

Colleyville Presbyterian Church

1 John 2:28-3:18

May 7, 2023

*28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. 1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

Calvin: “Our present state is far short of the glory of God’s children. Physically, we are dust and shadow, and death is always before our eyes. We are exposed to a thousand miseries and our souls to innumerable evils, so that we always find a hell within us. The more necessary is it that our senses should be withdrawn from the view of present things, lest the miseries by which we are on every side surrounded and almost overwhelmed should shake our trust in that happiness which as yet is hidden. . . For our faith can only stand if it looks to the coming of Christ. . . This, I say, is the only way to sustain our faith, so that we may patiently wait for the promised life. As soon as anyone turns away in the slightest degree from Christ he cannot help failing.”

God’s love for us, and his work in making us his children has a goal — it is something that we grow in, and in the end, God’s love *will* be perfected in us — we will be made like Jesus when we see him as he is (consider Revelation 1).

Verse 28 gives us a powerful picture of the Christian life — as the “little children” of God, we abide in Jesus, so that when Jesus appears we will be prepared to see him. All of our Christian life is meant to be a preparation for this experience, which will come on the Last Day. (Each Lord’s Day is a particular preparation for the final Day of the Lord).

One of John’s main themes is the close resemblance between ourselves and Jesus. If we abide in Jesus, we will become like him. If we abide in other things, we will no longer resemble Jesus. This, ultimately is the standard for our sanctification — Christlikeness.

We will never fully experience this reality here and now. But one day, we will. This, along with eternal life, is the great hope of the eschaton — to be made like Jesus in his glory and purity.

W. H. Auden: “The blessed will not care what angle they are regarded from / Having nothing to hide.”

*4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

Calvin: “The sum of the passage is that the perverse life of those who indulge themselves in the license of sinning is hateful to God and is unendurable to him because it is against his law. It does not follow from this, nor can it be inferred, that believers are unrighteous. For they want to submit to God and they abhor their own vices even in individual offenses, and they also compose their life so far as they can to the obedience of the law.”

Calvin on verse 5: “In this place John means that Christ really and actually (as they say) takes away sins, because through him our old man is crucified and his Spirit through repentance mortifies our flesh with all its depraved desires... This is the sanctification of the Spirit.”

Calvin on verse 6: “[Believers] are said not to sin because, although they labor under the infirmity of the flesh, they do not consent to sin, but in fact struggle and groan, so that they can truly testify with Paul that they do the evil they would not. He says that believers *abide* in Christ because we are by faith engrafted in him and united to him.”

Calvin on verse 8: “The life of God and Christ is not present where men act perversely and wickedly. On the contrary, such are the slaves of the devil.”

Calvin on verse 9: “God’s children must needs labor under faults and sin daily; that is, inasmuch as they still have some remnants of their old nature. Nevertheless, the apostle’s contention stands firm that the end of regeneration is to destroy sin and that all who are begotten of God live righteously and godly because God’s Spirit corrects the lusting of sin... God’s Spirit so forms the hearts of the godly to upright affections that the flesh and its lusts do not prevail, but are tamed and as it were yoked, so that they are checked. In short, the apostle ascribes the superiority in the elect to the Spirit, who suppresses sin by his power and does not let it flourish.”

Calvin on verse 10: “[John] does not mean that they are so manifested that they can be openly recognized by the whole world, but simply that the fruit and effect of divine adoption always appear in this life.”

*11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

*16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*