

Purifying Love

Listening to the Apostle of Love

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Bible Text: 1 John 3:1-10

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Our focus this year has been on the task of "Loving Our Neighbors" and while we have focused on the commands to love others, the vast majority of our sermons have actually focused on God's love for us and that point is very important simply because we all understand that simply being told to do something does not on its own result in character transformation. So for every time we have been exhorted to love our neighbors, we have twice been reminded of God's love for us that makes loving our neighbors even possible. I think it's also important for us to put these ideas together, this command to love and the reality of God's love for us, because it reminds us of several really important truths, things like this: God's love is not solely something to be enjoyed although it is enjoyable. God's love is not something solely to think about although it's worth thinking about. It's not just something to marvel at although the more we marvel, the more we are amazed at his love. Instead, God's love is active; it's encouraging; it's life-changing; it's hope giving; and even life motivating. So God's love is so wonderful that it doesn't just work in the challenges and difficulties of life, it works in the highs and in the valleys too, all the time. God's love works wonders.

I'd like you to begin by turning in your Bibles to Numbers 12. That is on page 109 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you. What I'd like us to do is to first of all consider an individual who was changed, given hope, and motivated by the love of God. It is the man, Moses. Obviously, coming into Numbers 12, there's a lot that has happened into Moses' life to this point so let me just kind of catch us up on what has happened. First of all, you remember that Moses had a death warrant before he even knew he had a death warrant and that was when his mama was pregnant with him, the king, Pharaoh, had decided that all of the young Hebrew boys needed to die. So if your child was born as a boy, then you were to take him and drown him in the Nile and if it was a girl, she was allowed to live. Moses was miraculously rescued from that death warrant. In addition, as he began to understand who he was and he began to understand his people, there was another death warrant on him for killing an Egyptian and God rescues him from that and sends him off into the wilderness and cares for him. Then God decides, "Hey, I want you to be the person who leads my people out of the land of Egypt." By Numbers 12, Moses has been the leader for over two years and he has witnessed some really incredible moments. Can you imagine the ten plagues? There they are in the land of Goshen, watching God do this amazing work. I mean, even a hailstorm

that happens on all the land of Egypt except where they are would have been an incredibly high moment of, "Wow, look at what God is doing." Then after they go out into the wilderness, they are trapped on the one hand beside the sea and on the other by Pharaoh's army and they have the privilege of watching God yet again work and deliver. He watches as God decides to lead the people by the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day.

I mean, there have been some high moments for Moses for sure. But there have also been some challenges, huh? Moses has endured a fair bit of grief. These people have whined, fussed, accused, ridiculed and complained about Moses. Just about everything has been the subject of their whining: they have whined about food, they have whined about water, they have whined about leadership, they have whined about safety. Here in Numbers 12, we find even some more grief. Notice what the text says beginning in verse 1, "Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married," so now he's getting fussed at because of his personal relationships, right? So now here is just another thing to tack on. Here's what they say, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses?" "Of course not, he's spoken to us as well," she adds. "Has He not spoken through us?" Then we have this little phrase at the end of verse 2 and it's like one of those uh-oh moments, "The LORD heard it." So here they are fussing about Moses and the Lord hears about their fuss and here is what the Lord decides to do. He says, "All right, Aaron, Miriam, come here. Stand right here." You know how those moments have been? Have you ever been called out in a class? "Come forward. Right here. Here's your spot." Now here is what he says, verse 6, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream." That is what they have received but, "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; With him I speak mouth to mouth," or face to face, "Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses? So the anger of the LORD burned against them and He departed. But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow." Now, can you just imagine this moment for just a second. Picture this. Moses could be thinking, "Do you know what? It's about time. I mean, you have been fussing and fussing and fussing and now you're dissing on me and you're selling me out. You want my leadership spot. Do you know what? That's exactly what you deserve. There you go." I mean, this is what the cost is of being a fool. You can imagine how easy it would be for Moses to get to a place like that, huh?

Well, Aaron, he sees this and Aaron says, "As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous. Then Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not account this sin to us, in which we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned. Oh, do not let her be like one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes from his mother's womb!'" In other words, now he crawls out to Moses and says, "Moses, would you please do something?" Well, Moses, verse 13, "Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, 'O God, heal her, I pray!'" Instead of responding with, "Do you know what? It's about time. You're getting exactly what you deserve. Maybe this will teach you a lesson." He calls out in praise and asks God to deliver her.

The story goes on. Chapter 13 adds that the spies go out and the spies go out into the land and two come back with a good report and ten come back with a bad report. The first two come back and say, "Yes, this is exactly the land that the Lord has promised. Let's go! Let's take it!" And the ten come back and they say, "No, there's like giants who live there. The people there are so huge we're like grasshoppers in their sight. They're going to squish us." So chapter 14, here's what the congregation does. Verse 1, "Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.'" Can you imagine this moment? I mean, Moses has got to be thinking, "Fine, is that what you want? Fine. You want to go back to slavery, fine. I've done everything that I can do. I have tried again and again and again and again and again and you just simply won't listen. Fine, we're done. It's over."

Check this out, verse 11, the Lord even offers Moses a way out. "The LORD said to Moses, 'How long will this people spurn Me?'" Moses could be thinking, "You know, that's a good question. How long will they spurn you?" He adds, "And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?" "That's also a good question, Lord. Thank you for asking it." Then he says, "I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you," Moses, "into a nation greater and mightier than they." Wouldn't that be a moment? He's offered this before, by the way. This isn't the first time that Moses has been offered this kind of deal by God. The first time he said, "No, no, no, no. I don't want that." What about this time? What about this time? You think that, boy, Moses could be at the place where he'd say, "You know, that's a pretty good deal. I think it's about time to take that offer." But that's not what he does at all. He again responds with no concern for himself, with no concern for his own comfort, with no concern for having things his way. Instead, he prays yet again for the people and notice verse 19 how he explains why. Chapter 14, verse 19, "Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Here's what Moses recognizes: Moses understands the greatness of God's lovingkindness to him and to the people and he just simply says, "Lord, I'm not interested in that deal. I am instead recognizing the significance of your love for me and I want to live that out in the people that you have called me to serve even if they fuss at me, even if they whine at me, even if they want to take away my leadership position, even if they want a new leader, it's all okay. I'm still interceding on their behalf as long as I have this spot you have given me because I recognize your great love." You see, the person that Moses was 42 years earlier when he killed that Egyptian is not the person that he is now. He knew God's love had firmly been upon him and that love was motivating him to love a group of people who weren't very loveable.

With that in mind, I'd like you to turn to 1 John 3. That's on page 186 of the back section of the Bible that's in the chair in front of you. We've been considering a series on love and Pastor Viars has already helped us think through: proven love, authentic love, perfected love, brotherly love and discerning love. Today our focus is on purifying love. Purifying love. I'd like to begin reading in verse 1. 1 John 3:1, notice the very first thing that John draws our attention to. It's a call to action. A call to response. "See," pay attention, look, acknowledge,

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us."

Look at how great God's love has been to us. Look at how wonderful it has been to us. Notice what's accomplished, it says,

"that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."

With the rest of my time, I would like us to consider three blessings of God's purifying love. The first one is this: God's purifying love gives us a new identity. Here's what it is: we are called the children of God. I think the way we view ourselves has a lot to do with really how we live. If I think I'm not very smart then it's pretty easy for me to hate school and not invest in school and not seek out opportunities that would push me intellectually. If I think I'll never succeed, then I'll be tempted to go through the motions being quite satisfied with simply giving 25% of what I could give because I'm not going to succeed anyway. Well, John reminds us: here's what your identity is, you are the children of God. Here's why: because of the Father's great love toward you. The text in Romans 5 says it this way, "But God demonstrated his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." You know, friends, when you recognized your sin and understood that your sin was worthy of an eternity away from God in hell and you acknowledged your sin before God and trusted in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for your salvation, everything changed. You were given a new identity.

Something was going to be different now about you. You moved from being an enemy to being a friend. You moved from being an outcast to an adopted child.

You see, we see this concept in our culture all the time. You know, when a young girl gets married, she often will take the last name of her new husband and she puts it on Facebook and she changes her name. She adds her new last name and then she goes down to the Social Security office and gets a new Social Security card, goes to the DMV and gets a new driver's license to acknowledge the fact that something about her is changed. But you know what? We got a new identity card, didn't we? We were an enemy and now we're a friend. We were an outcast and now we're a child. Friends, if you're here and you have never come to the place where you have repented of your sin and trusted in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you can get a different card today. You don't have to wait. You can get a different card today.

Now, we see in this passage how all of this kind of happens. First of all, it was made possible because God is the one who initiated the love. Just like we saw in the book of Exodus and in our ABF studies, it's not that the nation of Israel was really so wonderful that God called them and he chose them. In fact, we see often times they don't even want to be chosen. "Hey, let's go back to Egypt. Let's go back to the way it was." God is the one who has made the movement toward us. God is the one who sent Christ so that our sins could be forgiven. God is the one who sent his Spirit in order to help us see our need for Christ. Praise God, his love moved in our direction, huh? Then he says, "Here's your new name." You get the name of child. You know, when I think about this name in particular, it reminds me of the certain privileges that we have in our own families of being children. Let me highlight just a couple of them. One would be affection. We give affection to our children in ways that would be inappropriate to give to a child outside of our family. The way we are affectionate to our own children would look very strange being that way with someone else's children. Protection. You know, in some sense we feel a duty as a member of our community to provide some sense of protection to all the children in our town but our own children receive a level of protection that we don't offer to everyone else. What about provision? Again, we may find all sorts of ways to provide for people in our community, we may seek to be generous in all sorts of ways and yet the fact of the matter is, we do not provide for others' children in the same way we provide for our own. When it comes time for that inheritance, we seek to give our children a blessing at the time of our death. That blessing is not offered to just anyone, it was offered to our children.

You know, when we move this into the spiritual realm, isn't it true that God gives his children blessings that he does not give to everyone? In fact, that is as clear as day when you look at this text because there's only really two kinds of children in this passage: there are those who are children of God and there are those who are children of the devil. One loves, the other hates. One saves, the other condemns. One restores, the other destroys. It is a blessing to be the child of God, isn't it? I mean, praise God that we get to be called the child of God.

Now, the text also reminds us, however, that that very notion becomes potentially confusing to the world around us. The way John wrote it, he said, "For this reason, the world does not know us because it did not know him." There are some things that are just confusing. Let me highlight one example. This week has been kind of rough, in fact, the last couple of weeks have been kind of rough for the NFL, hasn't it? I mean, Ray Rice is now the poster child for domestic violence. Adrian Peterson is now the poster child for child abuse. Not only that, he ruined some of our fantasy football teams, didn't he? He totally destroyed them. Adrian Peterson, Ray Rice, they need to and should be appropriately gone through due process in our justice system and if they are guilty, they should be found guilty and the fact that they are rich and the fact that they are popular and the fact that they are famous and the fact that they can do football really well, should not be relevant in what they receive. However, you know there are a lot of people who are using those two incidents now to launch all sorts of other platforms so not only is Adrian Peterson the poster child for child abuse, now he is the poster child for any and all spanking being child abuse. Have you seen the news? On and on and they are now saying that every aspect of spanking is child abuse. It's by definition child abuse. Well, we might when it comes to the specifics of the Adrian Peterson case, be right with the world on that, right? He should pay. He should. If that really happened, then he should be disciplined. On the other hand, we're not simply just going to go to the reality that every and all spanking is therefore child abuse because we have a different worldview. We have a Scripture that has given us a few instructions about things like that and people sometimes are confused. "Like, what do you mean? Didn't you see this? Why doesn't that make sense?" They are potentially confused. One of the reasons is they simply, the text tells us, do not know Christ. They can't understand all the elements and I'd like to suggest that that difference is one of the differences that allows you and I to explain how wonderful and how significant the Gospel really is. Not only for eternity but for the here and now.

We find something else in this passage that is particularly helpful and that is God's purifying love gives us a promise for the future. Or to say it another way: the best is yet to come. Not only do we have a new identity but verse 2 tells us, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." You know, part of our world view is that we have a future after death. In fact, the future is actually longer than our earthly lives and so in many ways it's more significant and more wonderful. But when people talk about heaven, they normally tie it to some kind of physical provision such as, "Heaven will be great because my spouse or my dad or my mom or my child is there." Or, "Heaven will be great because of all the health problems that I endure now will simply not be there then." Or, "Heaven will be a place where my mind will function where here it doesn't really function all that well." Or, "Heaven is the location where the streets are gold and boy, won't that be exciting." And it's right on the one hand to focus on elements like that, after all, Revelation 21:4 reminds us, "And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

But John decides not to focus on the hope of heaven in those terms. Instead, in terms of relationship. In terms of relationship. Notice what the passage reminds us of, "We will see him as he actually is." I think John is drawing our attention to the reality that while we are still on the earth, we still see incompletely. There is information about Jesus that our earthly stage is simply not able to comprehend. Maybe we could put it this way: Jesus is even better than what we know. It's going to be even better. So imagine all of the wonderful things that you know about Jesus and just ratchet them up another level. When we see him, we will see him as he is. When I pondered this in my own mind, my mind just went to a couple of examples. The first one was, several months ago my wife, Stephanie, purchased a bag of miniature candy bars and it was one night at dinner and she decides to bring these out and everyone gets to pick which one they want. So I normally like Snickers. I mean, I would always reach for the Snickers because you can never, ever go wrong with Snickers. I mean, here we are, regular Snickers, peanut butter Snickers, Snickers blizzard, Snickers ice cream bars, Snickers concrete mixers, it just doesn't matter. I mean, Snickers is reliable. It's awesome every time. But I was feeling rather, I don't know, excited that day so I decided to risk it. I decided that I was going to choose a Take Five. I've never had one of these before and so I figured, "You know, I'm going to do this. This is the way it is. It's probably a bad choice. I'm probably going to regret not taking the Snickers but I'm going to do this anyway." I took a bite of that Take Five and I was like, "Whoa! Like, this is really good!" which is why I immediately ate another one. I mean, it was better than what I had anticipated. I thought, "Boy, nothing can top Snickers but this is really good."

The second example that kind of came to my mind may be a little more significant. Like, all of you who are married, you thought your girlfriend or boyfriend was a pretty good catch and I did too. I mean, I had watched my then girlfriend work as a nursing assistant which is really no easy job by any means. I mean, you have people who drool all over you, cuss all over you, get lippy with you and all sorts of other vices. I thought to myself, "You know, I'm really not all that great but I bet I could do better than that." I mean, my standards really weren't all that high but I thought, "I can probably treat her better than that." In addition, we had fun. I was as boring as a black and white film before sound was invented but she was crazy and a risk taking bungee jumper and I figured it would be good to have a little spice in my life. I need to get out a little bit of my bubble and I'm the kind of guy who always picks Snickers every time because it's reliable. You know, that's just kind of, I get it, I'm boring. So I need someone with a little pizzazz. Besides that, we got along pretty well so I was pretty confident that marriage was a good idea. Well, just over a week ago we celebrated 21 years and here is the reality: the girl I got was better than I knew. I mean, I thought it was pretty good before but after 21 years, I realize I got a better deal than I thought because I didn't know everything before we got married and the longer I got to know and the more I got to know, the better it was.

It was frankly, better than I had anticipated and I think that's what John is doing right here with us with Christ. He's saying, "Look, you've had an experience with Christ. There is no doubt you've had an experience already and it's been wonderful and it's been glorious and you have appreciated everything about Christ's character, about what he did, how he sacrificed, even how he intercedes for you now. But let me tell you, when you get

there, it's even better than what you know." In fact, it's going to be so good that when we see Jesus, it's going to be so powerful that we will become like him. That's been God's plan all along, that we would actually become like our Savior Jesus. Romans 8 reminds us, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." It's been the plan all along, to be conformed to the image of his Son. In Philippians, Paul writes, "For our citizenship is in heaven for which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." It's just reminding us that this has been the plan all along and when we see him, not only will we be thinking, "Man alive, he's even better than we thought," but we will actually be transformed. I mean, have you ever prayed and asked the Lord to take away an intense struggle you've had for most of your life? Some have struggled with alcohol. They stay sober for a while and then one day results in one drink and three months later they are a drunk again. Some have struggled with lust. Pornography is not an issue for months and even years and then temptation comes and boom, the battle's on all over again. Or maybe the struggle is with anger and a person has just struggled at various points in their life responding to difficult circumstances in a way that is going to be pleasing and honoring to the Lord and yet again, they blow it and it just seems like they can't shake it. Well, sometimes the Lord answers those prayers by completely and even miraculously taking away those desires and those sins but other times the Lord just simply reminds us of this, "My grace is sufficient. My grace is sufficient so no, I'm not going to remove that struggle for your life for all of the rest of it, instead, my grace will be sufficient." Do you know what this passage reminds us of? There is coming a day when we're going to be made like Jesus, when we won't have those struggles anymore with sin. We won't have those battles anymore with sin because we were made in his likeness now.

Well, I think it's fair to say that God's love is pretty powerful, huh? Accomplishing two things already: giving us a new identity, giving us a future. Now we need to see how God's purifying love motivates us to pursue personal purity. How it then motivates us to pursue personal purity. Verse 3 kind of highlights that for us, "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him," that is Christ, "purifies himself, just as He is pure." In other words, here is the motivation now: because of what God has done through his great love giving you a new identity and giving you a new future where you are going to see Christ as he is and be transformed into his likeness, now because of that, here's the task, pursue purity. I think the picture is one of this: it's motivation, isn't it? He's giving you motivation and I find, maybe you do as well, that I'm not really motivated to do stuff unless I have some type of motivation for it. I don't typically just go to the pool and swim laps just because I didn't have anything else to do. I go to the pool because I signed up for a triathlon and I don't want to drown. I mean, hello? It was really pretty simple in my mind. I don't want to drown so I'll go to the pool. There's my motivation. But it's not like I was just sitting around going, "Yeah man, I've got nothing else to do so I might as well go and swim laps." Well, I think in many ways, that's the way people view personal purity. If I'm not motivated, I'm not going to pursue it and what this passage does, what John helps us understand is look, you have every reason in the world to be motivated to pursue purity.

There are several points that he makes in this pursuit that I think are particularly significant. The first is that personal purity is consistent with the ministry of Christ. Notice how he puts it in verse 4, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins." So here's the ministry of Christ. He came in order to take away sin, "and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." Now, Pastor Viars has been teaching us that John balances several concepts. On the one hand, is the concept that believers should have assurance for their salvation. On the other hand, there is the warning that if we choose to have a careless attitude toward sin, then maybe we're not a believer at all. And so if we have the attitude of, "Hey, we lack control in our anger so what? The other people had it coming to them anyway. When we lust and pursue sexual pleasure in godless places, so what? My life is pretty godly anyway. We don't honor our parents, so what? They don't deserve it anyway. We don't work hard, so what? I don't get paid to work hard. I get paid to work, I don't get paid to work hard." You see, as soon as those kinds of attitudes come in, we recognize we're in complete violation of what this text calls us to and that is that Jesus died to take away sin. Jesus died to redeem a people so that they would not abide in sin anymore. After all, no one who sins has seen him or knows him.

Therefore, anyone who has a casual approach to sin needs to check, do I have a new birth birth certificate? Do I have a new birth birth certificate? Am I a genuine follower of Christ? If so, then I need to be motivated to pursue personal purity. Now, I'm going to suggest a little step process to help you think about applying this even this week. Consider, maybe there's an area in your life where God wants you to change and you know it, you've known about it for a long time but today is going to be the day that you decide, "Do you know what? Because of God's love for me, I am going to take a step of growth. I am going to work at it." I would encourage you to identify that particular area and once you identify it, consider what would it look like to have some measure of growth or victory in that area from this point forward? So what would the end product look like? Then I would encourage you to find one place in Scripture that speaks specifically about the area of your life that you know needs to be different and to take an index card and to write that Scripture out on that card and just carry it with you. It's going to be one of those texts that you just think about on a regular basis. "Lord, I know this is an area where you want me to grow. I know that this is an area that you want me to change and so I'm going to put this verse on an index card, carry it with me so that way I properly consider what your word has to say about it." Then the next thing is to add that particular area to your prayer list and say, "Lord, I'm wanting to change. I'm asking that you would change me in this area. I have your word hiding deep in my heart. I'm carrying it with me all the time and now I'm coming to you and I'm asking for your help. I recognize this is an area that needs to be different." Because we believe in the word of God that we were designed to live in community, find an accountability partner. Talk to someone that you can trust and say, "I know this is an area of change and here's what I've done already. I have searched the Scriptures. I have put one on an index card that I carry around with me. I've added this area of my life to my prayer list and now I'm asking that you would help me be accountable on this particular area of life."

Personal purity not only is consistent with the ministry of Christ but we also find in this passage that personal purity means that we'll not be deceived by people who talk well and live rebelliously. We're not going to be deceived by people who talk well and live rebelliously. Notice how verse 7 begins, "Little children." Little children. I think he writes that not simply because he's highlighting their age but instead because he's highlighting the reality that they are vulnerable. They are vulnerable to deception and if we were honest, I think we would all have to say that we are vulnerable to deception, especially to those who speak really well, who give right answers but whose behavior is not consistent with it. You see, any of us is open to that and you find a person who uses the right vocabulary, who says the right thing, who is able to present their ideas in a compelling way and we're drawn to them. He reminds us right here in verse 7, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you," here's the part of personal purity, "the one who practices righteousness is righteous." You don't have access to the heart. The biblical writers all care about the heart but they all recognize, "I can't see inside another person's heart. My access to their heart is by what they say and what they do." What a person says here, he says is "those who practice righteousness are righteous just as He," that is the Lord, "is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." You see, the picture he's painting here is look, sometimes the only way you can tell is looking at a person and he's saying, "Those who practice righteousness are righteous and those who practice sin are of the devil." Those who take a casual, meaningless approach to sin are demonstrating that really they cannot be people who are trusted even if they talk well.

So here's a couple of application points that may result from a comment like that from the Apostle John. It may mean that we need to turn off some radio stations or some TV stations because the people who are talking are talking really nice, they have the radio voice, they have the TV personality, but they don't have the life that backs it up. So maybe their words really aren't all that valuable or all that helpful. Instead, we're just simply being deceived by them. Maybe we need to pay attention carefully to what our coworkers are saying and maybe we even have to ignore their foolish counsel. I've been in a situation a lot of times where people at work provide counsel to others and sometimes that counsel isn't all that good and at some point we have to recognize, little children, be careful. Don't let anyone deceive you.

Finally the text ends with this comment: personal purity results in righteous living and loving our brothers. In many ways, we've come back full circle now, don't we? Full circle. Just as we were considering from the very beginning Moses, how did Moses respond the way he did? In the midst of all of that chaos? And the answer is that he understood God's lovingkindness. Not only in his life but in the life of the people of Israel. Now, how is it that we are going to love our neighbors? When we understand the significance of God's great love for us that gave us a new identity, that provided us a hope for the future and now that motivates us, calls us, to a life of personal purity. Yes,

God is going to ultimately make his children into the likeness of Christ but we should want as much of that likeness now as possible.

Well, let's stand together for prayer.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the challenge that it is, for how it convicts us and how it encourages us. In this passage, we have a very clear picture of both: encouragement through the reality of how much you love us and how that love has resulted in our new identity and how that love has resulted in a new picture of hope for the future where we will be made like our Savior, Jesus. Then there is also the command to pursue purity, recognizing that that is what Jesus came to do. He came to put to death sin and so therefore, Lord, we are asking that you would help us this week to live this out for your honor and glory. In Christ's name. Amen.