

THE CERTAINTY OF OUR PRESENT POSITION—AND FUTURE POSSESSION!

Please turn to I John 2:28 and follow along as I read through I John 3:3. Three weeks ago—on Father’s Day—I preached a message on vs 1 “Behold, What Manner of Love.”

In the way of review, “Behold” in vs 1 means **more than just to see** with our eyes. It means to contemplate...to consider...to ponder...to think about. **What is it** that we are to contemplate? The manner of love that God the Father hath bestowed—given—to us that allows us the privilege of becoming His child!

We also noted when we looked at this last time that the verb “behold” is in **the imperative**—meaning that it is **a command**. God **isn’t suggesting** we ponder and think about His love—He **commands us** to do it!

Why? Because we often take for granted that with which we are familiar! God forbid that we should “get over” the awe and wonder that God would save a wretch like us—and yet sadly we do....

Not only did we look at the **command to contemplate** the Father’s love, we also looked at the **components**—the different sides of—the Father’s love. In the way of a reminder, here is what we looked at 3 weeks ago.

First, the **giver**—which is God the Father. What do we know about God? God is omniscient, omnipresent, Holy, the Creator, and the Judge with whom we will all meet some day and give an account to.

Second, we noted **the gift**—God **gave Himself** in the person of His Son! God did not send Jesus to do something He wasn’t willing to do—He came to earth **as Jesus** and paid the penalty He demanded so that we could be forgiven!

Third, we saw **the “getters”**—who it was that **received this gift** of love from the Father. **Who** are the getters; who are the **recipients**? Us.... Proud, rebellious, self-pleasing, self-serving, undeserving, unrighteous, and unthankful sinners! “Amazing love, how can it be? That thou my God shouldst die for me!”

Lastly, we noted the **“gain” of the getters**. What was it that we received from the Father? It wasn’t just love—it was **the privilege of adoption**—of becoming the sons and daughters of God!

I gave you this quote from **J.I. Packer** last time, but it bears repeating: “To be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is a greater.” (Knowing God; pg 207).

What I want to do this morning is zero in on verse 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.” Title of my message: “The Certainty of Our Present Position—and Future Possession!”

1. Our Present Position as Sons of God

Let’s consider first... **A. The Applicability**

John says in vs 2: “**Beloved**, now are **we** the sons of God...” **Who** is he “**talking**” to? **Who** does this **apply** to? **Is everyone** “beloved”—and a son of God? Is everyone heaven-bound? Is everyone forgiven?

The answer is an emphatic “NO!” **i. Not everyone is a child of God**

How do we know? Look at the end of vs 1: “...therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.”

--Some people **know** God; others do not! If you don’t **know** God, He is obviously not your Father!

Look at **3:10**. “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil...”

--Here we see there are those that are children **of God**—and those that are the children **of the devil**.

--Since you can’t be a child of the devil and the child of God **at the same time**, this verse also demonstrates that not everyone is a child of God!

I John 5:12. Two groups of people: those that have the Son—and those that don’t. Those that have not the Son don’t have life—and obviously are not children of God!

I John 5:19. “And we know that **we are of God**, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Again, we see two groups of people—those who are **of God** and those who are not!

We dare not miss this point—**not everyone** is a child of God! Not everyone is forgiven; not everyone is heaven-bound. John **does not say to everyone**, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God...”

So who does this **apply to** if it is not for everyone? **ii. We must be born of God—born again—to be His child**
1 John 2:29 “If ye know that He is righteous ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is **born of Him**.”

Who is the Him? God! Only certain people—those that do righteousness—are **born of God**.

1 John 3:9 “Whosoever is **born of God** doth not commit sin; for His seed” [referring to God’s Spirit] remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is **born of God**.”

--Twice in this verse it mentions being **born of God**. There are people that are born of God—and there are people that are not! But what does it mean that “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin?”

--It means this: when we are born of God, God implants His Spirit within us. Although we still sin, we **cannot continue to live a habitual**, long-lasting, sin-filled life because that kind of life is incompatible with the Holy Spirit who is now within us.

1 John 4:7 “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is **born of God**, and knoweth God.”

1 John 5:1 “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**.”

1 John 5:4 “For whatsoever is **born of God** overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

1 John 5:18 “We know that whosoever is **born of God** sinneth not; but he that is **begotten of God** keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

I don’t know how it can be any plainer—to be a **child** of God, you need to be **born of God**! So when John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” it only applies to you if you **have the Son**...if you are born again!

Can you say in your heart of hearts that **yes**—this applies to me—because I have the Son? Is Jesus yours? Have you **ceased from trusting you**—and are you **trusting only in Him**!

If so, John is speaking **to you**! If not, this **does not apply**! You are **not beloved**—and **you are not** a son—or daughter—of God!

We’ve seen the applicability; let’s look now at... B. The certainty

Vs 2 again: “Beloved, **now** are we the sons of God...”

What a wonderful word...**NOW**! Now—right now...at this very moment, we are **children of God**. It is a certainty—it is our **present position**!

--It **doesn’t** say, “Beloved, **maybe** you are the sons of God...”

It says, **now are we!**

--And it doesn’t say, “Beloved, **you later will become** the sons of God...”

It says, **now are we!**

There is no maybe...or hope so...or probation! Praise God, “**NOW** are we the sons of God!”

How can we be so certain? Isn’t it presumptuous to claim we can **know for sure**—right now—that we are God’s children and are heaven-bound? **Yes—it is presumptuous to claim** you are heaven-bound if you are **counting on your goodness** to get you there!

Jesus Himself plainly teaches that there is a... **i. Presumption-based arrogance**

Mark your spot because we’ll come back here in a bit, but I want us to turn to Luke 18. We’ve looked at this passage several times in the past, but it is good to be reminded what God thinks of those who are self-righteous.

--Luke 18:9. Right out of the gate, we are told “why” Jesus taught this parable—because there were those “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous...”

--In vs 11, we see the Pharisee **telling All-knowing God** that he wasn’t as bad as others

--In vs 12, we see him **telling All-knowing God** all the good things he did

--In vs 14, we see Jesus’ verdict regarding the two men. The publican who humbled himself and asked God for mercy went home justified—meaning forgiven. The arrogant Pharisee went home **condemned**!

Jer 17:5 “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that **trusteth in man**, and maketh flesh his arm.”

Prov 28:26 “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:”

Do not trust your own heart—your own supposed righteousness—meaning goodness—to gain heaven.

Why? Isaiah 64:6 “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all **our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;**”

It is presumptuous to believe—right now—that we are God’s children **if we are counting on us!** But—if you are a **true child of God**, you are not counting on your own righteousness/goodness. Instead, you are counting on **Jesus’ perfectness** and what He did for you on the cross! I’m calling that a...

ii. Promise-based assurance

Back to I John 3:2. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God...” We can know—right now—that we are God’s children. How can we know? From this verse here—and from I John 5:12.

Even though I referred to it once already, I want us to turn there. I John 5:12. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the son of God hath not life.” No in-between; no “limbo-land.” You either have the Son—and have eternal life—or you don’t. It is really that simple.

Now vs 13. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may”—what’s the next word? **Know!** “That ye may **know** that ye have eternal life!” God **wants us to know**—and we can know—that **now** are we the sons of God!

J.C. Ryle: “...It cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally—to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly—to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes.” (Holiness; pg 106).

We’ve seen our present position as sons, let’s consider next from our verse...

2. The Promised Revelation of the Son

Look again at our verse. “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...**”

There is **coming a day**—and it could be today—that Jesus shall appear! Jesus is coming back; He is going to be revealed! It says that here, and it says it—**twice**—in I John 2:28!

I John 2:28. “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when **He shall appear**, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him” ...when? **At His coming!**

Jesus Himself told us He was coming back! The disciples were heart-broken when they **finally grasped the reality** that Jesus **would die on the cross**. Listen as I read Jesus’ familiar words in John 14:1-3: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again**, and receive you unto myself; that **where I am, there ye may be also.**” **I will come again!**

Angels told the disciples that Jesus was coming back when they saw Him taken up to heaven!

Acts 1:9-11 “And when He [Jesus] had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? **this same Jesus**, which is taken up from you into heaven, **shall so come in like manner** as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” ‘You saw Jesus go; you will see Him come back/return!’

What will that be like? God through Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 4, beginning with vs 13. Let’s turn there; I want you to see this for yourselves in your own Bible. For the sake of time, we are going to jump down to 15.

--vs 15. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain **unto the coming of the Lord....**” What is the coming of the Lord? The day Jesus comes back to get us like He told the disciples in John 14!

--vs 16. “For the Lord Himself shall **descend from heaven** with a shout...” Again, it is referring to Jesus leaving heaven and coming to earth—just like He said He would do—and just like the angels said He would do!

--last part of vs 16. “...and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” **Who** are the dead in Christ?

Believers who died before Jesus comes back. They will rise first. **What** does that mean? It means that their bodies will be resurrected out of the ground—and be reunited with their souls. How do we know that? Look at vs 14. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus”—those who have previously died—“will God bring **with Him**”—meaning **with Jesus**.

Here’s the picture. Jesus returns to earth—from heaven—with the souls of believers who are in heaven with Him. Their bodies are resurrected—they come out of the ground—and are reunited with their souls. “Then we which are alive and remain” (vs 17) “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds...”

How is that **possible**? How can we be “caught up together with them in the clouds?” Because we get a **glorified, resurrected body**, too—without having to die first!

I’m calling that... **3. The Profound Transformation of Saved Sinners**

Please turn back to I John 3 one more time. Notice again vs 2. “Beloved, **now** are we the sons of God, and it **doth not yet appear what we shall be...**” Although in **position** we are—right now—sons of God, in **appearance** we are not yet what we shall be. There is a future transformation that awaits us—“we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” **How** will we be like Jesus in the future? I’m sure there are more, but here are **two ways** we will be like Him.

A. We will have transformed bodies

Although the details of that transformation are not in this passage, we do have them elsewhere.

I Cor 15:50-52 “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

We cannot—in our **current** bodies—live in heaven. We need to be **changed**. The next verse speaks of that very thing. ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be **changed**, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we **shall be changed**.”

If you are thinking that sounds a lot like I Thessalonians 4 that we looked at earlier, you are absolutely correct! Here’s one more:

Philippians 3:20-21a “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: ²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body....”

--We are—or at least should be—looking toward heaven for our returning Saviour.

What will Jesus do when He returns? Change our vile—meaning flesh and blood, corruptible body—into a body like His: incorruptible and glorious!

Our corruptible **body** is not the only thing that needs to be transformed, however. Our **sin nature** is also corruptible and must be **removed**. The second way we will be like Jesus, then, is that...

B. We will have a transformed nature

Logically, we know that our sin nature needs to be removed. James 1:14 reminds us that we are tempted to sin when we are drawn away of our own lust that is within us. In order for us **not to sin in heaven**, we need this nature to be removed. Is there a Bible verse that spells out that “removal?” Surprisingly, not really!

--Our verse here says, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” There are limits to how much we will be like Him, however. We certainly will not be All-Powerful like He is—and we will certainly not be “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords” like He is!

Although there isn’t a Bible verse—that I know of—that specifically declares our sin nature will be removed, I believe Jude 24 comes as close as any: “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to **present you faultless** before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,”

Can we be faultless—in the presence of a thrice-holy God—if we still have a sin nature within us? Not hardly! So for us to be presented faultless, our sin nature needs to be removed.

What a miraculous, transformation that will be! To have a **glorified body** with no dentures...or glasses...or hearing aids...or pins...or plates...or screws is hard to imagine, isn't it? On top of that, no more arthritis...or bladder issues...or breathing issues...or cancer...or pain! And to never be tired!

And yet—even better than that—is that we will never sin again! Never an outburst of anger...never a bad attitude...never a word of complaint...never a thought of jealousy...or lust...or pride...or suspicion...or unforgiveness! As I thought on this, the chorus of a song we sang earlier popped into my head:

O that will be... glory for me, glory for me, glory for me;
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory...be glory for me!

How about you? Will you look on His face? Are you certain of your present position as a son or daughter of God? You need to be—and you can be!

So what would God have us do in light of His word?

1. First and foremost, be honest about who you are trusting in to get to heaven.

--If you are trusting in you and your efforts, you are not going to make it!

We know from the parable in Luke 18 that God does not allow the self-righteous into heaven.

2. If you are a child of God, God wants you to enjoy—and be assured of—your present position. Do you? If not, it could be that you are doing things God doesn't want you to do. It is pretty difficult to have the joy of assurance if you are disobeying your Father.

3. Lastly, Jesus is coming back! Do you live like He could return at any moment? You should—because He could!