

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King's Kids.*

NEWS

Wednesday Nights at Alêtheia 6:30

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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Emails: [pastor@myaletheia.com](mailto:pastor@myaletheia.com), [stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com](mailto:stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com)

**I JOHN 2:28-3:3 ~**

How do you want things to go on the day you fully meet Jesus?

How much is that worth to you?

If you are ambivalent about it - what do you suppose that means?

The prosperity gospel is being more concerned about \_\_\_\_\_ today,  
than you are about \_\_\_\_\_ eternal.

Simply desiring a future outcome does not \_\_\_\_\_ the behavior today, that will secure that future.

Whatever you think about human free-will, you personally hold other people \_\_\_\_\_  
for their choices.

Likewise, it's impossible to feel guilt unless you believe that you could have  
\_\_\_\_\_ differently. We live life as though we have \_\_\_\_\_.

Who you are, and where you're at, today, is the balance between what the  
\_\_\_\_\_ you wanted in your future and what you wanted at the time.

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate  
or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

It is perfectly acceptable to \_\_\_\_\_ and simultaneously love. To abide is to be \_\_\_\_\_ and to be \_\_\_\_\_ cannot be an act. We must put ourselves in His hands.

“The Father has bestowed on us,” is, in a word, “Love.”

God wants people to \_\_\_\_\_ because they trust Him with their whole being.

Sacrifice your desires \_\_\_\_\_ for a Heavenly reward \_\_\_\_\_ because God has already showered you with the greatest gift of all - with Himself.

In the middle, John seems to get off track with 1) the \_\_\_\_\_ not in conformity to God cannot know Him and therefore cannot know us, His children and 2) that we don't know what we'll be in the \_\_\_\_\_.

1) If we act in this way, we are proving that we are not of the \_\_\_\_\_, but truly the children of God, but on the other hand, if we act like the world...

What the world does not \_\_\_\_\_, it fears. What it fears, it seeks to destroy.

2) None of us can say what we will be like, but it will be a huge difference from what we are now...

A) Since there will be a massive \_\_\_\_\_ to be just like God later, it only makes sense to get the train moving that way now.

B) Second, it isn't vital that we get it all perfectly correct now - it will be perfected.

“Purify” and “Pure,” are ἁγνίζω (häg-nē-dzō), and ἁγνός (häg-nōs), respectively. They are related to ἅγιος (hä-gē-ōs) meaning holy. God is going to do what is right no matter the cost to Him and He's telling us to act like Him.

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



Last week we covered the final two verses of chapter 2. I'd move directly on to the opening of chapter 3, but the chapter division is poorly placed. I'm not being critical, at first blush, it seems like a perfect spot, but it's actually in the middle of a cohesive passage.



So, let's reread a bit as we move forward... I John 2:28-3:3, 28Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 29If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. 1See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, 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. 2Beloved, 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. 3And everyone

who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Notice the big picture. Remember, leading up to this passage we were taught the principle of abiding, here we're commanded to do it - abide in Him by abiding in the Gospel Truth about Him. Then we're given the purpose, the reason, the motivation, the encouragement for us to abide... diligently, desperately, and intentionally, abide.

If we do, we will be confident as the Triumphant Jesus rewards us and, on the flipside, if we neglect our abiding now, we will suffer loss at His Return and we will slink away in shame. How do you want things to go on that day?

If you are a person informed by the Holy Spirit, there can only be one answer to that question. If you are an actual Christian saved by Christ, you genuinely want that day to go great - you are eager for that day to be the best day of your life.



If you are ambivalent about it, meaning what I just said doesn't really describe you - if you don't really care too much, or if you are more concerned about being happy, and fulfilled now, than you are about meeting Jesus then, to put it bluntly, you are either not a Christian, or you are a very shallow, uninformed, and immature Christian.

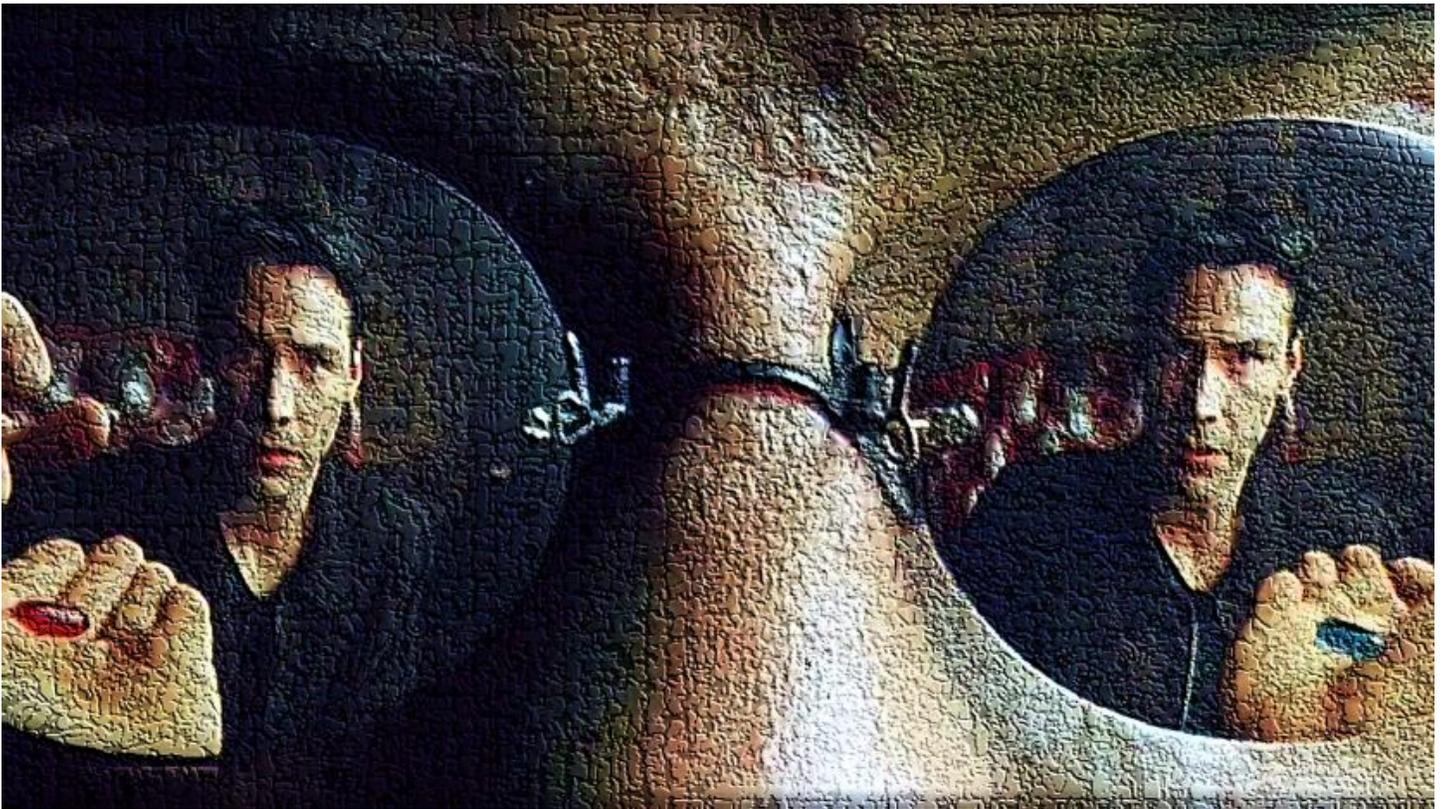
Don't worry, either way, you have a lot of company and it's nothing that cannot be fixed today.

The entire prosperity gospel can be shown to be a false gospel with the passage we just read. The immediate reply might be, "Why are you talking about the prosperity gospel - we know it's wrong and we do not adhere to it at all." Well, is that true? The prosperity gospel has subtly influenced millions of Christians who are unaware of that distortion to their Christian walk.

In a nutshell - which is where such a doctrine belongs - the prosperity gospel is simply being more concerned about life today, than you are about life eternal. It is a failure to abide. Hopefully, we can get that sorted out today.

Again, a person might say, "I do care more about God and eternity, than I do about me and this life." Really? Would that person's actions tell that story? It's so easy to get distracted by our hopes and dreams, by our fears and worries, by our plans and purposes... Isn't it? Evaluate your priorities by examining your activities. Where do you spend your time, your efforts, and your money?

Even if you have your priorities straight, simply desiring a future outcome does not guarantee the behavior today, that will secure that future. See what I mean? I really want to be thinner in the future, but not enough to sacrifice eating today. Desire doesn't ensure conduct.



What does? Well, my deeply Calvinistic friends don't think that desire matters, because they don't believe that human choice plays any role at all. They are wrong, at least, as far as we ourselves are concerned. What I mean is that no matter what the reality might be, for us, from our point of view, there is nothing but

choice... Choices all around, choices made hundreds of times a day, if not hundreds of times an hour.

Whatever you think about human free-will, you personally hold other people responsible for their choices. If I carelessly bump into you and knock you to the floor, causing you to spill your café mocha on your new clothes, and then step on you while you're writhing in pain and covered in coffee and whipped cream... Even if you're the staunchest Calvinist, you are not going to say, "It's alright, you were merely doing what the universe, or God, has conspired to make you do - you had no more ability to avoid doing that, than I had in having it happen to me. We're all just cogs in someone else's drama." No! You're going to be mad at me as though I could have chosen to act more carefully. Everyone holds other people responsible for their actions as though they had a choice in the matter.

Every day we hold others accountable for their choices as if they are in control of those choices and what's more important is we do it to ourselves. It's impossible to feel conviction or guilt unless you believe that you could have acted differently. We live life as though we

have free will. In fact, doing so, is the only way to avoid utter chaos.

As an aside, our society has so focused on a person's rights lately, that it has ignored a person's responsibilities. The net effect is the same, and that's why we have so much chaos now, and why it will only get worse going forward. That's a freebie.

Again, whatever your thoughts on a clockwork universe, predestination, unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace, you must choose - even if your choice is an illusion, you'll never be free of that illusion.

God knows that. If He didn't, He wouldn't have done all this in the first place and He certainly wouldn't have inspired a Book full of encouragement, exhortation, and outright commands, for people to act.

Abide! is a command. It is nonsensical to command someone who has no ability to obey. My friends, as God's representative this morning, I'm commanding you, from your perspective, to choose each and every day to abide in Him.

Now, why wouldn't we? 1) We have the information, 2) we understand what's required, 3) we've been commanded by Almighty God to do it, 4) from our perspective, at least, we have the ability to choose to do it, 5) we've been given the consequences and, 6) as Spirit-filled Christians, we want to have a positive outcome. So, why wouldn't we ensure that we abide now to ensure that outcome later?



Sacrificing today for a better tomorrow is not natural. It's learned behavior involving a fairly complex relationship between the actual reality of now, the

lessons learned from our interpretation of the cause and effect of the past and the realization of potentially altering the future. Animals can not consciously do that. They do not comprehend the future and how actions now can change it. We're not animals.

If we knew the future with certainty it would make it easier. It's difficult to save a bunch of money now, forgoing the benefits of spending it today, in order to provide for a future that may, or may not come. If you knew with certainty that you would live to be precisely 87 years old and also that you'd be in reasonably good health until then it would be easier to save now. We've all heard the stories of people saving for old age only to be struck down before getting there. Someone else gets to enjoy their sacrifice.

We don't have that excuse here. In this case, we do know the future. If we cannot take God's Word seriously concerning the future described in this passage, we would be complete morons to take it seriously elsewhere about anything... We might as well abandon Christ now, if we don't believe this Truth about what will happen in the future.



Well, that's another excuse down, but it's still not easy. I said that I want to be a thinner version of myself in the future and I know that to achieve that desire I must sacrifice now. The problem I have is that I also want to enjoy food today. In fact, my weight today is the result of a balance between my desire for food and my desire for being thin. That's revelatory.

It applies to everything in your life. Who you are, and where you're at today, is the balance between what the past you wanted in your future and what you wanted at the time. Tomorrow and all your future tomorrows are

the same. A balance between what you hope for tomorrow and what you're willing to forgo today.



That's the only thing remaining that will keep us from abiding the way we must, in order to have a glorious first meeting with Jesus. We now, unlike some uninitiated, untaught, or unthinking people, only have this final hurdle to overcome. We must care more about that future day than we do about today.

In order to choose wisely, which is to say, sacrificially, today and each day, until that future day, we must

desire that bright future more than we desire doing what we want to do now.



What's so difficult about abiding in Him? Nothing, as long as we don't think about what it means. Everything, once we do. Essentially, it means to be like Him. It means to actively court the Holy Spirit to alter you into a member of God's family. In this place it's to be righteous, which as we saw last week means to act with extreme integrity. To be a just person, you must be an honest person. Honest with yourself about your prejudices and honestly taking them to the Lord for correction.

Here's an example: Let's say you are a staunch conservative and have a prejudice against democrats. Let's say you find out that a fellow Christian claims to be a democrat. Let's say that you do your very best to ignore that fact and treat them well as Christ commands. Because you've not honestly dealt with your bias your treatment of that person is a lie. It's merely a fake fluffy façade. You have not changed - you have not allowed the Lord to mold you and conform you - you've simply buried the truth. It will come back to haunt you.

To actually be righteous you must recognize your prejudice and deal with it. You must beg God to help you overcome your bias and truly love, honor, and respect that fellow Christian, even though you disagree with them.

You say, I don't want to love democrats - I want to vilify them as the source of all that is wrong with America. Yeah, that's difficult. To do it right, you must care more about that future meeting with Christ, than you care about politics today. It is difficult and we haven't even gotten started yet.

It is perfectly acceptable to disagree and simultaneously love. It can only be right, honorable, and just when we honestly deal with it with integrity. Now extrapolate that principle to every area of your prejudgment of persons.

You may be a democrat disgusted by the rabid Trumpians (my new word). You might be an old fogey repelled by the way teenagers dress. You might be a poor person resentful of the rich. An educated person dismissive of the uneducated, or one of the 7 ½ billion people on the planet who thinks all the problems of the world are due to the tiny minority of only a ¼ of a billion white men. Whatever your prejudices, first realize that you have them, and then realize that you and God have some work to do.

To abide is to be conformed and to be conformed cannot be an act - it must be real - we must put ourselves in His hands and that's righteous. To "Practice righteousness" is an everyday exercise in acting with integrity and decency just like Jesus. That's why we start our day in prayer - I mean before you get

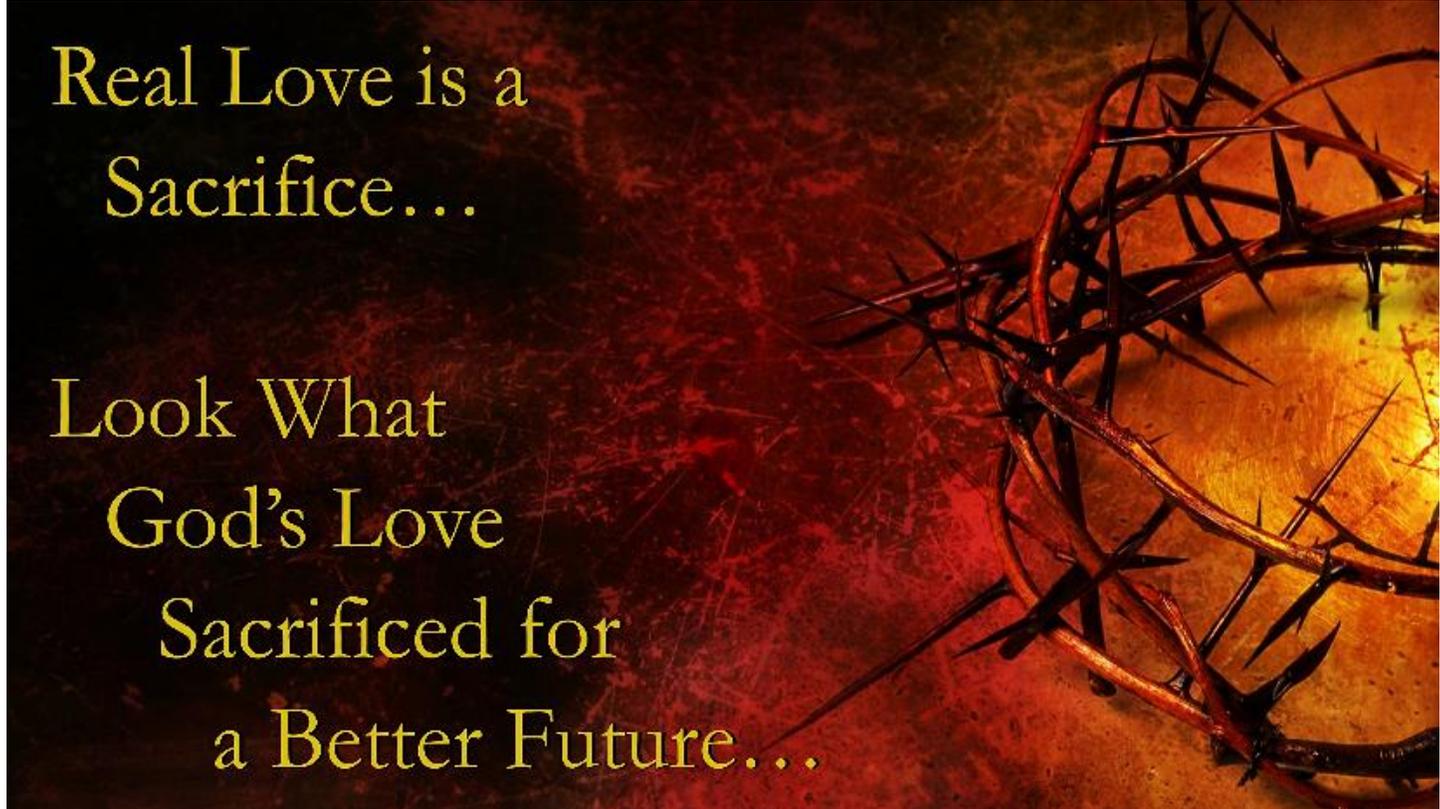
out of bed in the morning start with prayer that the Holy Spirit would help you abide in The Truth.

Incidentally, that's precisely what Jesus intended when He taught us how to pray. The first three stanzas about honoring God, building His Kingdom and accomplishing His Will are impossible without the fourth... "Give us today and each and every day the bread that we need to be like Christ." Because "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8:3). God's Word did proceed and "Took on flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). It is a prayer for that Manna from Heaven, that "Bread of Life," to come and sustain us, to nourish us with that spiritual food that we might therefore abide and abide well.

You cannot abide in Christ if you do not make that your highest priority in life. Please get that. Abiding must take precedence over all else. Only then will you stand before Jesus with well-placed confidence. Not a self-deluding and irrational confidence born of ignorance and self-deception, but a true confidence knowing that the relationship you have with Him is right. And if it's right now, it will only be better then.

Look what happens next... It's what "The Father has bestowed on us," which is in a word, "Love." The motivation to abide, to be actively conformed to Jesus is because we will meet Him face-to-face soon, but nevertheless, from our point of view, future.

God knows that we will struggle to actually sacrifice today for that day so here He reminds us, what it means. This is so cool. God is demonstrating here that He has no need for people to simply obey Him out of devotion to duty, or cowardly fear, or force of personality... God wants people to obey because they trust Him with their whole being.

A crown of thorns is positioned on the right side of the image, set against a dark, textured background with warm, reddish-brown tones. The thorns are dark and sharp, creating a stark contrast with the background.

Real Love is a  
Sacrifice...

Look What  
God's Love  
Sacrificed for  
a Better Future...

Sacrifice your desires now for a Heavenly reward later because God has already shown you Who He is. He has already showered you with the greatest gift of all - with Himself.

There's the misused prosperity gospel saying, "You can't outgive God!" Well, it's actually true in this legitimate sense... God has already given you far more than you could ever repay in a thousand lifetimes and what He's asking you to do is trust Him, because of that, with your present. Trust Him with today and He guarantees a tomorrow so amazing it cannot be imagined, let alone described.

Notice verse 3 is about purity and that's how the first three verses of chapter 3 tie into the final bit of chapter 2 in case you were wondering. It's far clearer in the original language, but the bookends are about conformity to our Lord and Savior as He and the Father are perfectly conformed with each other. That makes the middle bit about why one would desperately desire to do that.

If, as the middle reminds us, you think little of the Love of God that sacrificially made a path to a Heavenly citizenship and a familial bond with Him, then you may sacrifice little for Him in the here and now. God hasn't done much for me so far, why sacrifice for some undefined reward in some undefined future.

Conversely, if you understand what God has already done for you and what that means for all of eternity, then you will gladly sacrifice for Him today because you love Him and trust Him.



I hate to bring it up, but it's an example... Mariah sacrificed a comfortable lifestyle with two fully furnished homes, a six-figure income, excellent insurance, and amazing benefits for herself and her three small children, not to mention an income today that would be in excess of \$300,000 a year as well as a multi-million-dollar retirement, to trade-in the pilot she actually married for a small-time country pastor she didn't.



Think what you like, she sacrificed safety and security as the mom of three little kids because she trusted God more than she trusted the physical realities surrounding her. Neither she, nor any of her kids had it as easy as they could have had it, but because she chose the future over the present all four of them are Christians who love God.



We are the actual children of the Living God! He has made us His own at the greatest personal cost. He did that for us while we were still His enemies, what would He not do for us now that we are His babies? (Romans 5:8). Trust Him, sacrifice today.

That means, in large part, sacrifice your ideas, opinions, and human folly, to love Him by loving His other babies - the church - with integrity. Don't forget what this Bible Book is teaching us. This is all about the church, that's individual Christians in community with each other, the church being unified.

That's impossible without everyone honestly, transparently, deliberately putting their own interests aside for the good of the Body.

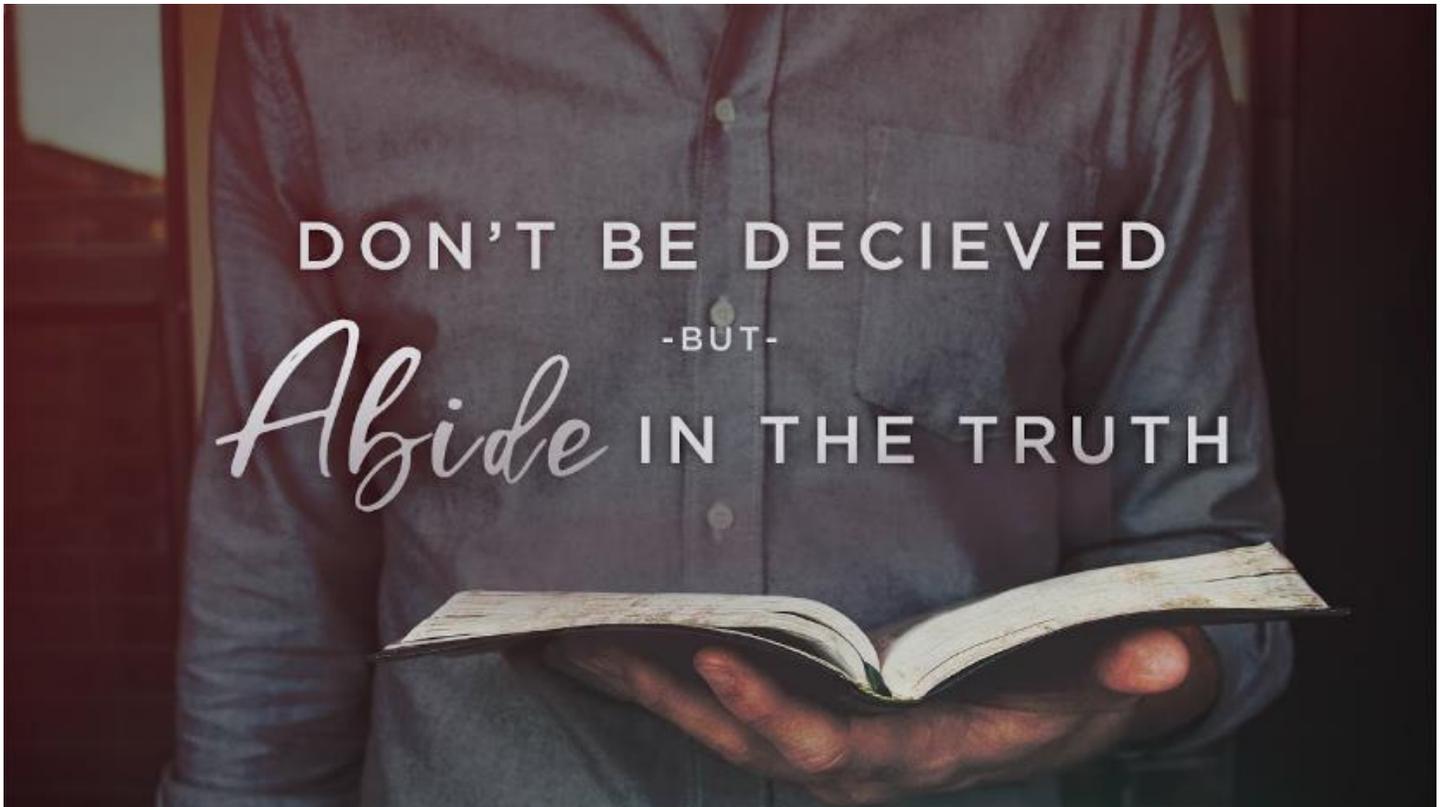


In the very middle of the passage, John seems to get off track a bit with the twin ideas that 1) the world not in conformity to God cannot know Him and therefore cannot know us, His children and 2) that we don't know what we'll be in the end. We are the children of God and "For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." Then... "And it has not appeared as yet what we will be."

When something seems a little out of the flow, we need to find out what's really going on, rather than just shrugging our shoulders, and moving on.



In context, John was most recently talking about hindrances to church unity. You remember, there's the personal pride we must get past so that we don't cause offence, that we confess if we do and that we forgive (2:1-11). There was the church leadership issue of mutual submission (2:12-14). Then the issue of materialism (2:15-17) followed by the biggest issue of all, which was wrong ideas (2:18-27).

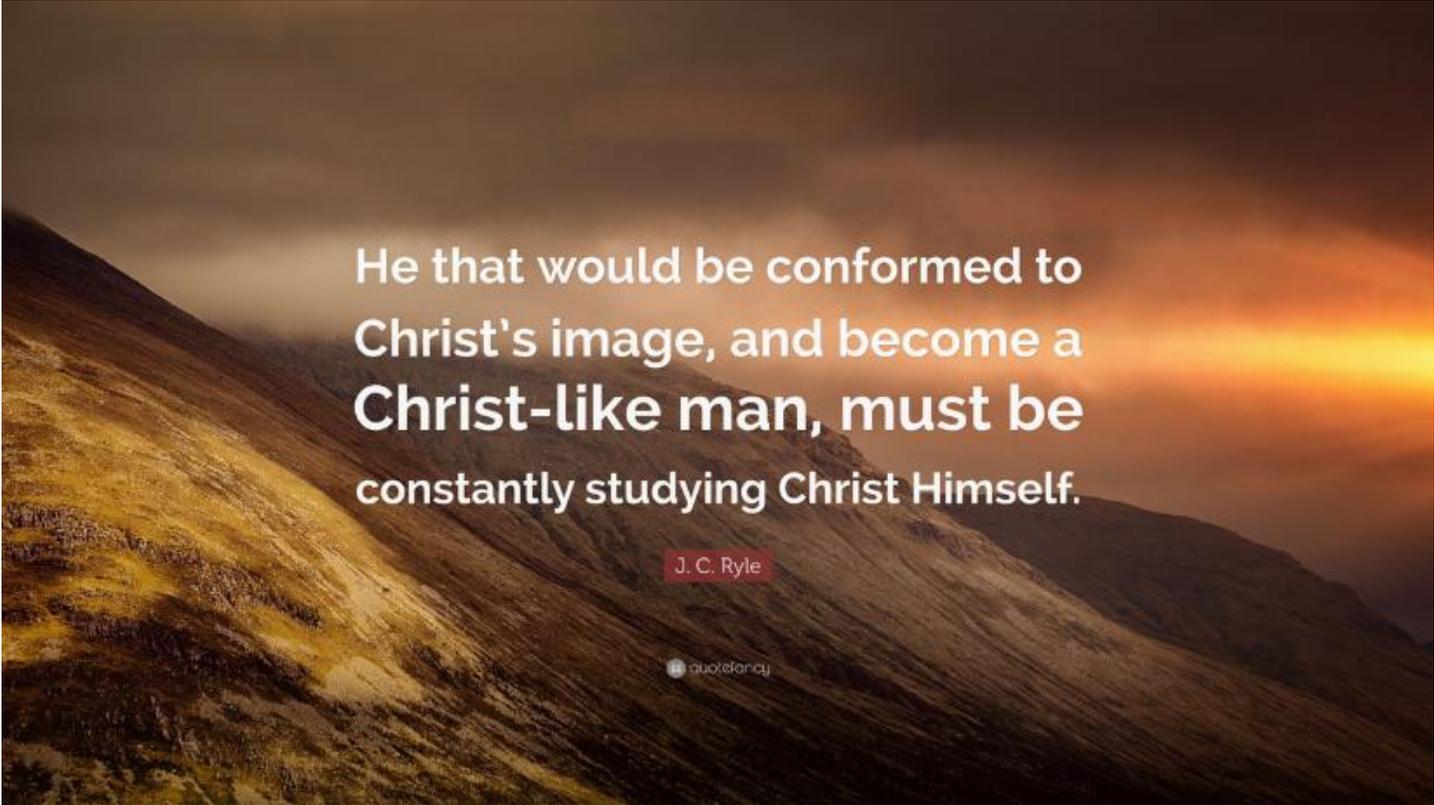


Then John said we need to abide in the Truth of good ideas as well as the Truth that we must be unified by being self-sacrificing. By abiding in that Truth, we then abide in The Truth, Jesus our Lord and Savior as well as in our Heavenly Father. Finally, we must do that with integrity called in 2:29 “Righteousness,” and called in 3:3 “Purity.”



The world that doesn't know God cannot act in this way. That's important. The conclusion is that if we act in this way, we are proving that we are not of the world and truly are the children of God, but on the other hand, if we do not act in this way, we prove that we are just like the world.

John puts a positive spin on it and assumes that we will do what is righteous and pure and because of that the world cannot figure us out. What the world does not understand, it fears... What it fears, it seeks to destroy.



He that would be conformed to  
Christ's image, and become a  
**Christ-like man, must be**  
constantly studying Christ Himself.

J. C. Ryle

quote fancy

Beyond that, as we act in this way, in this conformity to what God has revealed of Himself through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, we recognize that there's far more to it. None of us, not even the Beloved Disciple the Apostle John, can say what we will be like when we see God for all that He is, but the implication is that it will be amazing and far beyond anything that all the books in the world can contain as John himself said in closing His Gospel (John 21:25).

What's the point? The point is we will one day be perfectly conformed, and it will be a huge difference from what we are now... That's two things.

1) First, we will be much different, there will be a great change. 2) Second, it will be 100% correct then.

Here's what that means for this passage. 1) First, since there will be a massive change to be just like God later, it only makes sense to try to get as much of that work done as soon as we can. In other words, it means you will not stay who you are then, so let's abandon that idea right now and start allowing the Holy Spirit to get us moving in the correct direction.

2) Second, it isn't vital that we get it all perfectly correct now - it will be perfected later. One of the big excuses for not moving ahead with something is that we're afraid it isn't perfect, so we do nothing. As an example, young people often hesitate and are even frozen into complete inaction when there are too many choices. If one choice is best, how can you do choose anything until every choice is examined? Unfortunately, there's no end to the parade of choices. Should I take online college courses, go to the community college, leave town for the university, go even deeper into debt at a major out of state school. What about trade school, what trade? Should I simply get a job now and work my

way up? On and on it goes, bewildering the person with too many variables. Well, an excuse for not sacrificing now, is what if the sacrifice isn't the right sacrifice? What if I suffer now and it was for naught? God reassures us here that we are to move forward as best we can with the information we possess, and, in the end, He will fix any deficiencies.

The Gospel is so simple to understand anyone can easily grasp it and that's all it takes. God judges the heart. Biblically, the heart that has the opportunity to know Him better (that's everyone hearing my voice) and yet ignores that opportunity is not cooperating with the Holy Spirit. People are judged, not on what they do compared to each other, but on what they do compared to the opportunities they have. 1,600 years ago, Jerome, the guy who first translated the Bible into Latin said, "The Scriptures are shallow enough for a babe to come and drink without fear of drowning and deep enough for a theologian to swim in without ever touching the bottom."

Make no mistake, we will one day be just like Him as we eagerly begin that process now and because we

have that hope, that faith and trust in Him we will purify ourselves, in the same way that He Himself is pure.



“Purify” and “Pure,” are ἁγνίζω (häg-nē-dzō), and ἁγνός (häg-nōs), respectively. The first, the verb and the second, the noun. The word is related to ἅγιος (häg-gē-ōs) meaning holy. We know all about holy.



The great cathedral turned mosque by the Turks in Istanbul is the Hagia Sophia. It means the Holy Wisdom. Anyway, the word family is translated as saint, as consecrated, as sacred, as holy, and as pure. Our related words in verse 3, stress the purity of one's intention. It again, in this context, speaks of integrity, just as "Righteous" does.



God is going to do what is right no matter the cost to Him and He's telling us to act like Him in this matter. Do what is right, not because it is easy, but because it is hard. Any loser without the Holy Spirit can do easy.