

The Children Of God

1 John 2:29-3:3

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow me as I begin reading in chapter two, verse 29. John says, "And if we know that he is righteous..." Now that he is righteous is a reference to God the Father, "then you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of him." I want you to notice that phrase, "born of him." That's the life that is real. That's what it means to be a true Christian. You're born of God. Chapter three, verse one, "Behold," or look, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of the children of God. Therefore, the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved now are we, the sons are the children of God, but it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we will see him as he is." Now every person that has this hope, that is the hope of the coming again of Jesus Christ, he purifies himself even as he, that is Jesus, is pure.

Now in this first epistle of John, we are finding that John is putting us to the test. Are you a true child of God? Anyone can say with their mouth, "I am a Christian," and a lot of people do that. They think they're Christian because they're born in America. They think they're a Christian because they believe in God. They think they're a Christian because they go to church. One thing to say I am a Christian, it's another thing to be a true child of God. To be a child of God, one must be born by the Holy Spirit into the family of God. Jesus told Nicodemus, a very religious Jewish fella, he was a Pharisee. If anyone can get to heaven by their race or by their religion, it was Nicodemus. He said, "Nick, you must be born again." He went by Nick for short.

Jay Vernon McGee used to call him, "Little Old Nicky." I like that. Nick, you got to be born again if you're going to enter into the kingdom of God. So it's not race. It's not rights. It's not religion. It's rebirth. You must be born again. And we're going to come back to that verse and focus on it. So John has given us three tests. There's the moral test of obedience, chapter one, verse six. There's the social test of love, chapter two, verses nine and 10, and there's the doctrinal test of belief chapter two, verse 22 and 23. Now, what do you believe about Jesus Christ will be determined how you behave. So he first starts with the moral test of obedience. Are you obeying God? Then the social test of love. The mark of a true Christian is love. The Bible says by this, shall all man know that you're my disciples, that you have what?

Love one for another, Christian Love. And then doctrinal test of belief. What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Is he the Messiah? Is the son of God? Was he God manifested in the flesh? Now just a little understanding of this epistle of John, then we'll jump into our text, and that is there are three tests in the epistle. There's the moral test, there's the social test, and there is the doctrinal test. These three cycle through the letter three times. This is why John seems repetitious, but each time these three tests cycle through the epistle, they are a tad bit different. They have a little different focus and a little different emphasis. So we move now to the second cycle of the same three tests, but the focus moves from being in fellowship with God to being a child of God. So you want to note that it. It moves from fellowship to sonship.

Fellowship is your relationship to God. Sonship is your being a child of God. You can be a child of God and not walk still in fellowship with God, but you can't have fellowship with God if you are not a child of God. So it starts with rebirth. A theological term for that is regeneration. What that means is that God gives you new life to... Regenerate means God gives you new life. We were dead in trespasses and sins and the Holy Spirit gave us new life and we became the children of God. You ever heard the expression of the proverb, "Like Father, like son"? Now I have a 23-year-old son and everybody says he looks like me. I feel sorry for the kid.

Everybody said he's like me on stuff and so we need to pray for him. But if you are born of God, you will be like your father. You will have his love. You will have his mercy. You will have his kindness. And mark this down, and this is not in my notes and this is not from the text, but this is from my heart. God is holy. If God is anything, God is holy. If you say that you are a child of God and you walk in darkness, and now I'm quoting scripture, you lie and you do not the truth. That's what John is saying. If you are a genuine, authentic Christian, if you have the life that is real, you will manifest that God is light. You'll walk in holiness. God is love. You'll walk in love. You can have that birthmark in your life of the holiness of God and of the love of God. By this others will know that you are his disciples.

Now, in our text today, John introduces the subject of the children of God. We don't get into the first test of moral obedience, that'll be next Sunday, we just introduce the idea of that we are the children of God. Thus the title of my message, The Children of God. What we're going to cover today is very doctrinal, very theological, but trust me, very, very practical. At first, you might say, "Well John, this is elementary. I know these doctrinal truths. I'm a child of God." But if these truths grip your heart, they then will transform your lives. So what you believe determines how you behave. So I want to inform you today and pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten you and transform you by the power of this Holy Spirit. There are two divisions to our text. The first is the divine origin of the children of God. The second is their unique privileges.

The first section is just verse 29 of chapter two. There we see the children of God, their divine origin. Go back and read it with me, verse 29 of chapter two. He says, "If we know," now the word know there is an interesting Greek word. It is the word oida. What that means is we know intuitively. What do we know intuitively verse 29? "That he," that is God, the Father, "is righteous." Underline that. Make note of that. We know in our hearts, we know intuitively that God is righteous. You know what that means? That means God is in the right. Now we are unrighteous. That means we're in the wrong. It also means that it is absolutely impossible, catch this thought, for God to do anything wrong. And yet you hear people all the time saying, "That's not right. God, that's not fair. God, why did you let this happen to me? God, I want to talk to you about this. God, that's not fair."

Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Cool Your jets. I understand the emotion you're feeling. I understand that you don't comprehend what God is doing, but let me make something perfectly clear. God never does anything unright. He never does anything unrighteous. He never does anything unfair. God is always perfectly righteous, perfectly holy, perfectly fair. He's totally under control. Do we have that established this morning? So if you're freaking out, "It's not right.

I deserve that job. It's not right. I deserve a better wife. I deserve a better husband. This one's all tweaked."

Do you know if we got what we deserved, we'd be in hell? Just thought I'd encourage you. Thank God for whatever you got. It's more than you deserve. I never pray, "God give me what I deserve." I'd be a pile of ashes. Say, "God, be merciful. Don't give me what I deserve. Be gracious. Give me what I don't deserve." That's what I want God to do and that's what God does. God is always perfectly fair and perfectly righteous. Now, here's what we know as well, verse 29, but he uses a different Greek word for know in the second instance. He says, "We know," oida intuitively that God is righteous. And then secondly, "We know," and he uses the word ginosko, which means by experience, that everyone that does righteousness is, catch this phrase, born of him. They are the teknon. They're the born ones. They're the children of God.

So let me point out two things. A child of God has been born of God. If you haven't been born of God, you are not a child of God. Secondly, a child of God practices righteousness. In the Greek, it is habitually, continually, ongoingly practices righteousness. Now that doesn't mean that if you look at somebody who's living a good life, that they're automatically a Christian. But it does mean that if a person is a Christian, the tenor of his life or the overarching rule of his life will be righteousness. You ever met somebody who says, "I'm a Christian. Yeah, I'm a Christian," and then they're doing things that are not Christian? We run into that all the time. The example I use first service, I'll use it again second. I've have people, they don't usually know I'm a pastor, but they say, "Ah, I'm a Christian." And then they say, "Blankety, blank, blank, I'm a Christian. Blank blank," and swear words, cuss words, filthy speech comes out of their mouth.

You know the Bible says, "From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." I have a paraphrase of that verse. If it's in the well, it comes up in the bucket. "Oops, I don't know where that came from." I do. It came from your heart. And when your heart has been changed, God changes your life, outcomes, words of grace and words of mercy, words of kindness. Filthy speech should not be a part of the child of God. It says that in the Bible. Let no filthy communication proceed out of your mouth. And I have to say, I don't care what you're professing, your actions speak louder than your words and your words are betraying you. You're not really a child of God or you're certainly walking in the flesh right now and not in the Spirit. You can look at somebody and tell whether they're a Christian by the way they talk, by the way they walk. Their life will manifest that they're a child of God.

God is light and God the Father is righteous, so the born ones are living righteously. This is how J.B. Phillips translates verse 29. He says, "Since you know that he is righteous, be assured that everyone also who acts righteously is a child of God. That doesn't mean you're going to be perfect. That doesn't mean you're going to be sinless. But it means the overarching tenor of your life is that you're becoming more like him. Your life is changing." Now, that's the first point I want to make from this text. Now the second point I want to make is in verses one to three of chapter three, that is the children of God, their unique privileges. What is their origin? Verse 29 of chapter two, they're born of God and they manifest God, like father, like son. Then we see their privileges, and this is where this text really takes off.

This is one of the greatest texts or verses in all the Bible. Notice what it says. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. Therefore, the world does not know us because it did not know him." That is Jesus. "Beloved now, we are the sons of children of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we're going to be like him." That is Jesus. "For we're going to see him as he is and everyone that has this hope and the coming again of Jesus Christ then purifies himself even as he is pure." So the true child of God has been born of God and manifests the righteousness of God. But John now enlarges on the wonder and the glory of our new relationship with God.

This is what John does from the end of chapter two to the beginning of chapter three, John just freaks out on the whole idea that we are actually the children of God. It's more than he can fathom or comprehend and that it indicates that God has set his love upon us. I had a grandmother on my dad's side of the family, my Grandmother Miller, she loved the Lord, great godly Christian woman. I'll never forget as a young Christian praying with my Grandmother Miller. She'd been walking with the Lord for like 60 years. I was so amazed that when she prayed, she said, "God, I thank you for your love. Thank you Jesus that you love us." I'm thinking, "Grandma, you've been walking with the Lord for a long time. Aren't you kind of over that right now?" She said, "No, I never get over the love of God." Don't ever take for granted the fact that God loves you. Let that sink deep into your heart. If you get nothing else that I preached this morning from this text, get this. God loves you.

Oh, the wonder of it all. Oh, the wonder of it all. Just to think that God loves me, an amazing thought that God would actually love me and that I would be born into his family, become his child and become partaker of the divine nature. Now, there are three privileges I want to point out from these verses. If you're taking notes, I encourage you to write them down. Three privileges of the true child of God. Number one, a child of God is a recipient of the love of God. Look at it with me in verse one. He says, "Behold," or look or check it out, "what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." Now he doesn't just say God loves us. He says, "Look, behold." You could translate that, check it out, and look at the manner of love that God has bestowed upon us.

This word manner, what manner is a single word in the Greek and it always connotes surprise, mingled with wonder and astonishment. Oh, the wonder of it all. Remember when Jesus was with his disciples on the Sea of Galilee and there was a storm and the waves were beating over the boat and the disciples were freaking out and they thought they were going to drown? They woke up Jesus, and he said to the wind and the waves, "Peace, be still." He actually said, "Be muzzled," and the wind and the waves immediately stopped and the sea turned to a sheet of glass. How did the disciples respond at that moment? They looked at Jesus and they said, here's our word, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the waves obey him?" They're like, "Whoa, this dude is radical."

He told the waves to stop and they stopped. He told the wind to stop and it stopped. So they were actually saying, "This is a man that's not of this world." What manner of man is this?

Originally, the word meant, check this out, of what country. That's what the word learning means. The word of this manner means of what country. Then it came to mean of what sort, so it means how great or how wonderful. I think a great, great paraphrase would be His love is out of this world. His love is out of sight. His love is unreal. We say out of sight, unreal, amazing, not of this world. Those would all be phrases to describe what manner of love. It's from another country. It's from another world. Now here's the apostle John and he'd walked with God for many years.

I remind you he's in his nineties when he's writing this epistle and he put his pen down, no doubt and got a big smile on his face. He goes, "Wow, God loves us and we are his children that he would call us the children of God." So don't ever take God's love for granted. It is unique. It's out of this world. Look at chapter four for just a moment. We'll get there in a few weeks. In verse nine and ten of 1 John, he says, "In this was manifest the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world." Why? "That we might live through him." Verse 10 says, "Herein is love," or this is love, "not that we love God, but that he loves us." So John says the big deal, the marvelous deal, the wonderful thing is not that we love God, he's lovable, but that God loves us, we're unlovable and God sent his son to be the sacrifice for our sins.

God's love is eternal, god's love is unconditional and God's love is limitless. You got that? You know that you can't do anything to make God love you more and you can't do anything to make God love you less? God's love is influencable. His love is perfect. So here's the first point. If you are a child of God, God has set his love upon you. Here's the second benefit or blessing of being a child of God. You are a member of God's family. Now, again, this may seem like it's basic and nothing to get excited about, but when it really grips your heart and the truth grabs a hold of your mind, it's a marvelous truth. Look at verse one for just a moment. He says, "Look what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that we," what? "We should be called the sons of God." Now, there's a little phrase that is omitted in my King James translation because the King James Bible is based on a manuscript called the Texas Receptus, and that is manuscripts that are multiple, many, many manuscripts, but there are older manuscripts.

Those older manuscripts are not an abundance. They don't have as many. But when we put them all together, we know what it belongs in the Bible. There's a little phrase that I think that should not be omitted in that verse and that is where John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." And then right there the phrase would appear, "and we are." Some of your modern translations include that. We should be called the children of God and then John goes, "And we are." In other words, we really are. We're not just fooling ourselves, we're not just talking about it, that in reality we really are the children of God. Now, when he calls us the children of God, he uses this Greek word teknon, which means born once. So you're born into God's family to receive his divine nature.

Then Paul, the apostle uses the word huioi, which means that you are adopted as full-grown adult sons and daughters. Now listen to me very carefully. This is an important truth that you need to understand. You become a Christian by being born into God's family. Because you're

born into God's family, you become a partaker of God's nature. He is your spiritual father and you become like him, but you are also adopted into God's family. You say, "Well, I thought you just said we get born into God's family." You do get born, but you also get adopted. When you have biological children, you don't get to pick them, right? You might have a little control over on how many you have, but that doesn't always work out either.

But when they're born, it's like that's yours. May not be the best looking kid, but that's yours. Shouldn't say this, but sometimes when I'm doing baby dedications, I feel like praying, "Lord, we thank you. This child is an answer to prayer. It does not look like it's father. Thank you, Jesus." That's a pastor joke, I'm sorry. But the truth is, when you're born into God's family, you do look like your father in heaven. But the idea of adoption, when you adopt a child, some of you have adopted children, you pick them. You choose them. There's something pretty cool about being adopted. It means your parents really wanted you. You're not a mistake. You're not an accident. They really wanted you.

Even though you're kind of funny looking, your hair's kind of freaky, they still picked you. God adopts you into his family. You've been chosen by God. But here's the point behind adoption. The moment you are adopted into God's family, at the moment you're born into God's family, you are placed as an adult child of God, which means you get to enjoy your inheritance. There may be some of you right now that are going to get an inheritance when you turn 18. Maybe you're going to get an inheritance when you turn 23 or 25, but you have to be of a legal age or according to the law, you have to be a certain age to enjoy your inheritance. In the United States today, you're 18, you're a legal adult, which is crazy by the way. I don't think we should get a driver's license until we're 50 and then take it away when they turn 60.

But the idea is that you don't have to wait when you're born into God's family to enjoy your inheritance because you are an adult child of God so you can begin to enjoy his love, his redemption, his salvation, the Holy Spirit, the blessings of God. All the blessings of God are yours to enjoy. You don't have to wait to grow in your relationship to God to enjoy your inheritance. So you get his nature from rebirth and you get your inheritance immediately by being adopted into the family of God, which is a marvelous truth. Therefore, the world, verse one, knows us not because it knew Him not. So they don't know that we are truly the children of God, that we've been born into that family of God. By the way, that's verse one of chapter three, that we do not know, the world does not know us.

When you walk through the mall, people don't look at you, "Wow, that's a Christian. There's a child of God." "How do you know?" "They're glowing." Their voice has reverb. May I have a Coke, Coke, Coke, Coke, Coke. Ooh, that's a child of God. Don't touch it. The world doesn't know us. They didn't know Jesus. God was in Christ reconciling the world. Jesus was God in flesh. Can you imagine when Jesus was in the market and he bought some grain or he bought something in the market and think, "I just sold something to God. I just bumped into God. I just bought an oxcart from God." I mean, what a mind blowing concept. Well, you are the children of God. Now, let me share this point before I go any further. It's not my notes. I didn't think about it, but it popped into my brain first service and I think it's apropos. You go, "So what? I'm a child of

God. I'm born into his family. He set His love of upon me."

Let me tell you something, nothing can happen to you and nothing can come into your life, but what your father in heaven is in control of and allows. That's good news. Years ago, some of you heard the abbreviated story. I've never gone into depth on it. I was kidnapped in Los Angeles, stopped at a place to eat before I went into LAX to fly out on a flight, came out to my car and at gunpoint, two guys kidnapped myself and two other pastors. For an hour, they held guns to our head, threatened to kill us. It was a carjacking, kidnapping, and they threatened to kill us and guns to our head. You know one of the thoughts that was going through my mind at that time? I am a child of God. Do you know who you're messing with? That's what I was thinking.

I'm a keeg's kid. I'm a child of God. You can't shoot me, kill me, hurt me. You can't do anything to me but what my father in heaven is in control of. I had this great overwhelming sense of, "God, do you see your children in this situation?" And I said, "Yes, because you see all things. You know all things, you're with us and you're in control," and I had peace. You say, "Well, I've lost my job." God's in control. You're his child. You don't think God knows about that? You say, "I was just diagnosed with cancer." You don't think your father knows about that? He has the very hairs of your head all numbered. Some of you old timers, that's not much work for God to keep track of this.

You used to have waves. Now you have is beach. The tide's gone out. But God keeps track of the very hairs of your head. Sparrow doesn't fall to the ground, but what your father in heaven knows. You are of more value than many sparrows. And again, leftist truth, just take hold of your heart. I am his child. Nothing comes into my life but what God is in control of. Amen. I don't just say that to encourage you. It's true. Behold, what manner of love the Father have bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God and we are. Not just called the children of God, and we are. Charles Spurgeon said, "This is a precious truth for the child of God to bring comfort in times of storm." So we have a partaker of his love and of his nature. Let me give you blessing number three and we'll wrap this up.

A child of God will also partake of his glory. So three things. You're born of God, you have the family of God, you're a child of God, and one day you will be in heaven with God. You will experience and share in the glory of God. Amen? That's because you're his child. So God loves you. You are born into his family. You are his child. You're members of his family, and one day you will share in his glory. Let's look at verse two and three. "Beloved," again, the idea that God loves you. "Now we are..." Not someday, not hope to be, not if you're lucky you'll be, "the children of God." But there is something we don't know yet, and that's in verse two. "We do not know what we shall be, but we do know something that when he," that is Jesus, "appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And if we have this hope," verse three, "then we're going to live pure, even as he is pure." God's love takes us all the way to heaven.

I believe that with all my heart because I believe that's what the Bible clearly teaches. I love what Jonathan Edwards said, one of the greatest theologians America's ever produced. He said, "What begins with grace ends in glory." What begins with grace ends in glory. Read

Romans chapter eight. "There's now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." How does the chapter end? No separation. Nothing can separate us from what? The love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Do you know that God's love will take you safely home to heaven? That's what John is saying in this verse. He's saying that we will get to heaven, but there's something we don't know. I want you to notice it there. We do not know what we shall be, future tense.

John is saying that when we get to heaven, we don't fully comprehend it. We don't fully understand it. We won't fully grasp it. There's a lot about heaven the Bible doesn't speak of. What the Bible does speak of, you can rest on and know for sure. This is why I'm not big on books about I went to heaven, I died, I came back and this is what I saw. You know why? Because if anything they saw in heaven, anything they describe in heaven is not in the Bible, I don't believe it's true. It may be true, it might be true, but I don't know it's true. What I do know is true is what the Bible says about heaven, and if the Bible says it's about heaven, I can believe it. But if it's already in the Bible, then why do I need to buy your book? Right? If I read your book, I got to go back to my Bible and say, "I wonder if that book's true or not."

Well, why do I need the book if I can start with the Bible and know that what's in the Bible is true? Did I make that clear? So be careful. Paul, the apostle died and went to heaven, came back and he said, Shh, can't even talk about it. It's unbelievable. It'd be a crime to begin to describe what I saw." And yet people write so freely today about what they saw when they went to heaven. I got a Bible that tells me truth. I can rest there. I don't get excited about things that you don't know about. That's subjective. The Bible is objective truth. Now, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 that right now we see through a glass dimly. It's actually a reference to a mirror. In those days, mirrors were just polished metal. How good of an image can you see in a piece of polished metal? The mirrors we have today are brutal. Stinking mirror.

You look in your mirror, you go, "I need a new mirror. This mirror, every time I look in it, I'm ugly." Tear the mirror down. Throw up a new one. "Oh, I'm still ugly. I need another new mirror." It's not the mirror. But in those days, if you wanted to know what you look like, you'd take a piece of brass or a piece of silver and you'd polish it as good as you could, and then you'd see your image. It was always foggy or distorted, which sounds like a good idea to me. I don't need to see all my blemishes. But he likened on that to our life right now and the clarity that we don't have to what heaven's going to be like. We're looking through a mirror dimly. But one day, he actually says in that chapter, "We will see him face to face and we will be like him again for we will see him as he is." So one day we're going to get to heaven.

Right now, we don't know what heaven's like. But what the Bible does say about heaven is pretty cool. You know that there'll be no more sickness there. There'll be no more sin. There'll be no more sorrow. There'll be no more tears. There'll be no more Satan, praise God for that. All the former things are passed away. The Bible tells us more about what's not going to be in heaven than what's going to be in heaven. No sickness, sin, sorrow, death, tears, for all those things will be wiped away. So we do not know what we shall be. Let's not speculate. Let's rest on the clear revelation of God's word. But there is something we do know, verse two. You know

what we do know? Three things. Jesus is coming, we shall be like him and we shall see him as he is. Praise God. That's what John says in that second verse. He says, "Jesus is coming when he shall appear." I believe this is a reference to what we call the rapture of the church.

That's when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. The Bible says, the dead in Christ, their bodies will be resurrected and rise first and then we who are alive and remain when the Lord comes from heaven, we will be raptured or caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we forever be with the Lord. Now, if that doesn't get you excited, I don't know what will. I'm looking for that blessed hope and that glorious appearing of my great God and my savior, Jesus Christ. Do you know that it can happen before I finish my sermon this morning? You go, "Are you going to preach that long because I got places to go and things to do buckaroo."

No. I mean that within minutes we could be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. I've always thought I'd love to get raptured in the middle of a sermon. I don't want you to be left behind either. Get right with God. But we know we don't know what heaven's going to be like, but we know that we're going there because Jesus is coming back. Secondly, we know verse two, that we should be like him. Isn't that cool? "What do you mean we're going to be like him? Going to have a beard and long hair?" No. It means that we are going to have glorified, immortal, eternal bodies. When Jesus rose from the dead, his mortal body that was crucified on the cross was raised in immortality. His dead body was raised in life. So what the Bible teaches is that your body, my body, is going to be redeemed. We're waiting for the redemption of our body, and that new body is going to be suited for eternity and suited for heaven.

When we shoot a guy or a gal up into space, they have to have a spacesuit, right? Can you imagine walking outside of a spaceship and the leash breaks and you're floating around forever out there? Scary thought. Or when you go into the depths of the sea, you have to have proper clothing on to breathe and survive or be in the right kind of vessel to go down deep. Well, to go to heaven and to see God, you are going to need a new body. I mean, there's very little I can do right now, right here in this body, let alone go to heaven and see God in this body. I think it's awesome to think that God is going to give me a new body. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. He said, this mortal is going to put on immortality. He said, "This corruptible body will put on incorruption."

He said, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death swallowed up a victory. Oh, death, where's your sting? Oh, grave, where's your victory?" Paul realized that Jesus Christ would change his body and that he would be like Jesus completely. Oh, what a day that will be. No more pain, no more sorrow, no more suffering. And then notice thirdly in verse two, we shall be like him. Isn't that awesome? He's coming, we shall see him and we shall be like him, or excuse me. Thirdly, we shall see him. So we're going to be like him and we're going to see him. Now I believe in order to see him, we need to be like him. We can't look on God in these bodies and live. So we're going to be changed in a moment. In the twinkling of an eye, there will be a metamorphosis take place, either the resurrection of our bodies from the grave or the translation and transformation of our bodies, a metamorphosis of our bodies in translation. But

in either way, in order to look at Jesus and see him, I need a new body.

So he's coming, I'm going to be like him and I'm going to be able to see him because I will be like him. So what do we have? The love of God, we're born of God and we are the sons of God, sharing in the glory of God. There's an illustration of this in the Old Testament where Abraham sent his servant to get a wife for his son, Isaac. You know the story? Abraham sent a servant, possibly Eliezer, and he sent him to a far away country. "Go get a woman." Doesn't say it like that, I'm just paraphrasing it. "Go get a wife for my boy, Isaac." So he took the camels, he loaded them down with treasures that belonged to his master, Isaac, and he went to a far country and the whole story of Rebekah at the well, and she offered to water his camels. The guy said, "Lord, let the girl for my master, Isaac, be the girl that offers the water to the camel." Any girl that will water all these camels, you want her for a wife.

So Rebekah says, "Can I water your camel?" He goes, "You're the wife of Isaac, my master." Now the point is this. Rebekah could only hear about the glory of this man, Isaac, who she would marry. All she had to go on was the word of the servant about how great he was and wonderful he was, and rich he was, and handsome too. Rebekah had to make a decision. Will I go? We don't know you. We don't know Isaac. Just some strange dude comes up in a camel and says, "Hey, will you go bonga-bonga land and marry my master?" "Okay, let's go." So her father said, "Will you go?" And she said, "Yes, I'll go." Think about that. You're going to jump on a camel, go for day's journey to marry a guy you've never seen? All you've had is you heard about him? Yeah, but I heard he's rich and he's handsome, and he's loving and he's kind. He's great. He's a marvelous guy. His father's Abraham, and his name is Isaac, and I'm going to go marry him.

So she jumps up on the camel and day after day, she's riding through the desert, and what is she thinking about? I'm going to see him. I'm going to see him. I'm going to see him. All she had to go on was the word of the servant. Here's the application. We're going to heaven. We're engaged to Jesus. We're going to be married to him. But you know what? You've never seen him. I've never seen him, but I've read about him in Matthew and Mark and Luke and in John, and he's awesome. He's wonderful. He's kind. He's gracious. He's merciful. He's amazing. I'm his bride and one day I will see him and I will be wed to him. So I make a decision to love somebody I've never seen. And as a stranger and a pilgrim and a sojourner in this life, I make a decision to walk through this life with my gaze fixed on heaven. I'm going to be wed to him. I'm going to be married to him.

I'm going to see him. And when Rebekah saw Isaac in the field, when the camels drew near, she jumped off her camel and she ran up and she met Isaac. That's a picture of the Christian life. The Bible says that we love him even though we haven't seen him. You know what keeps us going all through life's dusty roads, long hot days and difficulties of life? I'm going to see my heavenly bridegroom. I'm going to be joined to Jesus Christ. So three things, the love of God, the family of God, and the glory of God. What does it do for us? Here's my closing, verse three. If you have this hope, you purify yourself even as he is pure. Two things, hope and holiness. If you really believe God loves you and that you are a part of his family and that one day you will

share in his glory, then you have hope and it will motivate you to holiness.

Heaven is not just a final destination for the Christian. It's a present motivation. It motivates us to follow God, to live for God, to serve God, to walk in holiness. So we have hope, not just a hope I'm going to go to heaven kind of hope, but it's a settled assurance and we are motivated to holiness. But here's my closing question for you. Are you his child? Are you his child? Or do you just come to church and listen to sermons? Maybe even believe in God? Maybe even read the Bible occasionally? But my question is, have you been born into his family? Have you been born again? Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

So if you're here this morning and you're not a child of God, you haven't been born into the family of God, then I want to give you an opportunity today before you leave this service to say, "Pastor John, I want to be born into God's family. I want to become a child of God. I want to know that my sins are forgiven. I want to know that if I die, I will go to heaven. I want to be a Christian, a true child of God. I want the life of God in my soul, and I want to know that when I die, I will go to heaven for all eternity." If that's your prayer and that's your desire, you need to receive Christ today into your heart. Let's have every head bowed and every eye closed and Christians praying.