

The Christian Hope

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev W.McKnight

[0 : 00] You'll find our text this evening in the third verse of the third chapter of John's first epistle.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.

And the subject that I would draw from that text is this. That the blessed hope is for the believer a purifying hope.

And what is the hope of the Christian, of the believer? Surely it is this, that he will ultimately see God.

Said John, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

[1 : 09] This is the believer's blessed hope. And of course Jesus himself had taught his disciples this. For he said, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

And in writing to the Corinthians, Paul told them, Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.

Last Tuesday, there was the eclipse, a partial eclipse of the sun.

And our newspapers carried a warning to those who wished to behold that eclipse, that they should not look upon it with the naked eye.

And that even to look through dark glasses was quite inadequate. Because harm could also result from that procedure.

[2 : 27] And so they recommended a kind of homemade projection through which the eclipse could be seen. Now my dear friends, if our eyes have not even sufficient strength to look upon such a phenomenon of nature as a partial eclipse, if our eyes have not sufficient strength to look upon the brightness of the sun, or even the brightness of a much inferior light, how much less can we by nature ever hope to look upon God whose glory is above the brightness of the noonday sun.

Do you remember the charge which God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai? Go down and charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze and many of them perish.

Do you remember the prayer of Moses and the response of the Lord to his request? Moses had said, I beseech thee, Lord, show me thy glory.

And in answer God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

And he said, Thou canst not see my face for there shall no man see me and live.

[4 : 37] which surely reminds us that we have to do with a God who is pure and righteous and absolutely holy.

It teaches us of the impossibility for man in his natural corrupt and depraved and sinful condition to look upon or even to see God.

God is essential and absolute purity. And if a man is ever to see God, he too must be of like purity. he must have the same nature as God Almighty. And it is here that we would introduce the saving, sovereign grace of God to sinners.

for by the transforming, saving, sovereign grace of God, a sinner can be saved out of darkness and can be brought into God's marvelous light.

[6 : 08] That is Christian salvation. conversion. That is Christian conversion. That is Christian conversion. And that must happen in the heart and life of any soul who desires to see God and to be with God for all eternity.

there must be the cleansing from a personal sin. There must be a salvation from sin and its penalty and its power and its presence.

There must be release from unrighteousness and unholiness and impurity. The sinner saved by the grace of God must be found on the same ground of acceptance before God as the Son of God with

whom the Father is well pleased.

And it is this glorious truth which Paul unfolds in his letter to the Ephesians. The glorious truth of the believer's acceptance with God.

And how is that? He is accepted in the merits of the Savior. Accepted in the beloved.

[7 : 34] Oh, it was this that God reasoned with to Cain so long ago. He said to Cain in effect if thou offerest correctly wilt thou not also be accepted?

For Abel was accepted with God on the ground of redemption. He was accepted with God on the ground of a lamb having been substituted in his place pointing forward to that great truth the lamb of God the Lord of Jesus bearing away the sin of the world.

Or listen as God through Isaiah the prophet reasons with his people Israel. He had shown to them their depravity their corruption their sinfulness.

from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet he said you are altogether unclean and corrupt and vile.

But he went on to say wash you make you clean put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes cease to do evil learn to do well come now and let us reason together saith the Lord though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool and this is the saving change which must pass under and above the soul that is to see God ultimately there must be that radical change wrought in the heart and life which the Bible calls the new birth regeneration salvation redemption conversion and without this no man shall ever see the Lord

[9 : 56] God the patriarch Job gave expression to his personal hope of ultimately holding God in the vision of his soul he said I know that my redeemer lives and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though after my skin worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes behold and not another do you note the emphasis in this testimony of Job whom I shall see for myself this corroborates what I've always insisted upon salvation is intensely personal and particular

God deals with us as individuals none can escape in a crowd salvation is personal remember the preaching of the apostles to you is the word of this salvation sent to you personally as an individual God has you in mind and in his heart not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance now Job spoke with the assurance of one who had had this saving change who had been cleansed from sin he spoke with the full assurance of faith similar in language to that which John uses when he says we shall see him as he is and unsaved a soul tonight without gospel purity you will never see God Christian your heart has been purified by faith this was the testimony of the apostles when the Gentiles came into gospel blessing they said in their assemblage the blessing of the gospel could not be withheld from them seeing that they also had purified their hearts by faith and this is what the transforming grace of

God does the very instant that an individual exercises personal saving faith in the Lord Jesus he has given a new heart a new nature in fact he has made a partaker of the divine nature he is clothed in all the acceptability of the Christ of God and is given by the assurance of faith the hope of glory that he will indeed for himself see God with his own eyes the hope of heaven then becomes yours when you repent and believe the gospel and receive the cleansing which by the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin and it is this which brings this anthem of praise to every redeemed soul unto him who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as

Christ is pure the believer then having experienced the salvation of the grace of God being a partaker of the divine nature having his heart purified by faith walking through life in gospel purity it is his privilege to seek more and more of this for the more he has of it the more is his hope animated and motivated he keeps on purifying himself not that any man can purify or cleanse himself from sin for this is the prerogative of Christ alone but by this term purifying is meant what

[15 : 26] Paul said to Timothy exercise thyself unto godliness or hear what John is hinting at imitate Christ purify yourself even as he is pure it was this which was the burden of Thomas Akempfi when he wrote that marvelous book the imitation of Christ it is this which Peter means when he says Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth Christ is the example to be copied what Peter calls the hupogrammas the hupogrammas the copy that is set up before the pupil which he is to a copy remember perhaps the old exercise of books at school with the copperplate handwriting at the top

of the page and which we were to attempt to copy in all its beauty now my knuckles would bear eloquent testimony to my ineffective and inefficient efforts to reproduce that copperplate handwriting but this is the idea behind what

Peter says Christ is the copy that is set up that believers in him might approximate to that he is the pattern to be followed he is the great example and believers are enjoined to walk even as he also walked Paul said be ye therefore followers of God as dear children Peter reminded those to whom he wrote be ye holy he said for God is holy the word of God then contains many exhortations to purity of heart and life and it is this that I would hope would engage our thoughts and our attention this evening for this gospel personal purity is first of all for the glory of God every man that hath this hope in Christ purifieth himself even as Christ is pure impurity dishonors

God God purity glorifies God sin is that abominable thing which God hates purity is the product the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the believer purity is an end of the electing grace of God for Paul taught this that God hath chosen believers in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him and this is to the praise of the glory of his grace through which he hath made us accepted in the beloved it is to purity that God calls his people Paul rejoiced greatly over the church of the

Thessalonians that church which he founded as the first fruits of his European mission and he wrote to them and he said this is the will of God concerning you even your sanctification God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness upon which Thomas Watson the Puritan commentator makes this comment that purity is the livery in which the servants of God have served him to have a single eye then for the glory of God means that our wills must be brought into subserviency to the will of God and that often we have to forego our own happiness and inclinations we must exercise self denial

Moses in the Old Testament is the great exemplar of this you remember his dramatic prayer blot me out of thy book no one went so far in self denial as that and Paul in the New Testament in whom there are so many features things like unto Moses and who also showed the same example of a self denial he prayed let me be accursed for Israel my brethren sake so in the study and in the pursuit of this purity of life we are bound to enter into conflict with the old carnal nature the old self which will constantly assert itself in all its insidious and subtle forms it is the old carnal nature that seeks to nullify the devotions and the prayers and the meditations of the people of

[22 : 17] God it is the old carnal nature that intrudes the world with all its fascinations and allurements into the heart of the believer to militate against the work of grace in the soul but for those who adopt a life standard of a gospel purity this will greatly enhance their Christian living and indeed their personal assurance of salvation it is the pure you see who hold communion with God and who obtain the blessing of the Lord the psalmist knew this for he said who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord or who shall stand in his holy place he that hath clean hands and a pure heart who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully he shall receive the blessing from the

Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation and this is the generation of them that seek him that seek thy face oh Jacob surely it is the ambition of the soul and heart of every believer to see the God of our salvation and gospel purity heart purity is required for this secondly this is not only for the glory of God but it is also for the glory of Christ for Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people a people of his own zealous of good works the more purity that Christ sees in his people the more doth he see of the travel of his own soul and is satisfied this is the standard which Paul held up to Timothy

Timothy who was about to embark upon the ministerial office Paul wrote to him and he said to him be thou an example of the believers in word in conduct in love in spirit in faith in purity and he emphasized this he came back to it he returned to this and he exhorted Timothy keep thyself pure now how is this to be accomplished well the apostle tells us till I come he said to Timothy give attendance to reading to exhortation to doctrine meditate upon these things give thyself holy to them that thy profiting may appear to all take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine continue in them for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee sound advice my dear friends we cannot attain to this purity about which

John speaks about which the whole of God's word testifies we cannot attain to it if we neglect spiritual privileges and duties and the means of grace Christ is honored by the practice of purity for by the practice of purity in the life the believer indicates his love for the Savior purity you see flows from the Lord Jesus who himself is holy harmless undefiled and separate from sinners Christ is

highly esteemed by the believer the believer who seeks to live in purity before the Lord esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of

Egypt Christ is glorified he is honored because by the practice of purity there tends in the life and experience of the Christian there tends to be the growing conformity to Christ of Christ being formed in the believer you will read of this in the experience of Paul towards the Galatians he had a tender affection for those believers he groaned over them desiring that Christ should be formed in them the Lord Jesus is greatly honored when the humble believer comes to him depending upon him for the strength needed in the pursuit after holiness and purity of heart and life

[28 : 19] Christ is honored by this practice of purity because the believer realizes that whatever height of purity he attains he is still to depend only on the merit of Christ the believer in Christ learns that he must never be removed from the ground of his acceptance before God which is in Christ in the third place following after this purity is for the credit of the gospel of Christ an unholy Christian is a disgrace to the gospel a worldly Christian is a betrayer of the savior rather we must bear in mind that the design of the gospel is to teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present age those who profess the gospel should prove it in their lives that it came to them not in word only but in power and in the holy ghost and in much assurance the power of the gospel the principles of the gospel and the preaching of the gospel have for their object the making cure of those who respond to that gospel the gospel aims at bringing into a saved state those that are lost and those who are thus saved by the power of the gospel are to live according to the principles of the gospel manifested in purity of life the believer in Christ then does not seek after purity in order to be saved rather he seeks after it because he has been saved for he sees the purity of life becomes of some credit to the gospel which he professes he is now a new creature in Christ Jesus all the things have passed away and behold all the things have become new now in the fourth place there are certain advantages accruing to the believer who goes in for this purity of heart and life which will glorify God and glorify Christ and be a credit to the gospel purity and sanctification these are not the ground of our justification they are rather the evidences of it the sanctification falls upon justification as I have told you before the justification is fundamental sanctification is experimental you cannot be more justified for justification does not admit of any degrees on the other hand sanctification does it has to do with our experience but what I want to point out to you tonight is this that purity of life flows from justification as streams flow from the fountain and a low attainment in purity does not lessen our justification even as a high attainment in purity does not increase it justification remains constant in all its perfection like the sun in the firmament it is fixed and it is full but sanctification admits of degrees and this is what is in the scriptures pressed home upon the heart and conscience of the believer it is this which Paul desired for the Thessalonians I pray God your whole soul and body and spirit may be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord he prayed that they might be sanctified holy one of the features about sanctification is this that the more you are given to it and the more you are controlled by it the more you will have of it and the more the Lord will give of it for it is written of him the Lord will give grace and glory this is what it means to walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit temptation is overcome as in the example of

Joseph how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God temptation loses its power when the believer gives himself up to following after holiness without which no man shall see the Lord so gospel purity is obtained and there is given an increasing stock of it the more holy you become in heart and mind and life you will find this that the more separated from the world will you become and it is this which will make you distinctive make you different make you to be a real witness and testimony for Christ you remember the example of the

Old Testament prophet who used to visit the Shunammite family who provided for his needs and one day the woman said to her husband behold now I perceive that this is an holy man of God who passeth by us continually it is this separation from the world and a separation unto God that will have some measure of influence upon others for they will observe the distinctiveness and the difference that Christ in the heart really makes and it is this which will attract the blessing of God on people and on places even as

[36 : 16] God blessed the house of Potiphar and the palace of Pharaoh for the sake of Joseph John said concerning the hope of the believer every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ is pure John the apostle was greatly gratified when he learned of his children those whom he had begotten in the gospel when he learned of them walking in the truth my dear friends

do you know that ministers can be very easily discouraged and disheartened do you know that sometimes they have the experience of sleepless nights they have their sensitivities and one of the greatest gratifications to the heart of a minister is this when he sees his people diligent in the use of the means of grace and going in for the deep things of God and

God's blessing upon them lately when I did such an amount of traveling by train up to the north of Scotland I used to observe some ladies when they were coming near the end of the journey that they would open their handbags take out a mirror and examine their appearance and do something to adjust to their appearance because they were coming near the end of the journey they knew that friends would be waiting to greet them and they would wish to appear at their best my dear friends relentlessly we are moving on in the journey of life and who but God knows how many of us may be near the end of it the end of the journey and what are we doing to make ourselves look the best for the believer waiting at the end of the journey is the

Christ of God who will stand up from his throne and glory to greet his homecoming child it is needful then for God's believing people to prepare themselves to make themselves ready to get out of the mirror of the word of God to see themselves in that and whatever adjustments that need to be made let them make them because this is the truth of God every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as a Christ is pure let us pray let us pray you you you