

## Hope That Purifies

1 John 2:28-3:10 (Key verse 3:3)

“All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.”

Last week Sunday we learned about the dangers of loving the world and the things in the world. It was a message of rebuke and encouragement not to love the world. Because in the world we find the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Simply put, all this world has to offer is darkness and sin. John wrote this letter so that we may not be led astray, that there are those who are eager to deceive believers. Some believers who go to the point of teaching others to place their hopes in the world and this world. Just last week one student in our school committed suicide, we also heard of one of celebrities Ricky who also committed suicide. Our world is empty though it gives an illusion to be full of things to place our hopes in. It is not easy to live a Christian life in this world, it is not easy to live and do the right things. When we live our parent's homes and come live away from them, we are exposed to more peer pressure and the lifestyle of other students on campus. On my first year at Wits I was shocked to see students getting drunk cause I came from a town where I was told learners who got drunk never make it to University. So since I wanted to come to University I never wanted to get drunk. But now seeing that I could get drunk and succeed I was tempted to also live as I pleased and the join the campus world. Even though I regarded myself as a Christian, or child of God. Our passage today tells us about who we are and what hope we should live by, in the midst of our vibrant campus or world that does not understand our faith. Today's passage provides us with means to fight against love of the world and the things in this world by a living hope that purifies. May we learn today what this hope is and who is at the center of this hope. I pray that we may receive and live by this hope so we may live genuine Christian lives as Children of God and make Jesus fashionable on campus. Amen!

In verse 2:28, we find John addressing the believers as “dear children” to illustrate how fragile we are to deception. Look at verse 28, “28And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.” The people who have legitimate hope in Jesus will continue to abide in Jesus. They are the people who believe Jesus will come one day just as he promised, and because they await his coming they will be confident and not ashamed before Jesus. This means because of their hope in his coming, they live lives that seek to please Jesus. In other words we can never continue in Jesus or follow Jesus if we do not have hope in his coming. The lack of hope in Jesus coming will make us live as we please, following the trends of this world. This will result in shame when Jesus appears because we would have lived in a way that rejected him since our hope was for this world. We would have lived unrighteous lives, look at verse 2:29, “If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.” The righteous life is Jesus life manifested in the life of the child of God. Because that person is born of him. To be born of Jesus simply put is to be born again. And to be born again is to acquire a new nature, new hope and desires that are of God and not of this world. So a good sign that shows a person has been born again, is those who live a righteous life, a life that is inspired by Jesus life, a life of obedience to the word of God. These people by their righteous living prove that they have a new hope that is not of this world.

We read in Chp 3, verse 1a, “*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!...*” God has lavished or given in abundance his love unto us that we should be called Children of God. Let us ponder bit on what this love is? This love is not some philosophical statement, but is experienced love of God. It was demonstrated through Jesus who laid down His life for our sin on the cross. This is a lived experience of God's love when we met Jesus personally. We are made children of God because of the love of God. This love is not of this world, it is the perfect love of God. It is the love that God gives because of who he is. This love is above us, beyond us and unknown to us. The agape love, the love of the will. It is not the affectionate love or love of feelings that can be generated through friendship or by love between a man or a woman. This kind of love is not the family kind of love that is normal between parents and children. It is the love that chooses to love and is self giving, self sacrificing, it seeks nothing for itself, only to give itself for the benefit of another person. And without that person being worthy for that sacrificial love. It is that kind of love that the father chose to lavish or freely give upon us. It is because of that love that we are now become children of God. We read in 1 John 4:9-10, “*By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10In this is love, not that we*

*loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" So you and me are a child of God through sacrificial love of God, for God had to give us His one and only Son so that you and me can become members of a heavenly family. We are not just members of His Kingdom or His servants, but family. We are adopted as His own beloved children.

God's love is really remarkable, it is an amazing kind of love, and encouraging kind of love because it's a love that gives us new identity and adopts us into a God's family. God chose to take a worthless sinner like me, and adopt me as His child. While I was His enemy, surely now God will sustain me now that I am His child. Paul sums up the effect of God's love nicely in Romans 8:35-39, that nothing and absolutely nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I can now call on God at any time and say, abba father. Now that we have new identity through God's love we can be certain about something, look at verse 2, "*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*" Through God's love we became new person, it is not clear what we will be, but one thing for certain is that when Christ appears we shall be like him. What does this mean, I don't think we will be like Him in external features, but like Him in virtue, character, service and faith. As believers we should have this hope and desire to meet Christ one day, not only that to be like Jesus. This is the end goal of a child of God. We face all kind of things in this world, we should never forget that the end goal of what we are is to be conformed to the full and perfect image of Christ Jesus. This should be our hope in everything because God loved us into this hope. At the center of this hope is the love of God. Because the object of our hope is a person our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also told in verse 1b, "*...The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him*", that means a child of God will be a stranger to this world, because Jesus was a stranger to this world. So a child of God should not expect good treatment from the world since the world never treated Jesus well. Ultimately the world allowed capital punishment upon him, though he healed many and preached the good news of the gospel to them. We sometimes complain that the world is not fair, as a child of God this is expected because the world never knew Jesus. The child of God may look the same outwardly as people in this world but inside of you is a hope in God's kingdom others don't have. In you is the spirit of God, in your soul is the life of God. As the bible says, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. God lives in you. **Our hope stands on these three pillars, It is guaranteed by abiding in Jesus, It is manifest in righteousness and It is established by an amazing love.**

What is the effect of this hope in our day to day lives? Let us look at verse 3, "*All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*" Our hope to be like Jesus in heaven is something that affect our lives practically, it has effect in our day to day lives. We should fix our hope on Jesus, not on a place, not on activity, but on a person, that in itself becomes purifying. We read in verse 4, that when we sin we disregard the law of God [4] that sin is actually lawlessness. Basically to live as we want as though we are not under God our maker. However we read in verse 5, "*But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*" Jesus had come to take away our sins because in Him there is no sin. So if our Christian lives is to one day be like Jesus, having that hope will purify us because it will affect our relationship with sin. The fact that Jesus has come to take away our sins, also means that we can choose not to sin. Because the power of sin has been taken away, we no longer slaves to sin. Look at verse 6, "*No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*" In other words, if we have living hope in Jesus, we will not commit sin habitually. And even when we have committed sin it would break our hearts because of the hope we have in Jesus. The passionate longing to be like Christ will affect the life I live here, if that longing is genuine. So when we think about heaven, we should fix our hope on Jesus and see how it purifies our life here. Living in this hope is life-transforming.

As an example on how this hope can make us pure, imagine you are in a heated argument or someone has just said something offensive to you, at that moment your natural instinct would be to retaliate with another offensive word, however if you can at that moment remember your hope to be like Jesus one day, a sure hope as promised by the word of God, you will react differently to your situation. You will take the decision that is more like what Christ would do. In that way you would have purified yourself because of the hope you have in Jesus. This hope in Jesus has power to humble our hearts, to consider that we are sinners and need to come

to God in repentance. . As Paul said in Romans 8:24a, *“For in this hope we were saved....”* That hope reminds us of God’s love and our true identity that I am a child of God. And so we live in hope as children of God. And because of this hope, we can deny ourselves as we read in Luke 9:23, *“Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”*

Our UBF ministry has sent out many missionaries throughout the world because of this hope, men and women left their comfortable lives, their homes and their own countries to be a foreigner in another country. Some had professional jobs in their home countries but chose to be dish washers in another foreign country because of their hope in Jesus Christ, they hoped to be like Jesus one day when he comes, they hoped in eternal life because they believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Our Wits Ministry was started by a single family, I remember when msn Rebekha invited me for bible studies, she was still pregnant (in fact this is how she reminds herself when we met, by counting how month old was her first daughter). Later on they invited me to stay with them while they did not even know me very well, but because of their hope in Jesus they could serve me with bible study and delicious food. Their hearts were pure in serving God, all their plans and desires was about using their family to grow the kingdom of God through campus ministry. There is so much I can say about the sacrifices of their family but I have limited time. Two things I want to say, first, what I saw in them was the life of Jesus manifest in their lives, so through them I could experience Jesus love personally. Their hope to be like Jesus one day had effect in their lives. Secondly, their hope in in Jesus does not mean they were perfect, however they could be kept sincere and genuine in serving God. They faced practical challenges even today their family is facing a trial since her husband shd Jacob is in Dubai separated from his family. However I believe when they meet Jesus in the resurrection and made to become like Jesus, their joy will wipe all their tears away. May we continue to pray for shd Jacob to find a job in South Africa so he may be re-united with his family, so they may serve UJ students with joy. May God also grant msn Rebekha and the kids strength to cope well through God’s word as they continue to place their hope in Jesus. I thank and praise God for giving us living hope in Jesus Christ. Hope that purifies.

Now let us look at the deception that had infiltrated the church. As I indicated in my introduction, one of the motivation of this letter was to really set the record straight regarding what it means to hope in Jesus, or what it means to be a child of God. Look at verse 7, *“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.”* This righteousness is as a result of the life of the righteousness of Jesus in the believe or child of God. This is the prove that indeed the person is a child of God, has the purifying hope in Jesus. One cannot claim to be a child of God but still does not live right. Because the bible does tell us that, you shall know them by their fruits. John puts it plainly, look at verse 8, *“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”* The sin John speaks of here is the one who continues to commit sin habitually, living in complete disregard of God yet wants to claim they are a child of God. We read in verse 10, *“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.”* There are children of God and there are children of the devil. Clearly the children of the Devil can never place their hope in Jesus because they never became born of him for they reject God’s love so they may love the world. All their hopes are in this world and the things of this world. Doing what is right has been the dominant indicator of being born of God, but now John adds not loving brother and sister. And this is because God is love, and if we are born of God, we too should have His love even though it may not be not perfect yet. So John is setting the record straight, a child of God, has living hope in Jesus and that hope purifies, it can never allow the child of God to live in habitual sin.

There is a story from a book *“Encountering our wild God”* that I read from a message on John. About Kim Meeder who prayed one day about where to go shopping and God led her to a particular Goodwill thrift store. When it was time to check out, the check out clerk named Angel was very angry and rude to Kim. Kim sensed God prompting her to give her testimony to Angel. At first the clerk said rudely, *“Did you find everything you need?”* Kim said, *“Yes, I found more than I need, even some things for my speaking engagement.”* (Angel): *“Well, what do you speak about?”* (Kim): *“I speak about hope.”* (Angel): *“Well, that’s great! You speak about hope. Nobody takes responsibility around here. Nobody takes responsibility!”* (Apparently she was pretty

angry at some fellow colleagues in the Goodwill thrift store, I guess. But she was taking it out on this customer.) Kim drew back and said to herself, “Lord, what do you want me to do with that?” And she felt the Lord prompting her: “Share your testimony. Point blank her with your testimony.” And she thought, “Oh Lord, hear and now? With this angry clerk and impatient customers behind me? Ok, God, here I go. I’m going in.” And she said, “Angel...everyone needs hope in their lives. I’ll never forget the day I found genuine hope. I was nine years old. It was the same day that my dad murdered my mother and then killed himself. In my grief, I cried out to Jesus—the Author of hope—and He’s been in my heart ever since.” Angel stood speechless and began to cry. Then she said, “When I was twelve, I saw my mom kill herself right in front of me. I’ve never told that to anybody.” Kim opened wide her arms and Angel came over the counter weeping into the arms of a complete stranger, because she had been introduced to the love of Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, this is life! the love of God births new hope in a child of God, hope that does not live us idle or as victims, but hope that initiates and that purifies. Let us live in this life and pray that we may share our love as we hope in Jesus.

**In conclusion**, John has provided us a basis on which we can build our future hope and make the necessary sacrifices in this life to gain eternal life. As a child of God our identity is clear what we shall become, it is clear where our hope should be in terms of the type of person we want to become. I pray that we are encouraged that we are indeed justified by faith in Christ and can live in hope, the hope of heaven and the hope of eternal life. This hope purifies and over time conforms us into the person of Jesus Christ. It is founded in the amazing love of God, demonstrated through a life of righteousness and by that hope we testify that we are the children of God. We can be fully confident that by placing our hope in Jesus will not be in vain for when he appears we shall be like him. May we live pure and vibrant lives through our hope in Jesus Christ. Amen.