

The Christian Mind and Glory

Building a Christian Mind

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Bible Verse: 1 John 3:1-3
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Well, we come today to what in some ways is the final message of our year-long series on "Building a Christian Mind." There will be a couple of messages on Tuesday and next Sunday that will kind of focus on kind of summarizing it all, but this is really the final message of the series proper, and then we'll just sort out a couple of things. What is the ultimate goal, what is the ultimate aim of a Christian mind that truly sees things biblically and sees things the way that they ought to be seen? And it's remarkable what we're going to see. We're going to see that the Christian mind is ultimately focused on a hope that goes far beyond this life and yet at the same time has a practical dimension in this life that shapes the way that we respond to everything that is around us.

Turn to 1 John 3. 1 John 3, it's a delight to come to this text once again emphasizing some different aspects than what I've done in the past as we've looked at this. 1 John 3, the first three verses. Today I want you to realize and to think about this text that what we're seeing here is the goal and the final ultimate aspiration of the Christian mind, of the Christian heart. This text unlocks for us the hope that beyond which there is no better hope, there is no higher hope. This is everything of our aspirations wrapped up into one complete package. 1 John 3:1, 2, and 3, where we read,

1 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. 2 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. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Now over the past several weeks, we looked at passages from Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 2 to see what Scripture said about the nature of true salvation, and true salvation rests upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, his perfect life, his atoning death. Apart from that, none of us could ever be saved. We saw that salvation is of the Lord. Salvation comes from God. It is a work of God, not a work of man, and that humbles us and liberates us at the same time, because we realize that we cannot save ourselves, we cannot be good enough to go to heaven, and so in one sense we give up even trying to make ourselves better and we by faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ. We receive him and

we rest in him. We realize that Christ has done all that is necessary for our eternal salvation and we rest in his work rather than trying to add our own. Scripture says salvation is a gift of God not as a result of works lest any man should boast, and so we rest in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what we find here and what is just such a necessary corrective to the way that most people think about Christianity, is that God saves us not to make us have a better life here on earth. This life, it's through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, through his Apostle Paul in the letter of Timothy. And so the ultimate goal is not about this life. And listen, that's good news. That is really, really good news because when you are faced with medical situations that don't improve, can't improve, have no prospect of improvement, then a message of salvation that says, you know, God's going to make your life better in this life, it's exposed for being really empty. That's not satisfying when you're at the end of your life, you're in physical decline, and it's not going to get better, for example, or when you have broken relationships and you don't know if they're going to get better or not. The thinking man, the thinking woman starts to say, "You know, I want something that transcends all of this," because even if it did get better in this life, you know, the ultimate end of it is all death anyway. It's appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment and so there has to be something beyond this life that is the aim of biblical salvation, that is the aim of biblical Christianity, or we're really wasting our time, and what we find here in this passage is exactly that, what we find in biblical Christianity is that there is this aspect of it called glorification when we are in heaven and we are made perfect in Christ and that there is also this aspect of during this life of progressive sanctification, and it's just amazing to me how much God can say, how much the Spirit of God could say in so few words that in these brief verses he would talk about the love of God, the aim of glorification, and the outworking of salvation and sanctification, all in the short frame of what we discussed or what I read just a few moments ago, 1 John 3:1 to 3. And so what we want to look at in verse 1, we're just going to review briefly our great position in Christ. I'm not going to spend much time here because that's what we've been talking about for the past couple of months now. Then we'll look at glorification, our great hope in Christ in verse 2. And then in verse 3, we'll look at our sanctification, which is our glad response to everything that the Lord has done for us.

Now, just to set the context, in the course of the life of our church, I want to take you back to Ephesians 2 and just remind you of the things that we have considered in recent weeks. Go back to Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2, just to remember what the Lord has done for us. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were blinded by the devil. We were under the wrath of God. And what did God do? What did God do? God came to us. God stepped toward us, you might say, and we read this in verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Beloved, I'm not going to repeat my exposition of those verses, but simply to say this is that the kindness and the goodness of God in doing the things that

are described there in verses 4 to 7 is absolutely immeasurable. The fact that God loves like this, is merciful like this, is gracious like this, towards sinners like you and me is unfathomable. This is not of human source at all.

If you go back to Ephesians 1, just again, by way of reminder of what he has done for us in that hostile, alienated condition in which we were, we read in Ephesians 1, beginning in verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing," where, "in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." Now there is no ocean on the face of the earth that is large enough to contain the water of kindness and goodness that God has shown. The sky if it were a scroll is not enough, it's not large enough to write out all of the wonders of the love of God to his people. He chose us before the foundation of the world. This is an eternal love that we are presently enjoying. He adopted us into his family as sons and daughters of the King. We were hostile. We were enemies. And for the most part, those of us that are here in this room, even in an earthly sense, nothing noble about our heritage. We're not kings or queens here. We're not, you know, there's no political power that's represented in this room that men would notice us, that men would pay attention to us. And yet God paid attention to us, so much so that, so to speak, he said, "I would have that one be my son. I would have that one be my daughter. I would bring him, I would bring her into my kingdom." And here we are, having nothing to offer, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." Nothing that contributes to God, and yet here we are on the receiving end of these immeasurable riches of his love, kindness, and mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's wonderful to contemplate and the key for us here today is to realize that there is a long-term plan of God in mind. There is an eternal plan. There is an eternal end to all of this. And if the Spirit of God would just be gracious enough to help us grasp something of this, it would enable us to let go of some of the sorrows and regrets of the present life and let our hands, you know, we can empty our hands of those things and start to reach forward, as it were, into the eternal riches that God has in store for all those that love him and are called according to his purpose.

So that's what we want to focus on here in 1 John 3. We're stepping into the realm of heaven. We're in an atmosphere that is not earthly here. We're in a heavenly atmosphere that just permeates this text that we're going to look at. We only know earthly air and earthly atmosphere to breathe, but we're getting a little bit of a sense of whatever heavenly air is like, whatever a heavenly breeze is like, whatever heavenly oxygen is like, we're getting a sense of that in our passage here today. Let's look at it again as we, first of all, consider our great position in Christ. Our great position in Christ.

Look at verse 1 with me as we kind of set the context from Ephesians, which is a little bit different way to do it, but it works because we're just seeing Scripture coming together with great power and unity here this morning. 1 John 3:1, we see, "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." John, when he says, "Behold," is calling attention to what he's about to say. He's saying, "Wake up, pay attention, look and consider at what I am saying to you right now." Be like if you had just seen a massive display of a meteor shower falling across the night sky and it's just spectacular and the person you're with, "Did you see that? Did you see the majesty of that?" Well, in an internal way, John is saying look at the shower of love that God the Father has given to us, and he's astonished at the fact that we would be called the children of God, that God the Creator, God the Sustainer, God the Concluder of the universe, that God who spoke the world into existence, that Christ who in his incarnation and in his crucifixion gave his life up for sinners with such great love and just, you know, there's just so much that wants to come out of my mouth at the same time, the kind of love that as he hung on the cross looked on those who were crucifying him and said, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing." Who is like that? And the God who is like that, the point is, is that the God who is like that made people who were sinners like us, made us children of God. It's a remarkable reality and John calls attention to it forcibly. He says we are in the divine family through union with Jesus Christ. We can rightly call upon the one true God as our heavenly Father, "Dear Father," as we said in recent exposition, we can know him in such an intimate, trusting, respectful, fearful way that we can call him Father in a way that is more real and more intimate than even our biological father ever was. It's more immediate, it's more direct, it's transcendent in a way that our earthly fathers, at their best, could never have done, and yet God was pleased to bring us into a relationship where we would know him as Father.

God has made us a new creation. We are essentially different from the unsaved man today. We are essentially different from the unsaved person that we used to be. We have been made a new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been transferred from the domain of Satan and brought into the kingdom of his beloved Son and we have all of these wonderful terms that Scripture gives to us to contemplate something of the majesty of the relationship vertically that we have. God is King and we are his glad subjects. We belong to him. We are under his rule, under his protection. God is a shepherd and we are the sheep. God is a Father, we are the children. And on and on it goes. Christ is our Master, we are his willing slaves so that there is this position of authority that God has over us that is shown in some of those expressions, and yet we find Scripture describing it also in this condition of love, this condition of acceptance, this condition of belonging by which we call God our Father. Jesus makes it central to true prayer. He said pray in this way, "Our Father who is in heaven," adopted into his family. And I want to take you, I've been contemplating some over the past few days in Romans 5, I want to take you there since this is fresh on my mind. It's fresh on my mind, so fresh it didn't even make it into my written notes and that's all right. But here in this Christmas season, it's especially good for us to anchor our thoughts, not in sentiment, not in the sentiment of a Hallmark movie that passes and isn't even real, but to anchor our reaction to this truth in the enduring truth of the word of God and to see it for all of the fullness in which God has revealed it to us, what we were and now what we are and the love of Christ and the work of Christ that accomplished it all on our behalf.

Romans 5:6, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Paul is making a very profound logical argument in that passage. What he is doing is he's reasoning from the greater to the lesser. If God has done the greater thing, then he will certainly do the lesser thing. And the logic of the passage is, is that if God has done the greater thing of loving us and Christ dying for us while we were enemies, while we were in a position and a state of hostility against him, if he loved us then, follow this, beloved, if he loved us then, and Christ did that for us then when we were hostile and under the judgment of God, follow me here, then if we're reconciled now by what Christ has done, and we are as believers, then how much more, if God loved us in that hostile state, how much more is his favor secure and certain to us now that we've been adopted into his family and are children of God? That's the logic of it. If he loved us when we were enemies, then how much more will he love and keep us when we're in the family of God?

It's an unanswerable argument and understand that this argument that Paul makes here in Romans 5 is a direct and final repudiation of every substandard form of Christianity that would tell people that you could lose your salvation. You cannot begin to fit that mindset into what Paul says here in Romans 5. If God loved us when we were rebels, he's certainly going to love us and keep us when we are his children and the point of all of that, beloved, the point that Paul is making there in Romans 5 is that God intends for you to enjoy a full and complete assurance of your salvation. If you understand that Christ died as a substitute for sinners like you, and you've put your faith in him, if you understand that you've been reconciled to God and adopted into his family, then as a logical necessity, as a biblical working out of your salvation, you should realize and you must know that that can never be taken away from you. That's what Paul says in Romans 8 in the last two verses, "I'm convinced that neither life nor death nor any other created thing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If you're saved at all, you're saved forever. If you are in Christ, beloved, God will not allow anything to turn his affections away from you. God will not change. God's purpose has been established. God brought you into Christ in order to keep you. And it's a blasphemy of unspeakable proportions to think that someone would say that, "Yes, God saved you, but he may toss you out in the end." Everything in Scripture is against that. Everything about that kind of mindset is a direct contradiction and assault on the unchanging immutable love of God as it's revealed to us in Christ and in his word.

Let that sink in. I don't mind slowing down and being quiet for a moment or two to let that kind of sink into your mind and thinking. And a person could rightly say, "Well, if that's true, then I don't have to worry about facing God in judgment, do I?" No, you don't because God would never send you away in the end if he saved you in Christ. You could say, "Well, if that's true, then that means that whatever goes wrong in this life, it comes out well for me in the end. Is that right?" Yeah, that's exactly right. "If I'm saved now,

then I will certainly be in heaven at the end. Is that what you're saying? Is that what Scripture says?" Yes, that's exactly what Scripture says so that there is this incredible burden that is lifted off of our shoulders and cast aside. The burden of sin was laid on Christ. He carried it. He suffered for it so that it could be put away.

Now look, I realize that some of you have besetting sins and troubling temptations; it's a privilege as a pastor to talk through some of those things with you from time to time. But to understand that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus, the ultimate outcome of your salvation is not guaranteed by the strength of your commitment or the perfection of your obedience, the ultimate final outcome of your salvation is guaranteed by the shed blood, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the immutable, unchanging nature of the promise of God to everyone who believes. If God promises that he will keep you forever, then he will keep you forever and there's just so much rest and relief to be found in that.

Now look, I understand that many of you were conditioned as children in legalistic ways of thinking, lots of rules, lots of guilt, and maybe your parents meant well, maybe they just didn't know any better, whatever. Doesn't matter. What you need to do, what your privilege is now, is to come with fresh eyes to Scripture and say, "Oh, this is what Scripture reveals to me. What Scripture reveals to me is a saving God who is loving and merciful and keeps his own forever. And if I belong to him, then I'm safe forever. And that redefines the entire way that I look at all of life. If I'm secure in the love of God, it doesn't matter that even my own flesh and blood rejects me. If I'm secure in Christ and he's loved me and he's my Good Shepherd and goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life and I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever, if that's true, then it flavors everything else that I taste in life. There is nothing that is just so completely bitter that it cannot be softened and sweetened by a remembrance of the eternal love of God on my soul."

These are things of vast consequence. We have not begun even in 55 messages, 53 today, to scratch the surface of all the wonder that these things mean. If someone thinks that, "Well, I understand all those implications," you haven't even begun to understand them because these are things that come from the infinite depths of eternity past going into the infinite depths of eternity future, brought together by the eternal plan of God in the infinite understanding by which he works all things after the counsel of his will, all things, whether in the heavens or on the earth, we could never begin to plumb the depths of all of this. It's enough for us to realize that in the immensity of the eternal mind of God, he looked on you and me with favor, loved us, died for us, drew us by his Spirit into these things and this changes everything. Beloved, it's these truths that kept those courageous martyrs at the stake, praising God without fear while the flames burned and singed their flesh and they did so with courage and without complaint. It's these things that caused the apostles to speak with power in the midst of opposition. It's these things that give you the strength and perspective to persevere another day with hope in the midst of your difficult marriage, in your family disappointments, to be rooted in these things. You see, we have a great position in Christ. God has loved us with a measure of love that

we should be called children of God, and we are, and that affects our existence in this world.

Look at the end of verse 3. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. The world does not bend the knee to Christ. It's no wonder that they ridicule, scorn, and persecute his followers. Jesus said it would be like that. "If they hated me, they'll hate you." But put that in perspective. It's as if Christ said, "But put it in perspective. Yes, the world hates me," Christ says. "The world will hate you," Christ says. But put it in perspective of the fact that Christ loves you and his love is better than any passing affections that this world could offer. And to belong to him, to be in Christ, to be in his family, we must learn to value that above everything else in the world. Above health, above family, above everything else that could possibly call upon our affections, things that we have that are painful, things that we want that have been withheld, all of those things yield to a greater reality that God has loved us and called us the children of God, secured by the blood of Christ.

Look, there's nothing like this anywhere in the world and the Christian mind, you know, just trying to remember the whole purpose of this series, the Christian mind focuses on that, works out some of the implications of it, and finds in that the anchor for its soul to encourage and keep them no matter what the world may bring. That's our great position in Christ. Ephesians 1, Ephesians 2, Romans 5, 1 John 3, you know, spend this week, spend this week going back to those passages and thinking through those things and trust me, you'll have a Merry Christmas. But that's not all. That's not all. Point number 2, our great hope. Our great hope. John had said we're children of God there in verse 1, and he picks it up in verse 2 in order to amplify the theme, all right? For everything that we just said from verse 1 and the other passages that we looked at, for everything that he said in verse 1, that's only a preliminary introduction to even greater things. Verse 2, he's going to develop the thought that we are children of God. Look at it there in verse 1. I want you to just see these things, just a moderately attentive reading just unfolds the theme for you, it just falls off like so much well-cooked ribs from the bone. Beloved, we should be called children of God, verse 1, now verse 2. Beloved, we are God's children now, okay? So he's talking about God's children, and he's amplifying that theme as we go into verse 2. Let's read the whole here, "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." Paul says, by status, by very position, by nature, right now we are children of God. We share in his nature, we're secure in his family, he has adopted us in, that's our position, it can't change, it never will. We're adopted into the family.

Now with everything that we've already said here this morning in the past half hour, if we just stopped there, if we just stopped there, we could walk out and rejoice at the goodness of God, rejoicing in the security of our salvation and being overwhelmed with praise and thanks to God lost in wonder and praise. But that's only part of it. There's so much more to come. You see, your essence, your nature, your status, your position as a child of God is settled, it is final, it cannot change. I'm speaking to Christians here this morning. But yet what Scripture teaches us is that our present position as a child of God is only a down payment. There's a greater glory that is guaranteed to us by the fact that we are children

of God now. We're children of God now, nothing can change that, but we don't have the fullness of what God intends for us to enjoy in our salvation here in this life. There is a greater glory. Oh, beloved, grab hold of 1 John 3:2 and everything in your life will completely radically change if you've not grasped this before. This verse contains the key to seeing everything in life and eternity differently. John says, look at it there again with me, "what we will be has not yet appeared." Notice there's a time reference change. He talks in the present tense at the beginning of verse 2. He says "we are God's children now." Present tense. This is the status we enjoy. Incredible status. Praise be to God for what he's given to us as children of God. But then he pivots to the future, "what we will be," future tense, "what we will be has not yet appeared." So now, having thoroughly dealt with the present, now we look forward to the future and say, what's the outcome of being a child of God, and John says it hadn't appeared yet. John's an apostle, he doesn't even know what to say about it.

He says, "but we know this much," look at there in the middle of verse 2. I want every one of you to look at your Bible right now. Look at 1 John 3:2, "but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." Two things there. We are going to be transformed into another condition, we're going to be glorified, we will be like him because, number 2, we will see him as he is. This staggering truth here in verse 2 takes us to just an eternal realm that all we can do is kind of stand like a little kid trying to look into the cookie jar that's just a little bit too high for him, just kind of standing on the toes trying to look and see what the goods are that are in there, we're something like that, standing on our spiritual tiptoes here, looking forward to something that we smell, the aroma of the fresh baked cookies. We smell the heavenly aroma of something really good, but we can't quite see it just yet because it's out of our reach here in this earthly body, in this earthly realm but we have the aroma of glory wafting through the atmosphere with what we are reading and seeing and contemplating here today. It's a staggering truth taking us to another realm. Jesus Christ will one day return from heaven, Acts 1, the angel said, "Christ is going to return just like he went up, so he's going to come back, visibly to all the earth." He's going to appear in the world with great glory and power. When he does that, we as his people will see him with physical, literal sight. Our faith will become sight.

And when he comes, we'll see him and what will that be like? Well, Scripture gives us, it pulls back the curtain just a little bit to just draw us in with this greater sense of anticipation. What will it be like to see Jesus Christ in his glory? Let's look at a couple of passages. Matthew 17. Matthew 17. In the transfiguration. Matthew 17:1, "after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." You want to know what it's going to be like when we see him? Somehow it's going to be blindingly glorious so that looking into the sun today will be a diminished picture of what it's like to see the glory of Christ. You say, "Well, I can't even look at the glory of the sun without it blinding me and you're saying it's going to be something greater than that?" Precisely inasmuch as the created entity, the sun, is lesser than the Creator who made it.

Verse 3, "behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents,'" and Peter didn't know what he was saying. He was so overwhelmed by the glory that he had seen that he just started babbling theological nonsense about creating equal tents for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.

Verse 5, "He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.'" What's it going to be like to see Christ in glory when he appears? Well, it's going to be something greater than anything we've seen on Earth, because we can't look at the sun. We can't look at the sun in eclipse without going blind and so we're going to see something greater than the sun, S-U-N, and when we see it, it's going to be a glorious something like white representing the fullness of purity and cleanness and majesty and holiness, and in any other condition than as a child of God it would be terrifying to see. Verse 6, "the disciples heard the testimony of God, "This is my beloved Son," and all of it just caused them to fall on their faces and they were terrified. What we're going to see when we see Christ would be terrifying to the natural man, a grandeur of glory beyond anything that we could compare. And yet, because we're children of God, when we see this, there's going to be a sense of Christ saying, "Rise and have no fear." I don't know, beloved. I don't know how you can look into something that's greater than the sun and yet, because of the work of Christ and the acceptance of God and adoption into his family, we'll be there without fear. It's going to be something like that.

Turn to the book of Acts, 7. And again, I'm not pretending for a moment that the things that we're saying here give us any kind of a complete picture. These are just whispered hints of what the glory will be like. You remember when Stephen was stoned after he rebuked the hard-hearted Jewish leaders in a brilliant speech in Acts 7. Acts 7:54. Maybe one day the Lord will give me power to preach in such a way that people want to stone me. That would be cool. Acts 7:54, "Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he," meaning Stephen, "full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'" He saw something of the glory of God. He saw something of the glory of Christ. He saw Christ. You know, the scroll of heaven is pulled back, the curtain is pulled back. He looks up and somehow with Spirit-enabled vision, he sees Christ in heaven standing at the right hand of God and the stones rained down and he entered into that presence. Seeing Christ in glory will be something like that. So it'll be such a complete enveloping of our vision, such a complete enveloping of our awareness that nothing else will matter by comparison. There's probably a sense in which Stephen didn't even feel the stones as they were hitting him for the sake of the greater glory that captured his mind.

How about Acts 9:3 through 5? This is when Paul was on the road to Damascus. The Lord meets him. Paul is converted and world history began a new course. Acts 9:3, "Now

as [Paul] went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'" Whatever the glory of God was, when the unconverted Saul saw it, it forced him to the ground. He recognized that he was in the presence of something greater, something majestic, something, he was in the presence of the Lord himself. There was this clear understanding in his mind that he was in the presence of deity. It overwhelmed him and he fell physically prostrate before the vision, and he could only cry out, "What shall I do, Lord?"

And so you pull these together, the transfiguration, Stephen, and Paul, and we see that this will be overwhelmingly great, something that the unconverted man cannot process in his own mind. This is beyond human capacity to grasp. There will be a blinding reality to it, and yet because we are children of God when we see him, it will be something that we see without fear. The eternal Son of God, the one who loved us and gave himself up for us on the cross, the one who created the worlds, the one who will still bear the scars of the nails in his resurrected hands and in his feet, the one who loved us with this great love that we've been seeing here this morning, somehow we're going to see him face to face. When that happens, nothing in this life is going to matter because that's going to be so transcendently great that everything else will fade by comparison. We don't have the words in this flesh to describe it, to assimilate it in our minds, but we haven't this, we have enough, we have enough biblical hints of it to realize that it's going to be something transcendent, something exhilarating, something magnificent, something to which the best pleasures of this life is refuse by comparison to that transcendent vision of seeing Christ. If all that God gave you, if God only created you for one moment to be able to enjoy that, he would have given you a gift far beyond anything that you could have ever imagined or deserved. If you could just see it for a moment, it would be a blessing beyond measure.

Go back to 1 John 3. And yet, and yet, and yet, he's not just going to let us see and then leave us there and move on to something else. It's not as though we're going to see this and then move on to better things. There's nothing better than seeing Christ face to face. Somehow when we see him, go back to verse 2, somehow when we see him, it's going to change us. We are going to be transformed, transfigured ourselves. Look at it there in the middle of verse 2, the simplicity of the language betrays the magnificence of which he speaks, "when he appears we shall be like him because we will see him as he is." I don't know what's that going to be like, beloved. I have no idea. I have no idea but somehow this glory of the transfiguration, somehow this glory that blinded the Apostle Paul, somehow this glory that ennobled Stephen in his martyrdom, somehow that glory, somehow Christ is going to share that with us so that we partake in the nature of that. We will not become God, perish the thought, the creature will never become uncreated, so we're not going to enter into the deity or essence of God, but somehow we will share in his holiness and in his resurrected glory. Christian, this is your destiny. This is the outcome of it all. To be a Christian is to have this outcome without exception. And in between, between God saving you and this outcome where you are made like Christ

because you see him as he is, in between connecting those two magnificent dots is the development of a Christian mind which loves these truths, which seeks to understand them, and increasingly sets your hope on that outcome and on nothing else, and finds your complete and final and ultimate and exclusive satisfaction in that. That's what it means to have a Christian mind, is that you love and hope and yearn for this outcome more than anything else in the world and if God withholds other blessings that your heart desires for, you're okay with that because the supreme surpassing blessing has already been given and it's just a matter of entering into possession of it.

Look at 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1. We'll just look at verse 13. This is all over the Bible and the only reason we miss it is not because God hasn't said it, we miss it just because we're looking for other things in Scripture in our earthbound affections. 1 Peter 1:13, "Therefore, preparing your minds for action," preparing your biblical mind, your Christian mind, prepare your Christian mind for action, "and being sober-minded," here it is, "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Set your hope, set your affections, set everything you want, conform the desires of your heart so that they are all united on this one single outcome of the grace that will come to you when you see the Lord Jesus Christ face to face when he's revealed in all of his glory. That's what you're to do. That's how. God's given you a mind, you're a Christian, that's how you're to use your Christian mind is so that it develops and fixes your heart on the grace to be revealed to you.

I've often quoted this, and I won't stop quoting it, but Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this. He says, "Do you know that you are destined to see him as he is? Blessed, glorious vision to see the Son of God in all his glory, face to face, you standing and looking at him and enjoying him for all eternity. It is only then that we will begin to understand what he did for us, the price he paid, the cost of our salvation." The great doctor continues, "Oh, let us hold on to this! Shame on us forever grumbling. Shame on us forever saying that the Christian life is too hard. Shame on us forever half-heartedly worshiping, praising, and loving Christ and his glory. You and I are destined for that vision glorious. We shall see him as he is, face to face."

We won't take time to turn to these passages, but if you want to look at other passages, Job 19:25-27; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:4; Revelation 22:3-4, all speaking about the transformation that will take place when we see our Redeemer face to face, when faith becomes sight, when something brighter than the sun becomes that which we partake in rather than shrink back from. And to think, beloved, don't lose sight of what the whole context of this is, to think that God, in his mercy, in his kindness, in his love, prepared you to enjoy that when you were helpless, a sinner, and an enemy of his, what kind of love is that? How great is this God. How kind is this God. How magnificent is he. How good of a Father is he that he would bestow this blessing on us when we were rejecting him and that he preserves and keeps us for it in the midst of our half-hearted worship and our half-hearted living for him. How good is he that he will carry us through to that to the end. There's no measure. There's no yardstick long enough. There's no ocean plumb that goes deep enough to measure the height, the depth, the breadth, the width of

the love of God upon us. It's a glorious, crushing weight that elevates us to heights unknown.

Now, just briefly. I never want to leave this mental realm when we enter into it. I never want to. The only reason we have to move on is because it's what Scripture does. It propels us on. You see, we contemplate these things, we set our hope on them, and then we realize that there is a consequence for life that remains while God leaves us in this flesh. That brings us to our third and final point, our glad response. Our glad response. There are practical implications to this hope. 1 John 3:3, "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." Do you want to know if you're a Christian? The question is whether having heard these magnificent things, your response is, "I want to be more like Christ now. I want to grow in grace now. I have a responsibility that I embrace to grow in my sanctification today." Because look at it there in verse 3. You know, if you don't care about your spiritual life, you're not a Christian. Full stop. Because Scripture says right here, in the context of being a child of God with this future hope, it says if you're a child of God and you have this hope, what's the outcome? What's the result of that? Verse 3, everyone who has this hope, everyone without exception, everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself as he is pure, realizes that there are biblical responsibilities that come with a biblical hope. There are no exceptions. This is the way it works and however faltering our efforts may be, there's something in the heart of every true believer that says, "I want to grow. I want to be more like Christ. I want to obey him. I want to live a life that expresses my gratitude for his mercy, kindness, goodness, patience, and grace. How could I do anything else," the believing mind thinks, "and so I want to grow in this grace that he has given to me.

Everyone. The true teaching of Scripture, true understanding of these things, brings a bright dividing line between the redeemed and the lost and makes it much more difficult to live in a shadow, to live in the shadows of ambiguity here. Scripture doesn't leave this for ambiguity. Scripture says this hope is real and the one who has this hope pursues sanctification. By the way, we'll pursue sanctification as we return to the Sermon on the Mount next year, in the next calendar year and everything we need to know about sanctification will be found in what lies ahead there in the Sermon on the Mount. Here John's just saying everyone who has this hope does in fact respond to it.

Now hope, we've said this many times, hope is not a vague wish that something will come true. In the New Testament, hope is a confident expectation grounded in the sure promise of an omnipotent God. Everyone who has this hope about seeing Christ and this hope is something that is confident. We expect this based on the promise of God and based on his power and his faithfulness so that as we stand here together today, those of us that are in Christ, we have no doubt about this outcome. We're confident of it. It has to come to pass exactly as God's word has said that it will be. And if we are in Christ, it means that we will share in this and so that we delight in it not because we're going to be good enough to earn it in the end. No, it has nothing to do with it. Our hope is grounded in the fact that our God, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ says, "This is what I'm going to do for everyone who believes in me." We say, "I believe you. I trust you. I can't wait."

And so Christ is coming and our glad response is to grow in grace in the meantime and, beloved, that inseparably joined response, we have this hope and the inseparably joined response of wanting to grow in grace, that is the capstone of a Christian mind. That's the capstone of it all. We look beyond this world based on all the doctrine that is revealed to us in Scripture, we look beyond this world to the hope that is the outcome of what God has given to us in Christ and we lay hold of that and then we pull it back into this life and say, "This is how I must respond." The Christian mind looks to the end of the world and beyond to brighter things to come, and then with a renewed heart says, "I want to live for Christ afresh here today." It sets aside lesser things to focus on the pursuit of sanctification.

Beloved, turn to Titus 2, we're going to end on that text. That text is in my notes. Titus 2. But my dear friends, my dear, dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to emphasize something to you as we come to these closing matters. This great hope that we have in Christ, this great understanding of our position as children of God, our position and appreciating our position as children of God, this great future hope that is ours in Christ to see him face to face and then to turn to pursuing afresh a life of purity in Christ and biblical thinking and biblical living, beloved, understand these are not side issues that we're talking about here today. This is not something incidental. This is not an academic consideration of what happened when Jephthah made his vow in Judges 11. This is not an incidental consideration about whether there are gaps in the genealogies of Scripture or not. Those things have their place but the things that we're talking about now, being a child of God, having a great hope, and pursuing sanctification as a result, these are not incidental matters. These are the fundamental reasons why we exist as Christians, is to know God, to know Christ like this, to long, to fix our hope on seeing him, and that's the outcome of it all, and to live a life in response that recognizes the comprehensive sovereignty and Lordship claims of Christ and not to resist them, not to play games with them, not to play these games of saying, "I want Jesus as Savior, but I don't care if I have him as Lord." Out on the thought! Out on the blasphemous thought that so many have published! If Christ has done this and we understand it, then we want all of him and we don't want to try to parcel it up so we can justify and continue in sin in our lives. Out on the thought. So these aren't side issues, is my point. Our position, our hope, our response, this is why we exist.

Titus 2:11 through 15. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people," now look at what the result of salvation is. Look at what having a Christian mind leads you to do, okay? I have not given you extraneous things here this morning. I've not given you obscure things and rooted in original language stuff that you can't seek out for yourself. This is all on the plain pages of Scripture where you can read it and see it for yourself and see the truth and force of it in your own heart and there's no excuse for that not being the result in any one of us. Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age," see there's our present response. Verse 13, "waiting for our blessed hope," there's the future, "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own

possession who are zealous for good works." And then Paul gives this command to Titus which is the responsibility of every preacher of the word of God and the authorization for biblical teaching, "Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

Beloved, are you in Christ? Is that your position? Do you have this great hope fixed in your heart and are you living accordingly? That's why Christians exist. That's the outcome of a Christian mind.

Let's pray together.

Father, we love you and praise you for all of your goodness. Bring forth new life to those who have heard these things and recognize that they're not Christians. Draw them by your Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ. For the rest of us, Father, we thank you to be children of God. We thank you for the expectation to one day see Christ face to face, to see that blinding glory without terror or fear, and we ask for your help to live accordingly while we wait. In Jesus' name, amen.

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