

1 John 2:28-3:3, Living in Expectation

Like faith and love, hope is a fundamental way of living for Christians. Our greatest expectation will be realized at the second coming of Christ, and personally experienced by our resurrection unto eternal life, but for Christians here and now we must live in hope and expectation of those events. Hope changes a worldly outlook, lifts up our soul, and produces joy in our heart. Our hope brings real spiritual life and true happiness into this dark evil death filled life on planet earth. As we discuss hope, it is necessary to distinguish between worldly hope and Godly hope. Worldly hope is in personal desires, wishes, even “pipe dreams” that we will make the big deal, achieve success, or receive whatever material stuff that we think will bring us happiness. But biblical hope is desired expectancy of a guaranteed future reality—guaranteed by the only one who can actually make it happen, the Lord God Almighty. Worldly hope is temporal, but Godly hope is eternal.

How important is hope to us? The author of Hebrews 6:19 said it well, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul”. This is a great image of ships safe in port anchored down and safe from the coming storms. Our anchor that holds us in place and protects us is our hope in Christ. Godly hope removes the fear of death, and the resurrection of Christ proves that we also will follow Him into eternal life as Peter wrote that Jesus has “caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”.

1 John 2:28—As for Now, Abide in Him

Since we have this hope in our future, the way to live now is by abiding in Him. To abide is to live in, remain in, and be motivated by our relationship with Christ. Our best image for “abiding” is the image given by Jesus in John 15:1-10. In this teaching given by Christ at the Last Supper, Jesus used the vine where grapes are grown to illustrate our living in a relationship with Him. In this allegory Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. The branches bear fruit only if they are growing in the vine. All their sustenance comes from the vine, but if they are separated from the vine they cannot bear fruit. Therefore the branches must “abide” in the vine. Jesus is always pruning the branches so they can bear more fruit, and we can equate this to our spiritual growth as we live our lives more and more for Him, living more obediently and doing more good works. Only by being plugged into the vine and

receiving all our resources from the vine can we bear fruit. What does fruit stand for here? Checking the other passages where it is used such as Galatians 5:22, Eph. 5:9, Romans 15:28, and Matt. 7:15-20; we find that it is an image used for proper attitudes, good works, and a righteous lifestyle. The shocking thing about Jesus' teaching in John 15 is that if we are not abiding in Christ we can't have proper spiritual attitudes, do good deeds that please GOD or live a righteous lifestyle. At this point you might say—wait a minute, I know a lot of good people who do good deeds, have a good attitude, or live good lives and they are not Christians—and you would be right. So what did Jesus mean that they could bear no fruit? There is a big difference in pleasing people and appearing to be good in the opinion of people versus pleasing God and actually being good in God's eyes. If you give money to some charity, they will appreciate it and sing your praises. If you help someone, they will appreciate it and say what a good person you are, but the Scripture (and Jesus) is primarily concerned with your relationship with God. Outside of an abiding relationship through Christ, people are just good humanitarians helping people out, but being alienated from God by sin causes them to be bearing no fruit for Christ. The concept of an abiding relationship requires that our sins be atoned for first by Christ, and then that we live for Christ. We can only approach God and have our sins atoned for by the means and basis that He has provided. Any other way may be acceptable to people but not to God. Therefore we are saved by Christ and only then are we called to live for Him in an abiding relationship in which we bear fruit.

Jesus makes all this clear in John 15:5 where He says, "I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, but apart from Me you can do nothing". Nothing means no fruit w/o an abiding relationship with Christ.

Be Ready for His Coming

In 1 John 2:28-29, the author encourages the church to abide in Christ now, so that when Christ comes back we can be sure He will say "Well done good and faithful servant", and you will have no reason to "shrink away". Therefore one incentive for godly living is our hope in the future return of Christ as promised by God. Our new spiritual birth in Christ should cause us to "practice" righteousness. He is not saying that we are perfect. The operative word is practice, meaning the life we pursue, desire, and work towards. John has already established in chapter one that we are all sinners who need to constantly confess and repent, so he is drawing a distinction between sinners who habitually practice sin and justify it, and the true

believers who sin but recognize it, confess and repent. The true believers who are practicing righteousness are born of Him. The effect of the new birth should be righteous behavior.

The doctrine of Christ's return is a dominant theme in the New Testament mentioned 318 times. It is mentioned in all 27 books except Galatians and Philemon. Philippians 3:20 says, "we eagerly await a Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ". Titus 2:13 says that His coming is our "blessed hope", and Rev. 1:7 says "He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him".

How Great a Love God has for Us-1John 3:1

John expresses his wonder and amazement that we, by God's grace, could become God's children, and the object of His great love. The Greek word we translate as love, is a special kind of love in the original Greek language. The Greek "agape", is used for the godly love that is sacrificial and unconditional. God sacrificed His Son for the likes of us, which is the greatest way love can be revealed. And God did not wait around for us to become righteous before He died for us, but as Romans 5:8 says, "Christ died for us while we were sinners", and so that is unconditional love. This kind of love is foreign to the world, so the world does not know Him or understand us. John is saying that because of God's great love we should be motivated to live for Him and according to His precepts.

1 Jn.3:2-The Already but Not Yet of Who We Are

Since the world does not know us, who does John say we are? We are already "children of God" and in the future "we will be like Him", meaning we also will be resurrected from the dead and receive new spiritual bodies suitable for Heaven. We will be conformed to the image of Christ, but we have not experienced it yet. We will not only see the glorified Christ when He returns, but we will become like Christ. Paul confirms this in Romans 8:14-21, Jesus will "transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory", and in Phil.3:21, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory". Therefore we are promised and guaranteed that Jesus is coming, we shall see the glorified Christ, we shall then be made like Him, and we will experience our citizenship in heaven.

Since we believe in the one and only God who alone can fulfill these promises, we have biblical hope which gives us a certain expectation, and that expectation produces a desire to become like Christ now. This hope will make a practical difference in our lifestyle and behavior. Paul expressed this attitude in Gal.2:20 when he wrote, “it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me”.

The Hope of the Gospel

In Colossians 1:23, we are encouraged to “not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel”. Prior to this in Colossians 1:15-20, Paul gave us a beautiful Christology (the nature of Christ) and confirmed that Jesus has reconciled us to God and brought peace to our lives so that He could present us holy and blameless to God. Therefore, we should “not be moved away from the hope of the gospel” that we believed and which transformed us. The world separated from God has a sense of guilt, helplessness, and frustration, but we can go to sleep with a peaceful heart knowing we are forgiven and we are reconciled and we have purpose and meaning.

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