse means nothing. Believers must be practicing righteousness. And it must be more righteousness than it was previously. How are we doing? How are we **growing**? Are we living toward **more** righteous living, or **less**?

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.

What are you astonished at? The wording in this verse is the wording of astonishment, amazement, knock you off your footing reactions. We do not have English words to match what the Greek had to say.

What we have is an **astounding love** that God has granted to us to make us His children.

Do you ever think that you deserve to be God’s child? If you, do you are utterly foolish. We received an outpouring of love that goes beyond our imagination. That is what this is saying.

Do you ever look at your life and wish that someone had loved you more? That someone had treated you as precious? That someone had looked more after your best interest? That someone had put their selfishness aside?

Well guess what? That is exactly what this is describing. **All that we have ever wished for we have received at the hand of God.** We have no room to gripe. We have an astonishing display of love here. That God would look at us knowing exactly what we are made of. And He would say, I want that person in my family. Yes I know their sin. Yes I know their stubbornness. Yes I know

what price I will pay for their love. Yes I know that they love themselves more than they love me. I know what they will do to meet what they think are needs. I know that they will put out of their minds what it is that I want, and they will pretend that they are innocent of doing so. Yes. I know. But I am making them children of mine.

How? How could God do that? Why would God do that? But that is exactly what God did to call us to Himself.

Do we realize that God has **not been surprised** one single time by the sin we have chosen? We may have entered relations. And our friends may not have had any idea of the sin they were accepting when they accepted the relationship. And we may not have either. And maybe that shock might make us second guess our decisions. But that never happened with God. **He knew.** And **He still said- I choose you to be in my eternal family.** And that is..... astonishing. That seems impossible. But we know that it is true.

that we should be called children of God!

This is not just a rumor. This is not a theory. This is a reality. It borders on being unbelievable. Christ has picked us to be part of his family, part of his clan, part of his kin. Why? How? We cannot answer those questions.

Anything that we have lacked on this earth in family relations has surely been made **more than right** in **this** family relation.

A believer is God's kid, God's family, God's inheritor.

There is just no way in this world that we will ever fully incorporate this truth in our lives. This, by itself, is justification for perfect obedience, perfect submission, perfect surrender. But that is never what we give God. We always find a way to give God less than He deserves, less than He has earned for loving us.

We are children of God if we are Christ's.

Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Here a truth is revealed that we are not extremely fond of. This family that we have been made part of is going to have a cost associated with it. The devil's kids are not going to be fond of us. They are not going to invite us as family if we really represent Christ well. And that is not an **unintended** consequence. It is **expected** and **intended**.

I remember hearing a lot about peer pressure when I was in high school.

People acted like it was an inevitable pressure that would make young people do stupid things to impress other young people. But scripture never calls it peer pressure. Scripture says that the **fear of man** is a snare. We do well to train our young people to stand on their own. We do well to train them when they are able to understand it that this world is not **for** you. And the prince of

this world is surely out to **destroy you**. So standing for Christ will cost you the approval of many of the popular people. It will cost you the benefits that the leaders in the little worldly groups have to offer. You may not be invited to their parties. You may not be trusted in their circles. You may never be popular because you stand for Christ. But when that happens we are fortunate. Why?

That is also how they treated Christ. They didn't know Him either. They didn't appreciate or esteem Him either. They didn't invite Him to their parties or inner circles either.

The world can never really understand what makes a true believer tick. They cannot know, nor do most of them ever really **want to know**, why we would spend those things that **they crave** to impress someone that we **cannot even see**. A true believer acting in true belief truly acts like a stranger, an alien, a sojourner. No world-ling is going to choose that life unless compelled by the Holy Spirit to do so.

But this is what God says.

Hebrews 11:16 (NKJV)

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

You know, we can read that over and over again. But it is so hard to fully grasp this reality, to read it as if it is absolutely and eternally true. God has looked at us and prepared a place fitting for us for eternity. My guess is that for Ruth there is sure to be beauty. Stuff will match. For Carla it will be practical. For Mark and Jarrod there will be good stuff to work with. You get what I mean. Maybe there will even be fish? Who knows?

God has arranged it all intentionally for our benefit. He has poured out His energy in preparation for our reward.

This belief makes us crazy to the world. It makes us willing to give up so much that this **world** thinks is **the ultimate** and **we think is inferior**.

Our theology says that if the world offered us **everything that it has to offer** it would be **inferior by far to that which Christ promises us**.

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.

We don't know yet what is coming. We don't have an absolute picture. We have guesses based on scripture about how things will be. Randy Alcorn did some good work with what eternal life might be like. But even he had to admit that there is much that cannot be known for sure. It has not been

revealed exactly what we will be. We do not know what our new bodies and lives will be like. Paul says the following.

Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Romans 9:23 (NKJV)

²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

It is not difficult to see that our end result is a **shared glory** with King Jesus. He will transform these lowly bodies to be conformed to His glorious body. We will be like Him in some ways. We will be better than we ever were in some ways.

What is it that troubles you in this life? Do you know what it will be when we see Jesus? Non existent. Our lives will be conformed to His. We will be able to see everything from His perspective. We will experience and understand to a degree the riches of His Glory.

And what did we complain about this week?

What did we allow to drag us down this week?

Why could we not praise God this week?

I think we get the point.

Now John is not saying we will be exactly like Christ when we see Him. But we will be **very like Him** when we see Him. We don't know to what limits. We don't know in every way what He means. But we will be transformed from all the ways that rob Christ Glory. We will no longer grieve the Holy Spirit. We will no longer sin. We will no longer disobey. We will no longer invite His discipline. And what a change that would have to be.

Can you imagine going through a week without regretting a single thing you did or said or thought? That is the life we are being promised. Our lowly bodies will be conformed to His glorious body. We will be different inside and out. Oh Praise God for this change that is coming.

Yes, we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. And that will be transforming to us. It will change us. Seeing Jesus for who He really is has always had that effect on people. This time it will be permanent.

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

Now how do you know if a person really believes this? Is it because of what they **say**? Is it because of what they **write**? Is it because of what they **teach or preach**? No. Those things matter, but it is ultimately because of how they live.

If you really hope to see Christ in eternity, if you really believe Christ has promised a rich reward and you will see it, if you really believe the promises of God about eternal life, you cannot live an impure life. You cannot live a life that disobeys God or ignores His word or acts according to your emotions. If you **have this hope**, if you **believe you will see Jesus after this life** and you will be granted eternal reward, the change is that you purify yourself. You walk in the light. You call sin sin and you turn from it. You tell the truth about your actions and your motives. You quit excusing rebellion and you repent of it. You don't care who is looking. You don't care that you can get away with your lies and excuses before humans. That does not matter in the least. You know what **God** sees and you no longer want to live in any way that displeases Him. You purify your thoughts and your actions and your motives and your reactions. That is what is going on in the life of the person of hope, in the person of belief.

Notice that our verse does not say- **everyone who has this hope in Him SHOULD purify himself**. No, he **will**. If there is hope, there will be a change in lifestyle.

It is impossible to hold onto a hope that is wildly looking forward to what God is going to give us, and live a life of **dismal despair and doubt and grudging obedience and distrust of God**. It cannot be done. When you buy into the promises of eternity, everything about us changes. That is the very reason we can have **joy**, we can **be happy in the midst of the sadness** that life events can often bring. **Hope is the fuel for joy** when circumstances scream out to us to disbelieve God. **Hope is that supernatural trust in God** to make everything we go through more than worthwhile.

Where do we stand this morning? What have the words of our mouths portrayed this week? What have our quotes displayed? We dare not think that God does not know them or take them into account or read them for what they are?

Do you trust God?

Do you trust God?

Will God's reward make everything you have trusted Him through worthwhile?

This is where true spirituality lives. This is the heart of the matter of what we really are. This is our life at its core. This is why we do what we do. Do we trust God?

As we stand together on this **mount of grace, amazed and bewildered and breathless** in the awe of the truth that God has displayed his **infinite love** by making us **His own children**, let us **come off that mountain** with the certain hope that we will **one day see this loving Savior**. And let's make it worth His while for the tremendous sacrifice he gave in order to make us children of His. Then we can approach that day with confidence and look forward to it without restraint. Then that hope will fuel every obedience and sacrifice.