

It seems perfectly fitting that the Sunday after Thanksgiving we would be coming to this passage in First John for which we should be exceedingly thankful. It is a passage that tells us who we are and what we should expect. Throughout the New Testament there is a looking forward to a determined future day when Christ will return for His bride. (Revelation 21:9) The previous passage told of those who had gone out from them for a perverted form of the gospel, one that was inconsistent with the life of Christ as witnessed by John the Beloved. John reminded the churches that the Spirit of God will always have us remain in the truth we heard from the beginning, remain in the historical Jesus Christ.

**Commented [notes1]:** 9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."  
Rev 21:9 (NIV)

John goes on to tell the churches some of the great benefits that are coming if we remain in Him. <sup>28</sup> *And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.* Continue in Jesus. That means to stay in fellowship with Him through continuing in prayer and the Word. It means to continue to heed the Holy Spirit's gentle direction in our daily life. It also means to stay in fellowship with His body, our fellow believers. (Hebrews 10:25) This is what those who had left the church did not do. They listened to teaching that was contrary to that of the Apostles' teaching. They entertained ideas that pleased their worldly nature.

**Commented [notes2]:** 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.  
Heb 10:25 (NIV)

There is a bumper sticker that says, "Minds are like parachutes. They work best when they are open." I'd like to see another sticker on the other side of that bumper, "Garbage in, garbage out." Does God want us to have an open mind? Well, toward what is good yes, but God wants us to be innocent toward evil. (Romans 16:19)

**Commented [notes3]:** 19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.  
Romans 16:19 (NIV)

The problem with simplistic statements is that they make great sound bites, but aren't very practical when it comes to the intricacies of real life. God wants us to have a discerning mind. If someone tells you of some new, so-called, enlightened idea that is contrary to what the disciples of Jesus said they observed, an open mind will hear it, but a discerning mind will ask why this new revelation does not line up with the teaching of Jesus' handpicked followers who memorized His sayings. A student of history will usually recognize the new idea as a reworking of some ancient heresy. (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

**Commented [notes4]:** 9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.  
Ecd 1:9 (NIV)

We should realize that one of the enemy's tools is to accuse believers of the things of which he is guilty. "You are intolerant." He says that because he can't tolerate God and the fact that you worship God alone. He says, "You don't have an open mind." He accuses you of that because he has closed his mind to the things of God, repentance, and the consequences of evil. The next time someone accuses you of being a closed minded Christian, ask them if they are open minded enough to hear your story. It will be a great chance to share what Jesus has done in your life.

*...continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.* To catch the drift of this passage, imagine that the trumpet sounded yesterday evening at 8 P.M. (1Thessalonians 4:16) What were you doing? Where has your heart been set throughout the week? Are you thrilled that

**Commented [notes5]:** 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.  
1 Thess 4:16 (NIV)

Jesus has come to take you from this world, or disappointed to leave the things on which you had set your heart? And when His penetrating eyes meet yours, and they will, what does He see in your soul? Will He see the confident welcome of one who has been faithfully serving Him daily, heeding the sound of His voice? Or will your eyes veer away because "faithful" is not a description you would use to describe yourself. You have not been remaining in Him, but in the world with all its cares and distractions. (Mark 4:18-19)

**Commented [notes6]:** 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Mark 4:18-19 (NIV)

Won't we all be excited to see Jesus because our sins are covered by His work on the cross? All believers have their sins covered, but how will you feel when Jesus reviews the life you lived after your conversion? Will you be excited for Him to see it, or will you wince at the record of your life? Remain in Him! Live in Him! Live to hear, "Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21) Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven! (Matthew 6:20)

**Commented [notes7]:** 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matt 25:21 (NIV)

*29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.* It seems to me that John just threw in this little reminder here to connect salvation with life transformation. Are you sure you are born again? Does your life show you are like your Father? For those who left the church in Asia, righteousness would not be a description of their life. The compromise in the definition of who God is results in compromises in the way we live. If God is simply the nature that surrounds us, indulgence is inevitable. (Romans 1:23-25) If God is righteous, then that is a standard to which we will desire to see our life conform. Do you know God is righteous, that is to say He is right and true? Evil has no place in Him. He will justly judge all evil. (Habakkuk 1:13)

**Commented [notes8]:** 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matt 6:20 (NIV)

*1a-b How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* This is an ecstatic declaration of wonderment. The Message translation says it like this: *1a-b What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are.* 1 John 3:1a,b (MSG) God loved us to such a great extent that He would call us His children. (Romans 8:15-16)

**Commented [notes9]:** 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Romans 1:23-25 (NIV)

Because our world is so broken, we have to explain why this love is so special. When people read the Bible today, they aren't excited by the fact that God wants to be a father to them, because they have a bad impression of fathers. They don't want another father who is too busy for them, who is only there to tell them what they are doing wrong, and moans and complains whenever they hear of their child's needs. Some children have even been abused by their father.

**Commented [notes10]:** 13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? Hab 1:13 (NIV)

But that is not at all like our heavenly Father. Think of how you wish your father would have been. The perfect father would be lovingly concerned, not overindulgent but recognizing your needs and what is truly best for you. He'd be concerned about every facet of your life. He'd want to know how you are feeling and what you are going through and have the perfect advice every time. He'd be firm about right and wrong out of genuine love and concern for your safety. But most of all, you'd know He loved you as much as one could possibly love another. That's what the heavenly Father is like bringing us into His family!

**Commented [notes11]:** 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8:15-16 (NIV)

The verse orders us to contemplate the kind of love that is lavished on us by God making us His children. When you have a child, there is an unspoken agreement to meet that child's needs no matter what the cost may be in time and finances. You are committed to that child for life. You will weep and grieve with, rejoice and laugh with, struggle with and love that child until you die. The child will bear your name and inherit what you leave behind. You can divorce a spouse, but you can't undo the fact that someone is your child.

How does that make you feel about your Abba, Daddy? It should warm your soul through and through. Imagine the pride in being adopted into a royal family to become a prince or princess. That's nothing! You've been adopted by the Creator of all things!

<sup>1c</sup>*The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Or as the Message puts it: <sup>1c</sup>But that's also why the world doesn't recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who he is or what he's up to.* The world can't begin to understand what love has been lavished on us. They don't have anything close enough to relate to it. Even the best of fathers fall way short. If they could see it, they'd be repenting and asking for salvation and they would be one of us instead of a part of the world. That's why when you talk about it, you sound a bit deranged, you know, trusting in someone you can't see; giving Him all your troubles; believing in His return and the rewards for faithfulness. That all sounds like wishful thinking to the world. They call it a crutch. They can't take it seriously because they don't know Him. (2Peter 3:4)

John continues with what is the natural outcome of being a child of God. <sup>2</sup> *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the hearts of men what God has prepared for those who love Him. (1Corinthians 2:9) But we do know this, when we see Him, the transformation in us will be complete. Everyone in Christ is on this journey of sanctification. We are working out daily what He has worked into us, God's very nature. (Philippians 2:12) Gradually there is an evident change in the way we respond to others. Selfishness and greed die a little more day-by-day. Love finds a greater expression as we allow more and more of the life of Jesus in us to be the life that others see.

When the tribes of Israel were moving through the wilderness and camped somewhere for a while, they would know it was time to move when the cloud moved. (Numbers 9:17) The priests would call everyone's attention to it with the blast of a trumpet. But then one day there was a great trumpet blast and they moved for the last time from the wilderness into the Promised Land. That last blast is coming. (Numbers 10:2)

Our eyes will look up and see the King of kings in all His glory. And we'll go ballistic, literally, from every corner of the planet. (1Thessalonians 4:17) We'll gather round the glorified Christ and see what John the Beloved saw in the revelation.

**Commented [notes12]:** They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."  
2 Peter 3:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** 9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" --  
1 Cor 2:9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,  
Phil 2:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** 17 Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped.  
Num 9:17 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 2 "Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out.  
Num 10:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.  
1 Thess 4:17 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> ...someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. Revelation 1:13-16 (NIV)

As our eyes are transfixed on the glory of our Redeemer and Savior, I think the wonder that John has asked us to consider, the love that would make us sons and daughters of God will start to really sink in. As it does, our very beings will be transformed. The sinful nature will fall away once and for all. The process of sanctification will be complete. The battle for supremacy of your life will be won by the godly nature of Christ in you. (Romans 8:29)

Even our bodies will be physically changed. Paul tell us that Jesus, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:21 (NIV) And then the radiance of glory that clothed Adam and Eve before the fall will shine forth from us. We will be like Him, for we will have seen Him as He is. "Like" does not mean the same. We will not be God. We can never be the Creator or have existed from eternity past, but we can take on the attributes of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, to such an extent that we are like Him.

Without this transformation you would not enjoy heaven as much, wonderful as it is. Unless everyone's sinful nature is transformed to be like Jesus' nature, heaven wouldn't be heaven. It will take a transformed soul and a transformed body to truly appreciate all that is in store for us and for us to not ruin it for everyone else.

Utopias on earth never work because people are sinful. (Romans 3:23) There have been so many communities around the world that tried in many different ways, but they all fall apart eventually over greed or power. Sin ruins everything man touches no matter how perfect the circumstances and setting.

Heaven will work because when you are transformed, you and I won't ruin it for everyone else. When everyone you meet is Christ-like, what peace, what fellowship, what freedom, each moment will hold! (John 14:2)

Peter urged us to prepare for this moment. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:13 (NIV) He told us to set our hope fully on that grace we'd receive when Jesus is revealed. That transformation is great grace and even if you are ashamed about how you've spent your time, you'll still receive the grace of a transformed body. You can't enter heaven without it.

Paul talks of this blessed hope in his letter to Titus: <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all

**Commented [notes18]:** 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.  
Romans 8:29 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
Romans 3:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.  
John 14:2 (NIV)

wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)

In these passages that speak of that glorious moment, we see two words that seem almost contradictory, grace and self-control. Is it all by grace? Yes! Do we need to exhibit self-control now. Yes! We have and are going to receive grace so our grateful response should be to live lives that are self-controlled while we wait for that day. You might ask, if it is all by grace then what does it matter? We're back to that earlier question of, "Aren't our sins all washed away?" Yes, they are, but that doesn't mean you won't wish you had spent your time more wisely while you were on this earth. Realizing that the presence of Jesus is our destination, we should long to live lives that are pleasing to God.

That is why John ends this thought on the blessing of remaining in Christ and the hope that is to come with this thought: <sup>3</sup> *Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.* If you have this hope, you should have a desire to be like Jesus now. You should long to cooperate fully in that process of sanctification. Every time you fail to be like Jesus in your reaction to others should grieve you.

Again we have this seemingly contradictory expression of purifying yourself when we know it is a work of the Holy Spirit. Which is it? It is both. (Hebrews 10:14) You must cooperate with the grace that is given to you. Without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, there could be no real change in your life. Unless you cooperate there will be no change because the Father has given you free will. He must purify your daily life. You must cooperate and let Him do His work. (2Peter 1:5-8)

If this coming day and the resultant Christ-likeness in you and in others is your hope, then begin now, by allowing Him to purify your life. Be like Him as much as possible in this physical body by always yielding to the Spirit. (Galatians 2:20; 2Corinthians 3:18) This kind of hope is not just a wishful dream but a guaranteed future reality proven by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (2Corinthians 4:14) It is a certain future event. It is a promise of Jesus who cannot lie and who knows the end from the beginning. (Isaiah 46:10) Fellow believer, remain in Him!

I'll close with the benediction from the end of the Book. <sup>20</sup> *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.* <sup>21</sup> *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.* Revelation 22:20-21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.  
Heb 10:14 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.  
2 Peter 1:5-7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.  
Gal 2:20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.  
2 Cor 3:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.  
2 Cor 4:14 (NIV)

**Commented [notes26]:** 10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.  
Isaiah 46:10 (NIV)