

**1st John 3: 1-9; “Progress in Purifying Yourself”, Sermon # 13 in a series entitled –
“Behold What Manner of Love”, A Communion Sermon delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on January 7th, 2018,
the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We live in 2018, but let us ask ourselves: Where are the people and the culture that developed in this country in the years following the Civil War? Those people are all dead and they have gone to their eternal reward; of heaven, or to the judgment of hell. The buildings that they built back then are decaying now, and crumbling now, many of them. Their names are forgotten to us, for the most part, and we know very little of their actual lives, or thoughts, or actions, unless they were written down in some journal or history book. It was a different time from ours, but it was just as real as ours is now. Now think about the world of the Christian versus the world of the rest of the people in the world who have not been saved. Verse 1 of our text says that the world does not know the Christian because it does not know God. I am sure that our unbelieving neighbors shake their heads at us when we go to our Sunday meetings and our Wednesday night Bible studies. Many of them sit and continually watch television, and they never pick up a Bible; the truth of which would save their eternal soul. They may know all the scores of the games of basketball, baseball, football, and soccer, but they do not understand what the score is between them and God. They are losing and they are losing badly. We must understand that unsaved people around us will never come to know Jesus unless they see our sure and certain hope of eternal life. When you have hope as a Christian you will purify yourself, and it will be a witness to unsaved people around you.

It is the Father’s love that listens to you crying ‘Abba Father’ to him in all of your attempts to be sanctified. It is His loving hand which guides you, and He will help you along the path of righteousness. It is His loving hand that chastens you with the rod and guides you with His staff. And surely it is true, “Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” And so, when He brings you to cross the river Jordan, as Christian and Hopeful did, in Pilgrim’s Progress, He will love you still more practically yet. For our verse 3 says that; “We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” We shall be glorified together with Him, fully conformed to His blessed image. Behold, what manner of love.

So, to purify yourself as Christ is pure, you must 1st of all – Understand that the love of the Father is a love which leads to giving His saints grace to change. 2nd – You must understand what sin is and why Christ came. 3rd – You must abide in Christ by the practice of righteousness. And 4th – You must realize that there is a spiritual battle to be won in your own life. It is my prayer that when we come to observe the Lord’s Supper, that we will see the real basis of our purifying ourselves is found in our acting upon the grace and truth which Christ Himself gives to us.

1st of all - To make progress in purifying yourself you should understand that the love of the Father is a love which leads to giving His saints the grace to change.

Verse 2 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be.” “We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” John is saying here that the Father who has loved you will bring the work of your salvation to a dramatic completion someday. “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1: 6) It was “In love that the Father predestined us to adoption as sons, through Jesus Christ,” it says in Ephesians 1: 5. Romans 8: 29 tells us the purpose. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” So, if you have come to know Christ, there is a work of conformity taking place. It began at your regeneration when the dominion of sin was taken away in your heart, and you were raised from the dead spiritually, together with Christ. And He is now

giving to you many blessings of grace which will lead you to become more holy in His sight. All of this giving of grace is based upon the love of the Father.

As your sanctification progresses in this life you come to understand more and more the right way to think, to feel, and to act in accordance with His blessed Word, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8: 12 says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you are living according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba Father"! "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."

Let us think together about our Lord's return. It is a fact that when we see Christ on that glorious day when He returns, that "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is". In other words we shall be totally conformed to what Jesus Christ is like, in both body and soul. We will never be deity in flesh as He is, but we shall, someday, be sinless and perfectly holy like Him. If you have Christ's saving grace at work in your heart, this is a sure hope that you have, and it will lead you it says in verse 3, to "purify yourself", just as Christ is pure. To purify yourself as a Christian means that you have to reckon with the fact that there is still some remaining corruption of sin in your very nature after your conversion to Christ. There are many actions of holiness and righteousness that you need to engage in, to grow up into Christ, and become more like Him. It is true that the Old Man that you were, is dead. The dominating power of sin has been broken in you, and you are free in regard to righteousness; to do it, and to practice it, and to make progress in it. You begin by thinking of the fact that you will one day be like Christ; perfect and holy, but that He expects you to make progress by your involvement of purifying yourself.

2nd – To make progress in purifying ourselves we must know what sin is and why Christ came. (Verses 3-5)

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin." Sin is defined for us in God's Holy Law. And God's holy law is the body of commandments that have been given to us in His Holy Word the Bible; the moral and ethical precepts and principles that God has stated that we are to live our lives by. It is summarized in the 10 commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, and those Ten commandments are summed up in the two greatest commandments which are: That you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and you are to love your neighbor as yourself. This is the summary of man's whole duty to God. John is saying that whenever you sin, you are committing lawlessness. You are not listening to, or regarding God's voice, which speaks to you in these commandments to direct you to your duty. When you commit sin you are breaking God's law, you are setting it aside, you are neglecting it, you are despising it, you are throwing rocks through the windows of light and truth and duty that He has given you to live by.

Now next to this definition of sin, John places the purity and perfection of the nature of Jesus Christ. "In Him there is no sin." There is nothing in Jesus Christ that ever inclined Him to commit sin, even though He was tempted in all points like we are. When He was tempted to sin, there was a power of holiness within Him waiting to extinguish the very thought and motion of His mind that might even begin to think or to do something wrong. There never was in him any flame of sensual passion, or unrighteous anger, or envy or impatience, or covetousness. Instead, He overcame it by the good thoughts of what love to God and love to man would mean, in very practical terms. Look at John 8: 21-30. "Then Jesus said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.'" "So the Jews said, 'Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come?'" And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from

above.” “You are of this world; I am not of this world.” “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” “Then they said to Him, ‘Who are You?’ And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.” “I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.” They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.” “Then Jesus said to them, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.’ “And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.”

Now, you can see from these verses that Jesus came from heaven, “from above”. Everyone else, born of a woman, are sinners by nature and practice. We did not come down from heaven but we are descended from Adam, and thus we are from “beneath”. We are “of this world.” Jesus is “not of this world”. Jesus knew that we would die in our sins if we would not believe in Him. “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” “Who are you,” they ask. “He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.” He is saying that He was the Messiah and that the Father had sent Him. But look at how focused Jesus was, in His love to God, and in His love to save His Elect people from their sins. Verse 28 – “Then Jesus said to them, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.’ “And He who sent Me is with Me.” “The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” Jesus did nothing of Himself, of His own initiative; He did the bidding of the Father so that He could come and “be lifted up” on the cross and die for our sins. His obedience to the Father’s law and the Father’s will is described by him as, “I always do those things that please Him”. “He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.” You and I are sanctified by that perfect will of Christ’s. And therefore, if you understand this, you can, and you will, study to purify yourself even as He is pure.

3rd – To make progress in purifying ourselves we must learn to abide in Christ by practicing righteousness. (Verses 6 and 7)

“Whoever abides in Him does not sin.” “Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” “Little children, let no one deceive you.” “He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” “The person who abides in Christ,” John says, “does not sin”. This obviously does not mean that that we do not have any remaining sin in our hearts after conversion. John has already said in chapter 1 verse 8 that “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” What he is talking about here, is first of all, abiding in the truth of Christ; that truth which Jesus gave to the apostles to give to us. Look with me at John 8: 31. “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’ “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” So purifying yourself begins with faith in the truth of Who Jesus is, and what He did, in dying for your sins. He died to sin once for all, and He rose again to set you free from sin. Belief in this truth takes you out of the slavery to sin that you are in by nature. Belief in this truth sets you on the path to the practice of righteousness.

Practicing righteousness means that you take all of the teaching of Jesus and the apostles and apply it; including the portions of truth related to what you will do about the struggles, problems, and sins in your life. Practicing righteousness is attempting by faith to live and do all that you can, to do the right thing in every situation of your life. You should know that you will fail at points, in the attempt. But even your failures are comprehended in the practice of righteousness in that you own up to them and seek for grace to do better in your obedience. Your heart is purified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Christian’s great desire, and it is what He is resolved to do by the grace of Christ. By faith the Christian takes all of the moral commandments of God’s law and puts those into application in their life. They think about the Ten Commandments and they study the things that are prohibited, and the things that are enjoined. And this is a delight to them, not a

burden. It is not as though they are no longer tempted to sin, they are; but they know that the Law was not given to them, in Christ, to condemn them, but to direct them to their duty. They know that only grace will enable them to address the issues of their heart so that their obedience is sincere. But because of Christ, your obedience is sincerely practicing and doing what He has commanded. The practice of righteousness begins in your heart, and it translates into your doing what is commanded. All the obedience of the believer is covered by the blood of Christ, and all the failures, neglects, and disobediences are covered by the blood of Christ as they are confessed. The believer prays to forsake the sins that they may be struggling with, and against. You will cry out to God Most High, through Jesus Christ your Lord to do the right thing in every situation of your life. If you will come down now, to the front with me, I will give you a few more thoughts about your sure hope in Christ before we partake of the Supper.

4th – To make progress in purifying yourself you must realize that there is a spiritual battle to be won in your own life. (Verse 8)

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.” “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” These words tell us that the person who is practicing sin is of the devil. This is where sin began, with the lies and the murderous heart of the devil trying to destroy our race at the Beginning of time. The devil did succeed in bringing about the Fall of Man through his deceitful dealings with Adam and Eve. But the Son of God was sent into the world so that He might destroy the works of the devil. The devil knows that we as Christians are still sinners sometimes, and he is called “the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them day and night before our God”. In Revelation 12: 11 it says: “And they overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” The devil will have his schemes to defeat you in the purification of your heart, in your cleansing yourself from all defilement of flesh and spirit. The only way that you can overcome the devil is to remember the blood of Christ was shed for you. And also, then you will not be using that holy covering of the blood as a justification for further unrighteousness. If you are walking in the Spirit, you will not hold on to your sin, but you will wage war against it. You will remembering Christ overcame sin and death at the cross. And because He did so, so shall you.

We need to remember the words of the writer of the book of Hebrews, Chapter 12. “Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” You see, there is a spiritual battle to be won by you. But you will indeed win it by looking to Jesus. The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. He destroys the hold that the devil has over us at the cross. In conversion He then gives you grace in regeneration, planting the “seed” of righteousness in your heart. Nothing coming from this “seed”, can sin. This is why the Christian does not sin. “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. This “seed” that is planted, is the New Nature placed within you by the Holy Spirit, and nothing that comes from His working can sin. This does not mean that it is impossible for you to sin, or that you do not have remaining sin, or that you do not have sin in the best of your works. It means that all of your sin, in the Old Nature and it’s acts, is covered by the blood of Christ, and therefore, you do not sin. Because of this New Nature and the Holy Spirit’s working in you, you do not practice sin, you do not enjoy it any longer as you used to, and you do not live for it any longer. Christ’s powerful love and discipline will see to that. And over time, then, you will find that you will overcome sinful habits. You will overcome sinful tendencies in your life by Christ’s grace. This is the practice of righteousness. And as you partake

the Supper, I would have you to remember who it was who laid down His life for you, that He might give you this grace. It was your Lord Jesus.