

Place: Lurgan Baptist

16:7:2006

Reading: 1 John 3:1-10

## BACK TO BASICS

### 9. IT'S GOOD NOW, BUT THE BEST IS YET TO BE

When Dr. Harry Ironside was pastor of Moody Memorial Church, in Chicago he had an old lady who lived by herself, who was just haunted by fear. She had a phobia .... she believed that there were two men who followed her just wherever she went. She came to see Dr. Ironside about this because she was worried. She said, “*pastor I have a problem.*” he said, “*What is it ?*” She said, “*Well, everywhere I go two men follow me. When I get on the streetcar, they get on the streetcar behind me. When I come home there they are behind me. When I go to the supermarket, they are still following me.*” He said, “*have you told the police ?*” She said, “*yes, but they say they are not there, that its all in my imagination, but I know they are there, they are always there.*” Dr. Ironside said, “*you are a most fortunate woman, for don't you know who these two men are ?*” She said, “*No, do you know ?*” “*Oh, yes,*” he said. “*They are David's friends*” And he turned to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and read these words, “*Surely goodness and mercy.*” He said, “*one of these men is called goodness and one of them is called mercy, and God has sent them to follow you all the days of your life.*” “*Why,*” she said, “*pastor, that's wonderful and to think that all this time I have been afraid of them, and God has sent goodness and mercy to follow me all the days of my life.*” She was so happy and every day when she would go on the streetcar she would wait for goodness and mercy to get on, and when she come home to her apartment, she would open the door and let goodness and mercy go in, and then she went in. My .... she lived the rest of her life until she stepped over onto the other shore in perfect happiness and no more fear. Why you say, “*was Dr. Ironside right to tell her that ?*” Well, would that all of could understand in a real way that “*goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life.*” My .... its good for the Christian now, but the best is yet to be, for David says, “*I will dwell .... for ever.*” ( Ps 23:6 ) Now this in effect is what John is talking about in ( 3:1-3 )

The first two chapters of John's epistle have as their main theme the subject of “**Fellowship,**” the key verse is ( 1:5 ) where John says, “*God is light.*” The last three chapters of John's epistle have as their main theme the subject of “**Sonship.**” The key verse is ( 4:8 ) where John says, “*God is love.*” So the first two chapters speak of being in fellowship with God, while the last three chapters deal with being in the family of God. You and I are children of God, we are in the family of God, because of the amazing love of God. John tells us, **What we are !** “*Sons of God.*” Then he tells us, **What we shall be !** “*we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.*” And then he tells us, **What we should be !** In view of the Rapture we should keep our lives clean. You see,

we could write across this passage.

***“ Its Good now, but the Best is yet to be,”*** for John begins by speaking about,

## **(1) OUR ROYAL DIGNITY**

Do you catch the wonder in John's words ? “ *Behold what manner of love, the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.* ” ( 3:1 ) Now don't forget that John is an old man now, he is on the last lap, he is well into his sunset years, he is close to death, but what thrills me about him is this, he has not lost the sense of wonder of God's undeserved grace. He is bowled over every time he contemplates the love of God for his life. When he contemplates the unique relationship he enjoys with his Heavenly Father, it leaves him, “ *lost in wonder, love and praise.* ” My .... do you ever stop to think about the wonderful position of dignity, privilege, and honour into which God has brought you ? John says, “ *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.* ” There is.

### 1. No DELAY:

“ *Beloved now ....,* ” we haven't to wait until the end. We enjoy this honour now.

### 2. No DOUBT:

“ *Now are ....,* ” there is no perhaps or maybe about it, we know we are. John wrote his gospel in order that “ *ye might have life.* ” ( 20:31 ) He wrote this epistle in order that “ *ye may know that ye have eternal life.* ” ( 5:13 ) My .... are you sure of your salvation ? I heard about an old lady who accepted Christ, through the reading of ( Jn 3:16 ) The counsellor showed her where the verse was in her Bible and marked it for her. Later on that night she had doubts, she felt the devil was attacking her new found faith. She decided that the darkest place in the room was under her bed, so that is where the devil must be. She found ( Jn 3:16 ) in her Bible, put her finger on the verse, and thrust the Bible under the bed, “ *here,* ” she said, “ *read it for yourself.* ”

“ *Beloved now are we,* ” right now. 1:2:

### 3. No DIFFERENCE:

“ *Beloved now are we,* ” ( 3:1 ) Every real Christian can believe it, however little knowledge of God, he may have gained. “ *We,* ” old and young, important and insignificant, all of us, because it is not of our merit, but of His grace. My .... are you despondent this .... ? Are you felling sorry for yourself ? Then, think about the great dignity, that God has bestowed upon you. You are God's child ! You can say to yourself this .... “ *wonder of wonders, I'm a child of God.* ” You see, as the children of God we are,

### **(a) LOVED BY THE FATHER:**

Do you see what John says ? “ *Behold what manner of love ....,* ” ( 3:1 ) The word “ *behold,* ” means “ *to see and know.* ” J. Dwight Pentecost likens the word to a flashing light on a highway

designed to get our attention. It calls for one to stop, to ponder, to consider the truth of what is being said. My .... do we appreciate the sheer wonder of this ? That such a righteous God should stoop down to where we were in the gutter of sin, and with a heart of love, draw us to Himself ! You see,

### 1. This love is UNDESERVED:

The love of God is like a river that flows out of the heart of God and reaches us wherever we are. Many years ago a little who had been disfigured in a fire was taken to a children's home. Her face was terribly scarred. When along with some other children she was brought to the train station, where the superintendent of the children's home would pick her up, she stood off in the corner and watched as the superintendent picked up the others, hugged them, and smothered them with kisses. After a while she edged up beside the superintendent and said, "*Please mister, I know that I am not pretty like the other girls, I know that my face doesn't look too good, but would you mind hugging me just a little ? You don't have to kiss me, but would you just hug me and let me know you're glad I'm here.*" Well, of course you know he did. He reached and took that child with the scarred face, wrapped her in his arms, and smothered that scarred face with kisses. So it is with the love of God.

Paul says, "*God commendeth his love .... Christ died for us.*" ( Rom 5:8 ) The Son of God became the Son of Man that the sons of men might become the sons of God. 1.

### 2. This love is UNMEASURED:

The same John writes "*For God so loved the world,*"( 3:16 ) I wonder what is contained in that little word "*so,*" ? How much does it mean ? How far does it go ? When the Bible says that "*God so loved the world.*"

### 3. This love is UNIQUE:

Do you see this phrase "*what manner of love ?*" The scholars tell me that its root significance is not so much of what kind, but of what country. Its interesting to notice the other places where this word appears. We find it in ( Mk 4:39-41 ) where the Lord Jesus calmed the storm. Do you recall what the disciples said, "*what manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him ?*" From what country is this man ? Surely not an earthly country seeing He has such authority. The word is found again in ( 2 Pet 3:11 ) where it talks about the Second Coming of the Lord and the dissolving of this world. Peter says, "*what manner of persons ought ye to be.*" ( 2 Pet 3:11 ) Of what country ! And now, "*Behold what manner of love .... us,*" From what country is such love ? My .... no earthly country contains, or cultivates a love of such sweet quality as this. It is a love altogether other worldly, unearthly. It is an out of this world kind of love. When Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean, he was so thrilled that he fell on his knees and thanked God for the honour of such a discovery. Is this not how John must have felt when he said, "*Behold what manner of love .....*" when it dawned on his soul how wonderful the love of God is, all he could do was rejoice in it and experience it. My .... are you rejoicing in it this .... ? Do you recognise

that as God's child (a) John tells us that the flip side of the coin is that we are,

**(b) LOATHED BY THE WORLD:**

Look if you will at ( 3:1 ) When the Saviour came from heaven the world did not recognise Him as the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world. John says, “ *He came unto His own and His own received Him not.* ” ( 1:11 ) He was despised, rejected, and eventually suffered the shame and pain of crucifixion. And “ *as He is so are we in this world.* ” ( 4:17 ) You see, this world has no idea of what it has in it midst. For in the midst of this world there is a group of people. They are strange to some, unusual to others, and they are the objects of this world's ridicule and scorn, yet God says they are the children of the King. They are the children of the God of this universe and yet the world does not know them. They are passing through this world as pilgrims and strangers. They do not belong down here. Do you recognise that ?

“ *This world is not our home,* ” are you disturbed, when you are not recognised, honoured and given fame by this world ? My .... we ought not to be surprised when we are not in this world's Hall of Fame ! For the world does not know us ! *You see, the more you know Christ, the more you will be like Christ, and the more you are like Christ, the less you are like the world, and the less you are like the world, the less the world will like you.*

**Our Royal Dignity !** Who are we ? The children of God. After his conversion Billy Bray, the Cornish miner used to rejoice in the fact that God had taken him from the dunghill and had made him a child of the king. Are you rejoicing in that fact this .... ? That your dignity is great.

**(2) OUR EVENTUAL DESTINY**

I wonder have you ever met a young man or woman that just so deeply impressed you and you said something like this. “ *You really have a bright future ahead of you.* ” Well, nobody has the bright future that a child of God enjoys. What does the future hold for us ? Well, look at what John says ! “ *Beloved now are we .... as He is.* ” ( 3:2 ) Now there is,

**(a) AN ELEMENT OF CERTAINTY HERE:**

Did you notice that John speaks of *when* He appears, not *if* He appears ? Jesus Christ is coming again ! The sinner can dread it, the liberal can doubt it, the atheist can deny it and the infidel can dispute it, but Jesus is coming again. “ *He shall appear,* ” Christ declared it ! ( Jn 14:3 ) “ *He shall appear,* ” the angels confirmed it ( Acts 1:11 ) “ *He shall appear,* ” the apostles revealed it. ( 1 Thes 4:13 ) “ *He shall appear.* ” Do you believe it ? I heard about a little boy who had a kite and the kite had flown so high that it had gone completely out of sight and he just held on to the string and maintained that he had a kite. He was holding on tightly and looking up into the sky and a man came by and said to him, “ *Son, what do you have there ?* ” He said, “ *Oh, I've got a kite.* ” The man said, “ *what makes you think you've got a kite up there in the sky ?* ” And the little boy said, “ *Well, I will tell you Sir, I can't see it, but I can feel the pull.* ” My .... you mark it down. It may be today, it may tomorrow, it may be next week, it may be next year, but Jesus

Christ is coming again ! (a)

**(b) AN ELEMENT OF CLARITY HERE:**

For John says, “ *For we shall see Him as He is.* ” ( 3:2 )

Paul says, “ *for now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face.* ” ( 1 Cor 13:12 ) Think of it. We are actually going to see our Lord Jesus Christ ! You have never seen Jesus Christ with the eyes of your physical body, have you ? Neither have I. We have no pictures of our Lord. We do not know He really looks. The Lord has given us some pictures of Christ in the four gospels. We can a glimpse of the Saviour there, but some day our faith will turn to sight. ( 1 Pet 1:8 ) Do you recall the story of Abraham’s servant seeking a bride for Isaac ?

When he found Rebecca, he told her about his master. All he could do was tell her. *There were no pictures to show.* Although she had never seen Isaac, the moment of decision came. The father looked at Rebecca and looked at the servant. Then he looked back at Rebecca and asked, “ *Are you willing to go ?* ” ( Gen 24:58 ) She made her decision. She said, “ *I will go.* ” It must have been quite a journey. She was riding on a camel and camels only go about three miles per hour.

It must have been wearying throughout those hot, dusty roads, looking forward to seeing this man she had never met before. That is the way it is with a Christian, is it not ? Sometimes the road gets dusty. Sometimes we wonder, “ *Will I ever make it ? Will I ever get there ?* ” Then one day about sunset, Isaac was out meditating in the field. The caravan came in sight of Isaac, and Rebecca said, “ *Who is it ?* ” “ *It is my master,* ” said the servant. My .... the Bible says when she saw him she got off the camel and went to meet her future husband. Faith had become sight. My .... some glorious day our Lord will appear and when He does the “ *camels,* ” of this earth will lose their importance and we will be enraptured with a face to face meeting. “ *We shall see Him as He is.* ” Personally, intimately, directly, forever.

“ *Face to face with Christ my Saviour .....* ” (a) (b)

**(c) AN ELEMENT OF CONFORMITY HERE:**

For John says, “ *We shall be like Him,* ” ( 3:2 ) Is this not the work of the Holy Spirit right now, to conform us, as much as may be, to the image of God’s Son ( Rom 8:28 ) in anticipation of the time when we shall be like Him in body and holiness for all eternity. What will it mean to be like the Lord Jesus ? I think it will mean,

**1. PURITY OF CHARACTER:**

We have problems with sin down here, do we not ? Well, one of these days, we will be saved to sin no more !

**2. GLORIFICATION OF BODY:**

My .... there are many things we don’t know about the resurrection body but we know this that “ *we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be*

*fashioned like unto His glorious body.*” ( Phil 3:20 ) Isn’t that amazing ? His glorious body ! No more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more dim eyes. No more death, deficiency, disease. “ *We shall be like Him.*” I think it will also mean,

### 3. SATISFACTION OF HEART:

For the Psalmist says, “ *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness.*” ( Ps 17:15 ) My .... this is our prospect. This is our destiny ! With Christ, like Christ, beholding Christ throughout the unending cycles of God’s eternity. Do you know something ? ***Its good now, but the best is yet to be !*** (1) (2)

### **(3) OUR PRACTICAL DUTY**

John says because our dignity is great, and our destiny is fixed, our duty is clear. “ *And every man that .... pure.*” ( 3:3 ) My .... the hope of His return is an incentive to live a life of daily holiness. When Christ comes I don’t want Him to find a grudge in my heart, I don’t want Him to find His tithe in my pocket, I don’t want Him to find drink in my fridge, I don’t want Him to find dirty magazines under my bed, I don’t want Him to find disharmony in my home, I want Him to find me in a place where He would not mind being Himself ! You see, the Lord Jesus is,

#### **(a) THE MODEL WE ARE TO EMULATE:**

We are to be pure just as He is pure. Two words are translated as “ *pure,*” in the N.T. One is the word “ *purity,*” in the sense in which God is absolutely pure. Another word, the one used here means a purity maintained in the face of temptation. Now the Lord Jesus was tempted. The Bible says, He was “ *in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” ( Heb 4:16 ) But He loved us so much that He maintained His purity in the face of temptation. In just the same way our love for Him ought to cause us to maintain our purity ! A young girl was out with friends one night, far from home, and her friends suggested that they go to a questionable place. She hesitated for a moment and then said, “ *I think I had better not.*” One of her friends said sarcastically, “ *Are you afraid if you go, your father might hurt you ?*” The girl replied, “ *No I am not afraid my father might hurt me if I go, but I am afraid if I go I might hurt my father.*” My .... is that your attitude ? Do you want to maintain purity of life lest you hurt Him, lest you bring dishonour on His name ? Here is the (a) but notice,

#### **(b) THE MEANS WE ARE TO APPROPRIATE:**

For John says, “ *Every man .... purifieth himself .....*,”  
“ *But I thought it was God, and not we that did the purifying work ?*” Well, there is a sense in which God purifies us. Paul says that He is purifying “ *unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*” ( Titus 2:14 ).

It’s a bit like soap. Soap will make you pure but you have to use it. My .... the Lord has given you His Word, prayer, fellowship, the means by which you can keep your life clean and pure. They are given by Him, but they must be used by you ! A soldier went through all the battles of

the European campaign. Amid the revelry and all that went on, this man kept himself above reproach. The others noticed that he would not participate in some of the things they were doing. Finally, they asked him about it. Do you know what Bill said, “ *Back home there is a girl I love with all my heart. When this war is over, I am going to be married to that girl and I am keeping myself just for her.* ”

My .... just over the clouds there is a Saviour who loved us and gave Himself for us. One of these days the clouds will burst and “ *the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout .....*,” ( 1 Thes 4:16 ) He is coming for His church, for His bride, for you and me, and we are going to be united to Him. ***Will you keep yourself holy just for Him ?***