

BEING READY TO MEET JESUS

1 John 2:28-3:10

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

Ever since Jesus Christ ascended to the heavens to prepare a place for His own we as Christians have been waiting for His return. For over 2,000 years we have been eating the bread



and drinking the cup in remembrance of Christ sacrifice and his promise to return one day and take us home to be with Him. What a glorious day it will be when the dead in Christ raise with those alive to see the mansions the Alpha and Omega has prepared for those He calls His own. To have the sorrow, crying, hunger, and death of the curse lifted will be a relief to humanity beyond words or emotions. To walk in a restored Garden of Eden, one in which Christ is the center, light and sustenance of all life; truly will be a time in which one will declare “I now know what it is like to feel unspeakable joy.”

While Jesus’ return will be glorious, it will not be a source of joy for all people! He who is the judge of the living and the dead promises to bring to light what is hidden in darkness, exposing the motives of all people’s hearts. How will He who is sinless and holy find you in that



moment? Will you be able to confidently approach His throne of grace or will He tell you that He never knew you? When He judges you for the things done while in the body whether good or bad, how much shame will you truly feel? After all, unlike people you certainly cannot fool Jesus by claiming you did not do the sin or that you had good intents but failed, can you? Given the talent of life that you were given, how will Jesus find you used your time: to promote His kingdom or that of your own? For many people Jesus’ return will not be a time to celebrate in joy but to be judged and eternally separated from Him. If you don’t make it to heaven, how will you feel burning in that lake of fire knowing

you had millions of chances to go to heaven but refused because giving up “self” was ... well just too inconvenient?

Goal of Christian Living

Since we do not know the day or hour of Christ's return we are told by John to always be ready:

And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at his coming.

1 John 2:28

When Jesus returns will you be confident that He will recognize you as His own? I have heard Christians give two distinctly different responses to this question. The first boldly and confidently say that since they are saved and sealed by the Spirit, they have no doubt at all that they are going to heaven. The second kind of response is one of doubt. I certainly hope I have made a genuine decision for Christ but am not sure and therefore am uncertain if will go to heaven or not. Before we think this person lacks any faith at all let's see what God has to say:

Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you.

Matthew 7:22-23, NIV

Those who use the title "Christian" but have never given their allegiance to Christ, will not make it to heaven! The people of John's day knew that the Devil had deceived many people into thinking the "Sinners Prayer" was all it took to get them to heaven. Allegiance to Christ that is merely spoken and not internal to one's heart, simply will not save a person! Many in John's day were gravely concerned that they spoke the words only and therefore would not make it into heaven. If people of John's day who were taught by Jesus and the disciples had doubts, then don't be surprised if you too have doubts as well!

The second part of 1 John 2:28 deals with shame. I don't know about you but I certainly do not want to be caught sinning when Jesus comes in those clouds, nor do I want to stand (most likely fall) before the Judgement Seat of Christ with unrepentant sin to be ashamed of! Scripture states Christ will judge not just the non-Christians but the Christians as well:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10, NIV

It is very humbling to know that Jesus who gave you life will hold you accountable for what you have done with your life! Do you have sinful habits that you have been able to keep secret all your life? Knowing that when Jesus returns nothing that was hidden will not be revealed can be very scary!

To be both confident and unashamed upon the returning of Christ requires one to “Continue in Him.” The key to feeling glorious joy at the sound of that trumpet call is to remain in Christ by living a holy life. While those words are easy to say they are not so easy to put into practice. To be confident and prepared when Christ returns John states we must have righteousness as a benchmark. While holiness is not humanly attainable, God promises that those who are sealed by His Spirit as His children have what they need to become holy. John concludes by giving us a litmus test to determine if we are saved or not. Let’s look at these three points in more detail.

Righteousness as a Benchmark

To be confident and unashamed when Christ returns one must continually seek to be right in God’s sight!



If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.

1 John 2:29, NIV

John is asking you and me if we know that the goal of living our life on this earth is to become more and more like God? It is tempting to set our standards of living a holy life much lower by comparing ourselves to people that we know such as deacons, Sunday School teachers, pastors or Christian mentors. While these people can positively influence our lives they are still sinners and as such often miss the mark of holiness. I am a pastor but that does not mean I do not sin daily! I would never want you to copy everything that I think or do because I am an imperfect imitator of God. It is only by imitating God’s righteousness that you can confidently and without shame embrace Christ upon His return.

To imitate God’s righteousness, one must first know what righteousness is! *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* defines righteousness as “the character or quality of being right or just”; it was formerly spelled “rightwiseness,” which clearly



expresses the meaning.¹ While this definition sheds some light it is incomplete because it does not state where being “right” or “just” can be found. Living in a fallen world where everything is “grey,” one can understand why Paul states the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight (1 Corinthians 3:17)! And since only God knows the true motives of a person, our irrational, human emotions make us all very poor judges of character!

Since righteousness is found in the very nature of God, only God can explain what He considers to be right or wrong. Fortunately, God has given us three main avenues to understand His expectations. First, humanity has been given His word that is to be used to train us the difference between right and wrong:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16, NIV

God breathed His word into the minds of men so that when they wrote their sin did not taint God’s message on how to live a holy life (2 Peter 1:21). Second, God has given us the Holy Spirit:

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

John 14:15-17, NIV

While God’s commands can be difficult for a sinner to follow with the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can and are expected to obey God’s teaching as found in the Bible. Third, we can pray and ask God when we do not know what is expected of us:

¹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 535.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

James 1:5-8, NIV

Through prayer God has promised to talk and to explain exactly what He wants from our lives. We should not doubt that God will come good on His promise to empower and enable us to hit His mark of holiness!

God's Promise



Even with the aid of God's word, the Holy Spirit and prayer; can a sinner truly hit the mark of righteousness? Even though righteousness is specific and measurable, is it truly attainable or realistic? Ever try to read God's word with the intent of changing? It seems like every verse speaks the truth that we still need to give up more and more control of our lives to be more like Jesus. If the disciples of Christ struggled to be like Him how much more will we struggle? Since God the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit are the only ones that can be sinless what hope do we have to walk in their holy footsteps? Even in a lifetime is it reasonable for God to expect Christians to meet what seems like an unattainable or unrealistic goal of becoming holy?

While holiness is an unattainable and unrealistic expectation by human effort alone it is a SMART goal because as children of God we have been empowered to accomplish what is humanly impossible, to be right in God's sight.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.

1 John 3:1-2, NIV

God the Father loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die so that our slavery to sin might be broken (John 3:16, Romans 6:20). When we were of this world God's commands seemed

foolish (1 Corinthians 1:18) and unattainable because to be like God one must first surrender one's heart to Him. Those who are born again no longer find God's commands or instructions on how to be right in His sight a burden or unattainable (1 John 5:3) but through the power of the Spirit the very breath of their lives.

As one of God's children we are heirs (Romans 8:17) with a promise that He will accept that of which He calls His own!

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. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as He is pure.

1 John 3:2-3, NIV

If one is truly born again then when Jesus returns you can be confident that you will be accepted by Him because you are already part of His family! The image of God lost in creation will be restored in Christ as we become like Him, the New Man and New Adam (cf. Col. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 5:14).² While living on this earth we are to strive for holiness with the assurance that when Christ returns we will be transformed into His likeness and as a result will hit God's mark of holiness.

Litmus Test of Being of Being Ready for Christ's Return



For the people of John's day there were gravely concerned that they were missing the mark. They wondered if they had a form of religion only (2 Timothy 3:5) or if they were like the Pharisees who were learned but did not allow Scripture to penetrate those dead areas of their hearts (Matthew 23:26). If Jesus thought the most "religious" of their day were hypocrites, then how much more would He feel the same about them upon His return? Ultimately the Christians of John's day wanted to know if they were saved or not? It would be one thing to feel shame from unconfessed sin but quite another to not make it into heaven!

In 3:4-7 John gives us a litmus test that can be used to see if a Christian is indeed a child of God.

² Thomas F. Johnson, *1, 2, and 3 John*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 68.

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that He appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in Him is no sin. No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him.

1 John 3:4-7

John states that Christ came to take away our sins so that we might no longer be slaves to our sinful natures. If you prayed the Sinner's Prayer and yet continue to sin openly and freely then you never surrendered your heart to Christ and therefore you are not saved. John goes on to say to not be led astray: salvation does not come from works but righteous living proves one is saved.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous. 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. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. 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.

1 John 3:7-10, NIV

Jesus came to destroy the work of the Devil, work that focused on keeping us captive in our sin. Since a born again Christian has God's seed, the Holy Spirit, living inside of them they cannot continue a life of sin. This does not mean of course that to be born again one must become sinless but simply means that to be a Christian one must give allegiance to God and make every effort to live a righteous life in His sight. The litmus test of salvation is simple: those who live for God are His children and those who do not live for God remain children of the Devil.

Conclusion

For over 2000 years Christians have been looking forward to the return of Christ. The Alpha and Omega promised to return and take His own home to be with Him in heaven. While that will be a glorious day for born again Christians for others it will be a day of great sorrow and eternal death. We have but one life to live and if we are to confidently and without shame meet Jesus in those clouds then Christians must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to continually do what is right in God's sight. Are you ready?