

Changed by Christ

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[0 : 00] Chapter 2, verse 28, through chapter 3, verse 3.

! If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we all shall see Him as He is, and everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? As a child, one of the most thrilling moments of my day was when my dad returned home from work.

[1 : 29] I sometimes would hide behind the door that he would enter through, wanting to scare him, surprise him, and he would play along, pretending that he would be frightened, and then I would go in to give him a hug, happy that he was home.

But there were times when I hid from him, not in play, but in fear. If I had been a good boy, if I had been an obedient son, I had no reason to fear my father's arrival.

But if I hadn't been a good boy, and if I hadn't been an obedient son, well, there were consequences for that. And maybe you can relate.

A bad report card came in the mail. A bad report followed you home from school. Maybe you mistreated one of your siblings in some kind of malicious way, and your mother would say to you as my mother would say to me, wait until your father gets home.

But there were times when I had a good report to share. I'd done something that made my parents proud, and my mom would say, your father will be happy to hear about this.

[2 : 55] Your father will be happy to see this. Those moments of obedience gave me confidence to be in my father's presence. Conversely, those moments of disobedience filled me with dread.

And so in today's passage, John writes about the attitude that Christians should have regarding Jesus' return, regarding his second coming.

He says that Jesus' second coming should be an event that all Christians are looking forward to, something that they should feel confident about.

He emphasizes that our greatest motivation in the present should be the certainty of our Lord's return in the future.

But I wonder, how often do Christians, how often do you spend time in your present thinking about and preparing for the future return of Jesus?

[4 : 07] I know for me, it's been the case that I most often think about it when I want to avoid something.

Just about every time I sit down to work on my dissertation, or whenever something breaks, something major like a car, and I think, Lord, now would be a great time for you to return.

Remember, Jesus spoke about his second coming frequently. And it's something he said that we should think about frequently.

Not just when we want to avoid some kind of difficult situation that we're going to have to live through. It should be a reality that constantly impacts how we live each and every day in the present time.

In Matthew chapter 24, verses 36 through 50, Jesus likened his second coming to the days that preceded the flood. People ignored the warnings of God's coming judgment, and they were swept away by the waters of his wrath.

[5 : 23] Jesus goes on in that passage to implore us to stay awake, to be ready, to live each day as if it's the day that he will return.

In Matthew 25, verses 1 through 13, he tells the parable of the ten virgins. And there he underscores the importance of being prepared for his imminent return, even if he's gone longer than we expected him to be.

In Matthew 25, the following verses, verses 14 through 30, he tells another parable, the parable of the talents, which illustrates the tragedy of wasted opportunity.

And Jesus makes the point that the person who lives their life without expecting him to return at any moment and who thinks that he won't care about how they chose to live out their days while he was away will have completely wasted their life.

There will be a second coming, but when he comes, there will not be a second chance or a do-over.

In a parallel passage in Mark, Jesus said this about his return, Mark chapter 13.

[6 : 39] Beginning in verse 32. But concerning that day, speaking about his return or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the sons, but only the Father.

Be on guard. Keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

Therefore, stay awake. For you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight when the rooster crows or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake. Jesus wants us to think about and be ready for his second coming every day.

Why? Why would he want us to think about that every day? Well, I think it's because of what I just said, because he doesn't want us to waste our lives. He doesn't want us to waste our times in pursuits of worldly treasures that will perish.

[7 : 48] He doesn't want you to waste your life worrying about the future and being fearful about what the next day may bring.

Worry and fear will cripple your present productivity. And Jesus doesn't want you to waste your life. And he doesn't want you to be surprised when he returns.

He wants you to live each day prepared for his coming. Anticipating also what his coming will mean for you and for all who have trusted in him.

And so John's main idea from this passage this morning and main idea for this morning's sermon is that what Christians will be when Jesus returns should change how they live today.

What Christians will be when Jesus returns should change how they live today. Are you prepared for Jesus' return right now?

[9 : 03] Think about it. Are you ready? Let's say that by the time I finish this sentence, Jesus has returned.

How does that make you feel? What does that make you think? Are you saying in your mind, oh yes, I heard a yes over here.

Or are you thinking in your mind, oh no. You know, there's been times in my life where the answer would have been, oh no. Especially when I was younger.

There were things I still wanted to do. I wanted to get married. I wanted to have kids. I wanted to start a career. Buy a house.

See the Chiefs win the Super Bowl. Praise God I've gotten to see that twice now. But if you view Jesus' return as an interruption in your life, what does that say?

[10 : 12] I think it says that there are things in this world that you treasure more than being with Him.

And there are things in this life that you are looking more forward to than the eternal life that awaits you in heaven.

And if that's the case, that's probably the case because you don't know how good the eternal life that awaits you in Christ is. It would be like if I showed up to Jack's school when he has lunch.

And it's lunchtime and he's hungry. And maybe the school lunch that day looks decent. And he sits down at his table and he's ready to dig in.

He's ready to satisfy his hunger. But then I burst through the door of the cafeteria. And in my hand, I have a bag full of food, steak from Texas Roadhouse, his favorite restaurant.

[11 : 23] I've got something for him that is going to satisfy his hunger more than any cafeteria food ever could. Whatever they slopped on his tray would no longer be appetizing to him compared to the better meal that I had for him to feast on.

And you think that that might happen sometime. And I'm not making any promises. But Jesus' second coming and what it will mean for you, what it will be for you, will make all earthly treasures seem like rubbish and slop in comparison.

If you see Jesus' second coming as an interruption, I hope that the Holy Spirit changes your perspective of that today.

So maybe if you think, oh no, you think it's, you perceive Jesus' returning as an interruption. Or it could be that you think, oh no, because you're afraid.

If Jesus' return fills you with dread, what does that say? You know, it's like the garage door has gone up. You've been bad.

[12 : 46] And dad's home. It probably reveals that you have been following your own will for your life instead of God's will for your life.

And maybe it's not so much fear that you feel, but shame. Maybe you feel shame because you've gone astray from him.

Or you feel fear and shame because you don't truly know him. Well, the good news for you is that he hasn't returned yet.

But none of us knows how much time any of us have left. And so my hope for you today, if that's the case for you, my hope for you is expressed in Hebrews chapter 3, verses 12 through 13.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall astray from the living God.

[13 : 52] But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The Bible says that Jesus is coming back.

And when he returns, he will bring transformation to those who have trusted in him. It's a future transformation that is so good, so certain, so glorious, so awesome, so amazing that it should change the way that we live each and every day.

And so in this text, John makes that point, that what Christians will be when Jesus returns should change how they live today.

And he gives us three principles to think about every day as we contemplate the imminent return of Jesus. And if you think about these things every day, I believe it will change the way you live in the present.

And it will ensure that you don't waste your life. So the first principle that he reveals to us about Jesus' return, we should be thinking about, is from verse 28.

[15 : 13] You can be confident when Jesus returns. You can be confident when Jesus returns. Look at the beginning of verse 28 again. And now he says, little children, abide in him.

And so once again, John refers to his readers lovingly as little children, as he continues here with his theme of abiding in Jesus, which was a key concern of his, which he just expressed in the verses that lead up to this one.

He's been encouraging his readers not to love the world or be deceived or discouraged by false teachers who have created chaos in their churches and then left taking some of their members with them.

The word abide here is written in the present imperative. This is a word of command. This is a call for consistent action.

To me, it's like a mother reaching down to grab her child's hand as they're about to enter a busy parking lot. The mother says, hold my hand.

[16 : 20] She's giving a loving command to her child that her child will stay with her, stay connected to her, so that they can proceed together and come out unharmed.

To stay, to remain connected to him, Jesus, is to be preserved from danger.

Now there are times when you leave your child behind somewhere, like a daycare or a school. You leave them in the care of someone who you know and trust while you go off to work or run an errand or maybe even worship in church.

There's a temporary separation. But as your children grows and matures, they come to know, realize that the separation is temporary and that they can trust whomever you've left them with.

And they know that eventually you're going to come back. And when you do come back, they see you and they run to you because they're excited to feel your embrace once again and be in your presence.

[17 : 39] Why? Because they know that you love them and they know that you're going to take them home. So John says, those who abide in Christ have known his love from the moment he saved them.

They've continued to experience his love as they've grown to know him and trust him more so that when he does appear, they drop whatever they're doing and they go to him because whatever they're doing is nothing compared to being with him and knowing that they are going home.

And so they move towards him confidently knowing that they will receive his embrace and not a stiff arm from him. That's the imagery I picture in the rest of what John has to say in verse 28.

He says, so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming. Confidence in the Greek means to speak freely or boldly.

In Hebrews, that word is used to refer to the Holy Spirit's call for all to come confidently before God's throne and receive his mercy and his grace through Jesus Christ.

[19 : 15] And John will use that same word again in this letter in chapter 3, verse 21. By this, he says, we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our hearts before him.

For whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

And whatever we ask, we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. As Christians, our hearts condemn us when we sin.

But John says that God is greater than our hearts. There may be times when you think that you have exhausted God's love and forgiveness.

Maybe as a kid, you disobeyed your parents. You disobeyed them so badly that you thought, you feared, that they would not love you anymore. Only for them to reassure you that though you maybe disappointed them, you are their son.

[20 : 32] You are their daughter. And they love you unconditionally. I got in trouble when I was a kid, especially when I was a teenager.

In high school and in college, I did some stupid things. Things that I knew would disappoint my parents. But I always knew no matter what I did, I could call home and they would answer and they would be there for me.

So when John talks about those who will shrink back from Jesus' second coming, I don't think that he has Christians in mind. Remember what he has said already to this point.

1 John 1.9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Remember what he said in chapter 2, verse 1. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

[21 : 46] So brother and sister, when you sin, you can always call home. What God saves, God keeps.

And whomever God forgives, he forgives completely. Whomever God calls, receives salvation in his Son.

And when his Son returns, he's coming to take you home. You won't be the one shrinking back when Jesus returns.

I think that's going to be unbelievers. It will be those of whom Jesus said in Luke 9.26, for whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory, in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

And so I ask you, do you know that you know Jesus? Are you confident, not in yourself, but in him and what he's done on the cross for you?

[23 : 11] Are you ashamed of being identified with Jesus? Or is being identified with Jesus what you most desire?

Imitation, they say, is the sincerest form of flattery. And so I ask again, is Jesus who you most seek to imitate?

If not, why not? Are you maybe like Judas, secretly ashamed of him though everyone else in the world was fooled and thought you were in him?

Is Jesus someone you use to gain the world's treasures or is Jesus the one whom you treasure? Jesus said, wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? Well, maybe you don't feel confident quite yet.

[24 : 28] Maybe you're not yet convinced about how Jesus' return should change the way you live today. And so John has a second principle for us to think about every day as we contemplate our Lord's return.

He says that you can be certain of your salvation in Jesus. You can be confident and you can be certain of your salvation in Jesus. In verse 29, he says, if you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

What does it mean to know that Jesus is righteous? To know that Jesus is righteous is to understand his sinlessness and your sinfulness.

It's to have heard and believed the gospel, which the Apostle Paul succinctly summarizes in 2 Corinthians 5.21. For our sake he, God the Father, made him, God the Son, to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus lived sinlessly and died sacrificially. He never sinned. But on the cross he took the place of sinners.

[25 : 49] He exhausted the wrath of God the Father for our sins on the cross. He was treated there as if he were guilty.

He endured the shame that should have been the shame that we endured and he suffered in our place that by faith in him God declares that we are righteous.

God imputed or transferred our sins to Jesus on the cross so that we who believe in him receive his righteousness and we are justified.

God credits his righteousness to our account. On the cross Jesus bore our sins so that by faith in him we bear his righteousness.

This is what happens when you are born again. The new birth precedes new behavior. When you are saved you are sealed you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who works to make you more like Jesus.

[27 : 03] That process is called sanctification. When you are saved you are sanctified positionally. You've received Christ's righteousness and in God's eyes you're justified.

You're righteous. You're saved. But then from the moment of your salvation you are progressively being sanctified by the Holy Spirit as he works in conjunction with God's word to conform you more and more into the image of Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior.

God started the work of making you like Christ and it's a work he completes. God finishes what he starts.

Philippians 1.6 A good one to memorize. For I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you when he saved you will bring it to completion at the day at the coming of Jesus Christ.

But we're not to be idle in this with salvation comes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and with that new desires a desire to earnestly pursue righteousness.

[28 : 31] 1 Peter 1 14 through 16 As obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance your former self but as he who called you as holy you also be holy in all your conduct since it is written you shall be holy for I am holy again this desire stirred up within us by the Holy Spirit leads us to apply God's word to our lives just as Jesus prayed that it would in John 17 17 sanctify them in the truth your word is truth!

God you can be certain of your salvation because though you've not reached glorification yet you are on your way because you practice righteousness you apply the Bible to your lives you aspire to be like Jesus is that who you aspire to be like remember going to the doctor and as a kid and the doctor would have those growth charts still uses the growth charts you know what I'm talking about and for me I always wanted to be as tall if not taller than my father who was six foot two and when I would go to the doctor he would pull out the growth chart this is where you were when we first measured you over the years and it's progressively going up this is where you are now and we think this is where you're going to be you would tell me you're going to be as tall as your dad man that would make me feel so good well

I came an inch short but my father is getting older and he's coming down to my level I didn't quite make it but I use that example of the growth chart to tell you that from the moment of your salvation you ought to be able to look back from that day and see progress you may not be where you want

to be but by God's grace you aren't where you used to be what he begins he completes and that should give you certainty that you are saved now and confidence when Jesus appears because that work is going to be completed but that's not all in the beginning of verse one of chapter three John says see what kind of love the father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are what kind of that phrase is one word in the Greek it's an adjective seldom used in the Bible in a word that we don't have a real good parallel to in the English language it's a word that implies a reaction of astonishment!

admiration! It's an expression that conveys both a quantitative and a qualitative force it could be translated in this way see what glorious measureless unfathomable love the father has given to us John again at this point in his life he's an elderly man he's nearing the end of his road he's nearing the end of his life but the love that he has received from God has not ceased to thrill him and excite him John isn't focused on the past here he doesn't look back on his life and reflect on memories of the good old days to find something to be excited about in the present he's looking forward he's looking forward to crossing the finish line and what awaits him there once he does once this life on earth is over and he revels in the present reality of the amazing grace and love of God to save sinners and not only save them but to adopt them as his own children and so here

[33 : 19] John is describing the awesome truth of our adoption as sons and daughters into the family of God it's something that the apostle Paul spoke about often for example in Romans chapter 8 verses 15 through 17 for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba father daddy the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children then heirs heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we also may be glorified with him the Bible says that we are all born with a sin nature which we inherited from Adam and Eve we are not naturally God's children it's true that

God is the father of all men and women in that he is their creator but a person does not become a spiritual child of God unless they are born again this is the biblical doctrine of adoption now adoption during John's day was a practice typically reserved for rich couples the upper class who were not able to have children of their own and thus they did not have an heir to pass on their fortune to and to pass their name on to and so what they wouldn't typically do is adopt babies or infants instead they would adopt young adults someone who had proven to be responsible somebody who had shown ability somebody who had merits and who had future prospects they had potential somebody who they could transfer their name over to and be proud of what makes God's love so amazing is that his adoption of us is not based on merits it's not like that it's not based on our prospects our potential or our beauty we are not fit to bear his name but he's chosen to give his name to us anyways you know I hear people sometimes talk about how it's unfair that God doesn't save everyone but listen you don't want God to be fair with you you don't want God to be fair with you you want his mercy what would be fair is that he would leave us all orphans eternally for having sinned against him and rejected him and rebelled against him you don't want his fairness you want his grace you want his mercy when you are justified by faith in

Jesus Christ you stand before God as judge and you hear him declare not guilty righteous through faith in Jesus that's justification but in adoption God the judge who just declares you righteous comes down from beneath his judgment seat comes over to you removes those robes that regalia steps down embraces you in his arms and says softly to you my son my boy my daughter my girl how can we ever get over the thrill of being adopted by

God and being made a full co-equal heir with Jesus how can we ever get over the love and the mercy of God J.I.

[38 : 10] Packer speaking of this verse in 1 John says God receives us as sons and loves us with the same steadfast affection with which he eternally loves his beloved only begotten son there are no distinctions of affection in the divine family we are all loved just as fully as Jesus is loved this and nothing less than this is what adoption means no wonder he says John cries behold what manner of love when you understand adoption he concludes your heart will cry the same John says that this love is so amazing it mystifies those who haven't received it in the rest of verse one he says the reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him they haven't known this no wonder they can't understand you know there are aliens in this world there are aliens in this world but they don't fly in

UFOs or UAPs they aren't those bodies that were recently unearthed in Mexico or Peru or wherever it was the true aliens in this world are Christians it's you and me the world is not our home we live confidently in the present with the certainty that Jesus will return for us and when he does we have this hope which is John's third principle here you will be conformed to the image of Jesus you will be conformed to the image of Jesus be confident be certain John says because you will be conformed in verse two beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is and here

John is talking about glorification the final step in our salvation John Edwards said grace is glory begun and glory is grace completed the perfection of God's grace will be realized in our full complete total permanent glorification let's look at Romans 8 29 through 30 for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and those whom he predestined he also called those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified that passage is called the golden chain of salvation again God keeps whomever he saves no child of his gets left behind they all reach the final stage of salvation when they are conformed to the image of

Jesus Christ 1 Corinthians 15 50 through 53 let's hear what Paul says more about this time when he comes I tell you this brothers flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable behold I tell you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we all shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed for this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality when Jesus returns you who are in Christ will be changed you will receive your resurrected body like his you will be you but the perfect version of you because you will possess

Jesus character and you will be free from sin and its consequences and your flesh in this life and this perishable body desires and you will see Jesus face to face and you'll see his face forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and that truth that reality should change the way we live in the present shouldn't it John seems to think so as he says in chapter 3 verse 3 and everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure and so the adjustment that I believe that God is calling us all to make having heard his word in these verses is this be consistent in your pursuit of purity be consistent in your pursuit of purity every day be consistent in your pursuit of purity

[43 : 59] Colossians 3 1-4 gives us this exhortation be persistent seek purity if then you have been raised with Christ you've been born again seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God set your minds on things that are above not on things that are on the earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God when Christ who is your life appears when he returns then you also will appear with him in glory are you excited about this is this something that you are anticipating you know I've been convicted this week of what I often think about when it comes to the future and what

I often think about when it comes to my future is retirement and I'm 40 and people are living longer and I've probably got 30 more years at least of working should the Lord not come back or I go to be with him before then but I always am thinking about retirement and in my mind I've had that kind of as the finish line you know once I'm done doing what you've called me to do Lord I've got these plans these things I would want to do I just want to relax and take it easy and I think about that a lot and I've been convicted because here's what's been convicting me if I serve the Lord in my present for these next 30 years or however long it is and my goal all along the way is just to retire I will not have been a good servant I'll have wasted a lot of time and opportunity and so

I've been changing and I hope that you will pray for changing in your mind as well you know you never retire from being a Christian thank God and there's always ministry for you to do whether you're retired or not but the goal that all of us should be seeking the thing that we should be thinking about the most when it comes to our future is seeing the sky torn apart and Jesus being there ready to call us home and so I am planning to think more about that I hope to do it every day and I believe that in doing so you will feel the confidence the certainty and looking forward to being made completely like Jesus and that will affect how you live your life in the present and I hope you'll join me in thinking more about that four application questions for you to discuss in your community groups look at later today or later this week question number one how do you think you will react

when you first see

Jesus revealed in all his glory and how can we be confident and be unashamed before him when he returns thinking about your present life what do we need to do to ensure that we're looking confidently towards that coming day question number two what motivated God to adopt us as his children and how can our adoption give us certainty that we are saved and that we'll be kept by him question three how should the knowledge that you will be conformed into Christ's image when he returns encourage you to live a life of purity and how will you seek to do that and I encourage you to read Philippians four eight through nine as you answer that question and then finally read Philippians one three through twenty and to verse twenty one and first Corinthians fifteen thirty five through forty nine what do these passages teach us about the resurrection and what we will be like in heaven and I hope you conclude just thinking and reveling about that day and what that will mean for you giving

God present but before I pray if you're here and you don't have that confidence and that certainty it may be because you don't truly know him as your Lord and Savior and when that day comes you won't be confident you will be ashamed and when that day comes you won't be certain because you have nothing to base your certainty on if you don't have faith in Jesus Christ and you will not be conformed into his image but you will suffer eternally in hell for the sins you have committed against him and I hope and I pray that today is the day of salvation for you!

[49 : 54] God and you can find can find me after church you can find me during our time of invitation I would love to talk and pray with you for the rest of us think about Jesus coming think about it every day and we have a promise from God's word that if you do that it's going to have a huge change on your life in!

wonderful ways let's pray! Lord thank you for these promises that we have that we can trust in Lord that you haven't left us as orphans but that you in your grace you have adopted us through salvation in Jesus Christ you not only declare us righteous but you declare us your children your sons and your daughters whom you have things prepared for in your heavenly kingdom that earthly words can't describe God I pray that for me for us that Holy Spirit each and every day you would cause us to to think about the fact that Jesus is going to return soon and that we would live our lives pursuing righteousness and purity and making the most of our days knowing that it's going to be worth it when you return and we're with you and we see your face and we feel your embrace thank you father in

Jesus name we pray amen