

We Believe in What is Not Yet Seen

1 John 3:1-3

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1 John 3:1-3 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God¹! Therefore the world does not know us², because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Every morning, we get up and put on different articles of clothing. This clothing serves numerous functions. It hides our nakedness. It keeps us warm. It can make us look professional or it can be practical. In some ways the clothing we choose to wear says something to others about who we are and what we plan to do with our day.

In a similar way every Sunday we dress ourselves in articles of faith. These articles of faith are things that we cannot see but which we know to be true because God who does not lie has told us that they are. These articles are not only a reminder of what the bible teaches but also a proclamation of who we are in Christ. These articles include things like:

I believe in the communion of saints

I believe in the forgiveness of sins

I believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting.

These things are not who we are by ourselves, but these are the clothing that Christ has given us to wear. We are sinners wrapped in the clothing of Christ

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

God's love for us is beyond our experience

When the Israelites were wondering in the wilderness God gave them bread from heaven. They said, "what is this?". Then they called it "manna" meaning "what is this." They called it manna because it was a type of bread they had never tasted before. It was beyond their experience.

So also, John declares in our text that this love which is from God is something that is beyond our experience. "What is this love?" John writes. In this context this is an expression of puzzled amazement. He is puzzled because it is beyond our experience. He is amazed because it is too good to be true. In the same way the disciples, when they saw Jesus calm the storm exclaimed (matt 8:27) "who can this be that even the wind and waves obey him."

The greatest love we experience on this earth is the love of a parent for their children. Yet even this is not equal to the love of the Father for his children

Isaiah 49:15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

God's love for us is beyond our experience. Our experience teaches us that people love us if we earn their love, God loved us when we didn't deserve it. This is a love beyond our experience which makes us the children of God.

1 John 3:2 ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He

We cannot see Jesus clearly, nor can we see clearly what he has made us.

Not even Moses saw his full holiness, but when he asked to see his glory, Moses was hidden in a cave and God went before him. Moses came out and saw only the aftereffects, for as the Lord said to Moses, "**no man shall see Me, and live.**"

Here John says that we shall see not the back of God like Moses, but we shall see him face to face. If therefore we shall see him face to face it is obvious that we will be changed. This is another assurance that God has given to us of the glory that is to come. We will be able to stand and see him face to face. The image of God will be restored as it was in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve walked with God. As our reading from revelation reminds us, we shall be dressed in white.

"it has not yet been revealed" - Christ has not yet been revealed fully to us, but also we cannot clearly see those truths that he has told us are ours.

We are sometimes discouraged because our church, and our lives, and the lives of our brothers in faith are not what we think they ought to be, and it is true they are not.

It's like when you are promised a particular present, and you finally receive that present and it is lacking. Or when you think the Star Wars movie is going to be so great and it is found to be lacking. So also our church and our lives and the lives of others around us, are found lacking, they are not what we think they ought to be. What we will be has not yet been revealed, we have not yet attained. We are not the church triumphant but still the church militant. We are not yet those standing in white before the throne. But we will be. Therefore, we have faith, in the promises of God. We believe in the communion of saints. We believe in the forgiveness of sins. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, even though all these things are things we do not yet see. They have not yet been revealed, still we trust that they are ours and that they will be revealed in time.

1 John 3:3 ³ **And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

Because we know the prize that is ours through Jesus Christ, we keep striving reaching towards that goal, we do this through faith in Christ Jesus.

As Paul says:

Philippians 3:12-14 **12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

We dress ourselves in the articles of faith, not because we are these things in ourselves, but because we see Jesus who is these things. We have this promise from God that these things will be ours. We have these examples of all these men and women who have gone before and have received this.

These white robes, this glory that is to come, this fellowship, this forgiveness of sins, this resurrection from the dead, these are our inheritance as the children of God, not because we deserve them but because Jesus died for our sins. This is what all these saints have obtained not by their works but by the love of God. These are our articles of faith, and for their sake we press on.

This pressing on, this purifying of yourself is done not by works but by faith. Those dressed in white, were not purify by doing works, but by washing their robes in the blood of Christ.

In the same way Paul reminds us in Galatians 3:3

Galatians 3:3 **Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**

And three verses later

Galatians 3:6 **just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."**

We continue in faith, and by faith we are purified from our sinful works, by the grace of God And by faith we become the children of God.

We have not yet seen what we will be. We know that they are ours and will be fully revealed by faith. By faith we press on. By faith we obtain the inheritance. Amen