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**“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:3).**

## Live in Hope

**Central Truth:** Anticipation of Christ’s return purifies the Christian’s behavior.

**L253. Date:** December 1989. **Text:** I John 2:28—3:3.

**Topic:** Christ: Return of; Hope.

Look at this week’s lesson text! It looks strange beginning in one chapter and going into another. But remember that the Bible was written originally without chapter and verse designations. Sometimes a subject begins in one chapter and goes over into another. This is the situation in this lesson text.

This week’s study deals with the subject of hope. That is a misunderstood term. We use it to express a wish or desire for something we are not at all certain will be realized. But when hope appears 137 times in the King James Version of the Bible, it does not have such a weak meaning. Hope means confidence, expectation, trust, and leaning for refuge. In a noun form it means the refuge itself.

Faith and hope are Siamese twins. Faith looks up in confident expectation to God regarding things present. Hope looks up in confident expectation to God regarding things future. Hope is the future tense of faith.

The New Testament says the Christian’s hope is good (II Thessalonians 2:16), blessed (Titus 2:13), living (I Peter 1:3), and better (Hebrews 7:19). God himself is “*the God of hope*” (Romans 15:13) in that He is the author and object of our hope.

*Believe* is a good synonym for hope when it is related to Christ. We believe “in Christ” as an expression of confidence in a person. We believe “on Christ” as the ground of our confidence. We believe “in Christ” as the sphere or element in which our hope is exercised. But always we believe

Christ!

Some have a false hope (Job 8:13; Proverbs 10:28); some have no hope (Ephesians 2:12): but we have a living hope (I Peter 1:3). We hope (believe, trust, have faith) in Jesus.

## **I. ABIDING: THE PERMANENCE. OF HOPE (I John 2:28)**

*“Little children, abide in him.”* That sounds like good advice, but what does it mean? *“Abide”* means to stand fast, remain, stay, reside, and even to submit. Relate those meanings to Jesus Christ. Stand fast in the Lord. Remain in fellowship with Him. Reside permanently in Him. Submit to Him. Abide in Him because He abides in you by the indwelling Holy Spirit (I John 3:24).

The abiding is to be *“in him.”* That is possible in that the believer is put *“in Christ”* at his conversion. He lives in Christ and Christ lives in him from that moment forever. The appeal is not to be loyal to a creed or a denominational structure, but to Christ himself. *“Crown Christ as Lord of the life”* is the appeal. Make every decision and action relate to Him. Consent for Him to live His life in you. That is abiding in Christ.

John 15:4-7 describes the consequence of abiding in Christ fruitfulness! John 17:23 mentions another consequence of abiding — testimony! So the greatest ministry a Christian can have is to bear fruit, more fruit, and much fruit for the Lord so that the world becomes aware that God has sent Christ. Abide in Him.

The personal benefit of abiding in Christ is *“that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (I John 2:28). Abide in hope!

## **II. RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE EVIDENCE OF HOPE (I John 2:29)**

*Righteousness* is the condition of being just, upright, virtuous. A righteous lifestyle is the consequence of an assured hope in God.

God is righteous. His name is *“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* (Jeremiah 23:6). We worship before Him because He is a righteous God. Those who belong to God and have received His divine nature (II Peter 1:4) are righteous in His imputed righteousness.

Our conduct must be righteous. John is careful to insist that we are righteous as God is righteous (I John 3:7). These *“fruits of righteousness”*

which we produce are not our own doing, but are “*by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God*” (Philippians 1:11). The Bible appeals to us to be marked by “*all holy conversation and godliness*” as we wait for the coming of our Lord (II Peter 3:11). That is the appeal of both the New Testament and the Old (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13).

Righteous conduct is the evidence of a righteous spirit. “*Ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him*” (I John 2:29). That is how righteousness is related to our hope. It is a testimony to us that our hope is well founded. Unregenerate human nature will never produce a life of righteousness before God and man. But faith in Jesus does. Therefore, righteousness is the evidence of our hope.

### **III. LOVE: THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE (I John 3:1)**

Here is one of the most beautiful passages in this first epistle of John: “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God*” (1 John 3:1, 2).

Consider the amazement of God's love: “*Behold!*” That is an exclamation of surprise and joy. We might translate it, “Look, consider, imagine that!” The amazement is that He should love us enough that we should be called what we have become, the sons of God. (Note that “sons” does not designate male as separate from female. The legal relationship with God is stressed in that word.) God's amazing love has made us His own sons!

It is not simply God's love but the “*manner of love*”, that causes our amazement. It is the amount of His love (that He could love guilty sinners), the scope of His love (that He could love the whole human race), the sacrifice of His love (that He would give the life of His only begotten Son), and the gift of His love (that He would save those who trust Him) that is so amazing. Well might we sing with John Newton, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, / That saved a wretch like me.”

God's love is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3), sacrificial (John 3:16), personal (John 15:9), redemptive (Ephesians 5:4, 5, 8), and never releases one of His own (Romans 8:35). What a basis for Christian assurance! We set our hope in God who loves us with an amazing love.

The blessing of God's love is that we are called the sons of God! (The grammar of the Greek text indicates that we are called what we truly are, the sons of God.) Not only does God make us His sons, but He also acknowledges us as such. He publicly confesses to be our Father and we His

sons and daughters. How that encourages our hope. “*Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ*” (Galatians 4:7). Believe it and go on rejoicing in your hope.

The uniqueness of His love is such that the world does not understand us. The world knows lust (*eros*) and it knows affection (*philia*), but no one can know divine love (*agape*) without knowing God personally through faith in Jesus. The world does not understand, but it is our privilege to make God's love real through reflecting it in our acts and attitudes. And we will if our hearts are filled with hope in God.

#### **IV. CHRISTLIKENESS: THE CULMINATION OF HOPE (I John 3:2)**

The present privilege of our hope is this: “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*” Read that again! Here is shouting ground. What are we? We are “*the sons of God.*” Who has that privilege? “*We*” who hope in Jesus Christ. When is that privilege ours? “*NOW are we the sons of God.*”

The Bible speaks of many wonderful things which await those who trust Jesus. But this one inheritance is present tense, already our birthright. We are already — just now, this very moment — the sons of God. We do not pray, “And finally in heaven save us.” We are already saved. That moment we heard the Word and believed that God had sent Jesus to be our Savior; we were saved and became His children (John 5:24). “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*” (John 3:36). “*Hath*” is the old English form of the verb in its present tense. The believer “has” (right now) everlasting life.

There is an uncertain prospect of our hope: “*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*” What will we look like when we are raised from death or translated to meet the Lord in the air? We do not know. God has not been pleased to tell us, perhaps because we cannot now bear it (John 16:12). There were some things the patriarchs and prophets did not understand in their day (Ephesians 3:5) and some things the angels desire to know but do not (I Peter 1:12). It is unknown to us but fully known and planned of God. So we wait in hope.

Our blessed expectation is, “*He shall appear.*” From the days of the ancient patriarchs men of hope have testified, “*I know that my redeemer liveth. and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: . . . in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold*” (Job 19:25-27). Jesus is coming again. Our hope assures it.

The expected change that will take place when He appears is twofold. (1) We shall be like Him, bearing the image of the heavenly then as we bear

the image of the earthly now (I Corinthians 15:49). (2) We shall see Him as He is, “*the king in his beauty*” (Isaiah 33:17). “That will be glory, be glory for me”(Charles H. Gabriel).

To be like Christ will be the consummation of our hope.

## **V. PURITY: THE CONSEQUENCE OF HOPE (I John 3:3)**

Never accuse the Bible of being so heavenly minded that it is of no earthly good. From the exaltation of seeing Christ and being like Christ, John brings us back to present duty. He writes, “*Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*” (I John 3:3). There is the practical application of Christian hope in Jesus.

Inward purity becomes the person who hopes in Jesus. Our Lord pronounces a special blessing on the “*pure in heart,*” promising that they shall see God (Matthew 5:8). The blood of Christ purges the conscience to enable service to God. So purity is a consequence of the believer's hope.

Outward purity becomes the person who hopes in Jesus. He cleanses himself from all uncleanness of flesh and spirit — he is pure before God and man (II Corinthians 7:1). He abstains from fleshly lusts, knowing that they are the enemy of the soul, and makes his conduct honest before unbelievers (I Peter 2:11, 12).

Upward purity becomes the person who hopes in Jesus. As there is no sin in Him, there must be no sin in one who trusts Him. He is “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*” (Hebrews 7:26). We must aspire to be the same. No one can hide anything from Him since all things are stripped bare and revealed to Him (Hebrews 4:15).

One day our hope will turn to sight. We will receive all that we have hoped for in Christ. Until then, let us live in “*the full assurance of hope*” based on what God has promised (Hebrews 6:11).

### **Questions for discussion**

1. How would you define hope?
2. With what adjectives does the Bible describe hope?
3. What is the relationship of hope and faith?
4. How is abiding in Christ related to our hope?
5. How is righteous living an evidence of our hope?

6. How does God's love give assurance to our hope?
7. How is being like Christ the end of our hope?
8. How is personal purity the consequence of our hope?
9. How can you strengthen your hope in God?
10. How can you manifest your hope as a witness for Christ?