

Title: Purity: Faith and Love

Text: 1 John 3: 1-24

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Do we think that not being under the law means we are under no rule at all? Being under grace is to be under the rule of Christ himself. He abides in his people and his people in him. Christ produces good fruit in his people like as the vine produces fruit in the branches. Christ makes his people to believe on Christ and to love one another. He also makes his people do what Christ says is right.

My text is 1 John 3: 1-24. Some may disagree with what I declare here. But that is irrelevant to me; I must give account to God, not men. I want to show you from the scriptures what this passage means because I want believers to know the truth.

One thing that I am terrified of is to hear young believers say that it does not matter how a believer lives. In the past few years, I have heard of more than one occasion where young, professing believers engaged in sin, and while doing so, stated that it is all ok because we are under the blood of Christ. God forbid! How anyone got that understanding from the gospel declared by faithful preachers is beyond me! How a believer lives is of utmost importance.

Proposition: Speaking by God the Holy Spirit, the Apostle John declares it is what we have received from God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ, together with the incorruptible seed within the new man that compels the believer to walk in purity: in faith and love.

THE CONSTRAINT OF LOVE

1 John 3: 1: Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

It is the love of God our Father for sinners like us that constrains every true believer to live for him. The constraint that compels every chosen, redeemed, regenerated child of God is God's amazing love for such unworthy sinners as us—*“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:”*

Because he loved us, God chose us and adopted us as his own dear children freely without a cause in us. Because he loved us, God sent his Son into the world to suffer bearing our sin and our curse to save us (1 John 4:9-10). Because he loved us, the Lord came to us with his gospel, called us by his Spirit, and revealed his love in us. (Ezekiel 16:6-8).

How could we serve self and sin when we are the recipients of such love and grace? His amazing love is the ruling force that makes us want to live as his dear children. Christ said that.

Matthew 5: 44: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust....47:...And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans do the same? 48: Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Luke 6:36: Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.]

John says “*therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*” The reason the people of this world do not recognize and acknowledge us as children of God is because they do not know God. The religious world does not know why we preach Christ and trust him to work in his people because they do not know him and the power of his grace. They treated him with ridicule and contempt; therefore, they do us the same.

THE CONSTRAINT OF HOPE

1 John 3: 2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3: And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

The constraint of God’s true children which makes us live unto God is not that we are attempting to earn son-ship but because “*now are we the sons of God!*” God made us his sons by adoption in eternal election. Christ the Firstborn Son made us righteous and holy by his obedience unto the death of the cross. Our regeneration by the Holy Spirit was “*because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*” (Gal 5: 6-7) Every believer born of the Holy Spirit is a child of God, that is why God sent the Holy Spirit unto us. And all who are sons are joint-heirs with Christ. For the sake of Christ his Son, God will never disinherit or disown any of his children!

Yet, there is something else besides sonship that constrains us to walk honorably before God, it is that we have a *sure hope* of things to come—“*It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” Our sure hope is that we shall see Christ as he is. That is constraint enough! But it gets even better! When we see him, we shall be perfectly conformed to his image. Oh, what a sure hope!

This hope constrains us to live for him—“*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*” John is not saying we have the ability to sanctify ourselves and make ourselves holy and pure. He would not even suggest that. No sinner can purify or cleanse himself from sin. Only the blood of Christ by the washing of regeneration gives a sinner a pure heart, a new holy inward man. In context, John is not talking of that but simply of walking as Christ walked. In chapter 2, he said the same thing:

1 John 2:6: He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. [context vv3-6]

The apostle Paul said it this way.

2 Corinthians 7:1: Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Having the promise from God to come out from among workers of darkness, be not unequally yoked with them, but come out from among them and God said I will be your father and you shall be my child. Paul says having those promises, as children of light, let us come out from among darkness and wash our hands of our former way of life once and for all. Paul told Timothy concerning men who were disobedient vessels of dishonor.

2 Timothy 2: 21: If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work. 22: flee also youthful lusts...

The apostle Peter put it this way.

2 Peter 3:14: Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Brother Henry Mahan said, *“It is foolishness for a man to say, ‘I want to be like Christ some day, but not now! I want to fellowship with God in eternity, but not now!’*

When the Spirit of Christ abides within, because he has purified us within, knowing we are the sons of God, having this hope that we shall see Christ and be like him, Peter said, a believer, *“no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account [to God].”* (1 Pet 4: 2-5) Our constraint to do so is the love of God our Father for sinner like us and our sure hope of seeing Christ and being like him.

THE CONSTRAINT OF SALVATION

1 John 3: 4: Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 5: And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 6: Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7: Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8: For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

We are constrained to walk as Christ commands by the salvation Christ has wrought for us and in us.

He gives us a definition of sin—*“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”* Sin is transgression of the law. All men are guilty, including the elect Christ came to save.

But Christ put away the sin of his people—*“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”* Christ is our Scapegoat—the LORD laid the sins of his people on Christ and Christ took them away forever, never again to be remembered by the all-knowing God. Christ is our Lamb of atonement—God laid the sins of his people on Christ therefore Christ was made a curse for us, bore all the just judgment and fury of God’s wrath, redeeming us from the curse of the law. *And in Christ is no sin*—before God, all who are in Christ have no sin. God will not impute sin to us because in Christ, by his finished work, we have no sin to impute.

Therefore, those who are in Christ by the new birth are constrained by the power of Christ to no longer live in sin—*“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”* John said the same thing in his third epistle by wording it this way, *“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”* (3 Jn 1: 11)

Christ is the vine and the believer abides in him as the branch. So this fruit is all of Christ. He produces it. Christ said,

John 15:5: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

We see Christ and know Christ because Christ produced that fruit. We cannot serve sin because Christ has taken up dominion in our heart and he produces the fruit of a faithful walk in his people. Being under grace, Christ effectually makes the believer live his life as a servant of righteousness, not as a servant of sin.

Romans 6: 14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15: What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16: Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17: But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18: Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Why is Paul using the word “slaves?” It is to make a point.

Romans 6: 19: I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

As ye used your bodily members fervently with great zeal as slaves of uncleanness and iniquity now use them that fervently and zealously as slaves to righteousness. Because things are different once Christ rules within us.

Romans 6: 20: For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21: What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death. 22: But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

We are not free from sins presence but we are free from sin condemning us and free from sin dominating us as slaves. But understand, living as servants to righteousness is not to earn salvation. Eternal life is a gift.

Romans 6: 23: For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not being under the law does not mean we are under no rule at all. Believers are under grace, which means we are under the rule of Christ himself, who works in us to produce good fruit. Being under grace, the Spirit of our Lord effectually makes the believer live as a servant of righteousness, not as a servant of sin.

John says, “*whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*” Be not deceived, whosoever we obey that is whose servant we are—“*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*” He is saying, “Little children, let no one ever seduce you into the belief that character and practice can be separated. He that doeth righteousness is righteous; for a righteous man inevitably practices righteousness.”

In John’s day Gnostics taught that conduct was immaterial to the spiritual man. They would say it does not matter how a person lives, provided he believes the gospel. That is what some professing believers in our day seem to think. But that is a lie!

Christ said a tree is known by its fruit. Christ is the Vine and he produces our fruit. Christ is righteous and he produces righteous fruit in us. He makes us do right. We cannot fulfill the righteousness of the law. But we are not under the law, we are under grace. We are not even talking about the righteousness of the law. We are talking about what Christ says is right. And understand, this is not works to make us righteous. Good

fruit does not make a tree good, but shows it to be good; so good works do not make us righteous (only Christ does), but good works show us to be so. (James 2:14-20, 26). As a tree is known by its fruit, so a righteous man is known by his works.

James 2: 17: Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18: Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

The same principle applies to the man who lives in sin—“*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.*” A man who lives in sin—in dishonesty, malice, envy, lies and disobedience to Christ’s teaching—is not of God, but takes his character from Satan. He imitates Satan, not Christ, and resembles his parent as children do their parents (John 8:41, 42).

Understand, Christ came not only to put away our sins in regard to the penalty of them and the curse of the law, but to deliver us from the power of Satan and slavery to sin—“*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*”

Christ destroys the works of the devil—by putting away the sin of his people on the cross and by the new birth wherein he creates a new holy man within—“*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*” When we are born of God, Christ’s incorruptible seed remaineth in us. So the new man Christ creates within a believer is holy and cannot sin because he is born of God; while our flesh can only sin. Yet, where Christ has created a new man, by Christ’s power, he breaks the dominion of sin over us so that the believer no longer is the slave to sin but is now the servant of Christ, the servant of righteousness—“*and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*”

CONSTRAINED TO DO RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TO LOVE BRETHREN

1 John 3: 10: In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 12: Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. 13: Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. 14: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. 15: Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 16: Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: Likewise, we ought to love our brethren in deed and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. 17: But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18: My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Some say John is speaking only of the inner man. Indeed, he is speaking of the inner man. But John is also talking about outward fruit. He says here that Christ was *manifest*—“*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested.*” Well, Christ was *manifest outwardly* for men to see. And just as Christ was manifest outwardly, so Christ manifests outwardly who are his by the fruit he produces in his people—“*In this the children of God are MANIFEST, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*” John is quoting Christ who said, “*By this shall ALL KNOW that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another.*” (Jn 13: 35) So John is not speaking only of the inner man because none can see the

inner man. He is speaking of the outward fruit by which Christ said all shall know we are his disciples and he speaks of that outward sinful fruit whereby all shall know those who are of the devil.

Now, what does John mean by doing righteousness?—“*whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*” Notice, “doing righteousness” is one part of this commandment, the second part of it is “loving brethren.” So down in verse 23, we see these two connected again in one commandment but in verse 23 John says what he means by “doing righteousness.”

1 John 3: 23: And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

First, doing righteousness is to believe on Christ. How is this doing righteousness? Christ established the law in perfect righteousness for God’s elect. Every believer established the law in him. *His doing, his righteousness* is imputed to us as *our doing, our righteousness* through God-given faith in him.

Also, doing righteousness is doing what Christ says is right. Believing on Christ is right because Christ commands us to do it. So is every other command we receive from Christ.

Again, be sure to understand, this is not keeping the righteousness of the law—we cannot do that—only in Christ. Still, though none of us can keep the law in perfect righteousness that does that mean we expect our wives to outwardly commit adultery on us. What if your wife came home and said, “Honey, I can’t help it, I must commit physical adultery. But it’s ok because none of us can keep the law.” Would that be ok? No! Sin is sin. But there are degrees of sin. It sin to commit adultery in the heart. But it is worse to go through with the act. John is speaking of obeying Christ through faith and following his example in all things. This is what those born of God do. We do not use our failures as an excuse to stop doing what he enables us to do.

Secondly, we love our brethren--“*Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*”

Abel was manifest outwardly to be righteous. It is because his works were righteous. What did Abel do? He believed on Christ. But faith cannot be seen except by works. Abel’s is faith was manifest outwardly by something he did outwardly which was a righteous (a right) work, he came to God in the blood of a lamb as God commanded. By this it was manifest that Abel was a child of God. Also, by coming to God in the blood of a lamb, Abel showed the greatest love that he could show to his brother because he bore witness to Cain that the only way a sinner can come to holy God is through faith in Christ.

Cain was manifest a child of the devil. His evil nature was out of sight. But he manifest the evil of his nature by his outward works. He slew able simply because Abel’s works were righteous and his evil. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you:* the world hates faith which works by love.

John is talking about doing right in deed and loving in deed from that holy heart where Christ’s incorruptible seed remains—“*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*”

But love is in the heart unseen. So how do we see love?—“*Hereby perceive we the love of God.*” God did something outwardly by which his love is manifest—“*because he laid down his life for us.*” Likewise, “*we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*” We ought to love our brethren, not only in heart, but in deed. Like as faith is manifest by works of faith, love is manifest by works of love.

Like, as love is manifest in deed, a hateful heart is manifest in deed, too—*“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”*

So we see John’s point—*“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”* It is certain that we are far from being able to love as Christ loved us and laid down his life for us. We certainly cannot do so to earn a righteousness. But John is saying that because Christ loved us and manifest it by laying down his life for us, by which he made us the righteousness of God in him, so we should imitate Christ by laying down our lives for our brethren in deed. (Phil. 2:3-5; Rom. 15:1-3; 12:10).

THE ASSURANCE CHRIST GIVES

1 John 3: 19: And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20: For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21: Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 22: And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 23: And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24: And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Christ gives those that are his assurance—*“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”*

Here is the first way Christ gives us assurance—*“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”* If we hear these things and our heart rebukes us, hereby know we are of the truth. How so? We would not care if we were a child of the devil. If our heart condemn us, it is Christ rebuking us in loving correction for whom God loves he chastens. He knows what his people need and is able to prune us and increase our fruits of faith and love. So even when rebuked in heart, our hearts are assured. It is those who live in sin and hear this and are not rebuked that should be troubled.

Here is another way our hearts are assured—*“Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”* If we hear these things and our heart condemn us not, but we are comforted in and by Christ, it is because we are in communion with him, asking and receiving because we keep his commandments and do those things pleasing in his sight. But notice, *“our confidence is toward God.”* Our confidence is not in us or our works. We know it is only by the grace of God that we are able to do anything pleasing in his sight. Everything, we received of him. Christ is the Vine and we the branches. He produces our fruit. Christ said, *“Without me ye can do nothing.”* So our confidence is not in us but in Christ.

So John reviews what we have heard.

What are we to do?—*“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”*

How will we do it?—*“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.”* The fruit in the branch is due to its union with the vine. So our fruit of faith and love is due to our union with Christ. We dwell in him and he in us.

How do we know he is in us?—*“And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”*

Amen!