

100% Pure
July 14, 2013

A week ago, yesterday, my wife and I drove to West Virginia. Our nephew is getting married and there was a shower for he and his fiancé on Saturday. As with other special events, there were preparations we had to make. I had to switch my day off that week. We had to prepare some food and pack it on ice in the cooler. We had to print out directions in order to get there. Any time some special event comes up there are preparations to be made.

The wedding is going to be in Hagerstown in October. We just found out last week that there is a parade the evening of the wedding, downtown, which is where the wedding and reception are. So parking is going to be a problem. Hotel rooms are already proving to be a problem. So in addition to all the usual wedding stuff, there are additional preparations to be made.

Maybe you had something special going on for the fourth of July. If so, there may have been preparations to make. You made arrangements to gather with family or friends. You prepared a picnic. Or you went somewhere for a parade or to watch fireworks.

Vacation Bible School starts tomorrow night. And we have been busy for the last two months with preparations. This morning after the service we will be moving chairs and tables and other stuff and doing some decorating. Any time some special event comes up there are preparations to be made.

As Christians we are waiting for a most special event. I'm sure you look forward to our annual Thanksgiving service, Christmas eve service, Easter services, and annual church dinners. But the most special event for Christians will be the return of Jesus. And there are preparations for us to make for His return.

Look with me at the letter of first John, written to some Christians by one of the early church leaders.

1 John 3:2 (NIV) Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Now we are children of God. What a great blessing this is. There is no greater blessing in the world than this. Being a child of God is a special blessing that not everyone receives. While everyone on the planet is a creation of God, not everyone is a child of God. Every person is born into this world. But no one is born into God's family. No one is born into a relationship with God. We must be adopted in. Being adopted in is one of the blessings we receive when we turn our lives over to Jesus.

He is writing to Christians, to those who have already turned their lives over to Jesus. So he can say of them that they are now children of God. We who have turned our lives over to Jesus are now children of God. We too have been adopted into God's family.

Then John speaks of our future. What do we know about the future? What do we know about heaven? What will heaven be like? We know that Jesus will be king. We know that there will only be day and no night in heaven. We know that we will be able to eat of the tree of eternal life. We know the new Jerusalem will be a very beautiful place for us to live. We don't know much more than these few facts.

While we don't know a lot about heaven, John tells us this: we will be like Jesus. Let me share with you three ways we will be like Jesus.

First, We will be like Jesus in body.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He did not come back to the life He had before the cross. He did not come back to life in His previous body. He rose in His new resurrection body. And while it appeared similar to His previous body, there were differences.

When Jesus rose from the dead and first appeared to His followers they thought He was a ghost. He told them He was not a ghost. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as they could see and feel that He had. He asked for food and ate it. Ghosts don't eat food. He invited one follower to put his finger into the nail hole in His hand and to put his hand into Jesus' side where the spear had pierced Him. He had a new body, similar to the old one, but not exactly the same.

We will have a resurrection body like His. When Jesus appears we will be transformed. On that day our Adam-like bodies will be transformed into Christ-like bodies. We will lose all that is mortal and gain that which is immortal. We will lose the aches and pains that are a part of these natural bodies. These bodies, that decay and wear out, will be replaced with new, immortal bodies, that will never see decay.

When Jesus returns, we will be changed. We will become like Him in body. That is good news.

We shall be like Jesus in spirit.

Our body will be like His and so will our spirit. We will no longer be subject to temptation, to bad temper, to laziness, to selfishness, to a lack of gratitude, to hurry and worry. With the loss of our natural body, we will also lose all the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

We shall become like Jesus in spirit. That is great good news.

We shall be like Jesus in Glory.

The glory of Jesus was hidden when He was first on earth. People did not look at Him and say to each other, "There goes God." His glory as God was hidden when He was on earth. When He appears the next time there will be no doubt as to who and what He is. Every person will see Him in His glory. When Jesus returns every knee on earth will bow to Him as Christ. Every tongue on earth will confess He is Lord.

When He appears and we are transformed, we too will receive glory with Him. Our faith in Jesus will be proven true. We will be vindicated in the eyes of our enemies. We will be recognized as those who have been with Jesus. This too is good news.

All this will happen when Jesus returns. It will be a most special event.

When Jesus appears we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is. We will see Him as He is now.

Maybe you have wished to see Jesus as a baby, in the manger. Maybe you have always wanted to see Him as a boy amazing the teachers in the temple with the wisdom of His questions. Perhaps you have wished to see Him in conversation with the woman at the well, or healing people. Perhaps you have wished to see Jesus commanding demons out of the man in the graveyard. Maybe you have wished to see Him hushing the questions of those who tried to trap Him in the temple. Perhaps you've even wanted to see Him at the cross.

Well you will never see these things. We shall not see Christ tempted and tired from the crowds. We will not see Him despised and rejected by men. We shall not see Him agonizing with the pain of the cross. Those are all in the past. Those represent Jesus as He was. He is no longer like that.

Now He is the risen Lord. And that is how we will see Him. We shall see Him as He is now. We will see Him as a conqueror, a king, a victor. We will see Him in His glory.

His hands will still be pierced, though the nails will not be there. His feet will show the evidence of the spike. And His side will show the wound of a spear. We shall know Him by those wounds He suffered for us. We shall see Him as He is now.

When Jesus appears we will see Him as He is and will become like Him. What a most special event. What a day to look forward to. What a day to hope in.

But any time some special event comes up there are preparations to be made. How should we be preparing for Jesus' return? John tells us.

1 John 3:3 (NIV) Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Purity is the condition of being pure. Purity means not contaminated, mixed, or blended with something else. Christian purity means not contaminated, mixed, or blended with sin. And so purity is no small thing. It is closely associated with holiness. We should strive for purity in our thoughts, desires, words, actions, and behavior.

Today, there is very little social pressure to be pure. The world is pushing impurity. The world is pushing all manner of lusts of the flesh and mind and heart.

And Christians are not immune to the push of the world. We are affected by the influence of the world's values. This influence is like a constant wind. We tire of resisting it. And so we see Christians becoming more like the world as the world becomes more immoral. We see attitudes in professed Christians that match the immoral values of our world. We see whole churches adopting worldly values about sexuality, marriage, family, and right and wrong.

The world will shape you into its image if you let it. We must continue to push back against the increasing immorality of our world. As the world continues to slide into impurity, you will have to make choices to resist that impurity from forming in you.

As one example, in the last year my wife and I have ceased watching several favorite TV shows. They changed. They were promoting sexual immorality. They were promoting greed and criminal activity as if they were good things. Whereas once we delighted in them, our attitudes changed as the stories and characters changed.

This pattern will need to continue for us as the world continues to change. The same is true for you who wish to follow Jesus and look forward to His coming. We must actively resist, resist in our education and understanding of the issues and Biblical truth. We must resist in our engagement with culture, giving up certain shows and movies, books, music and other forms of entertainment that promote immorality.

For if we do not, we will be affected by the immoral attitudes in them. They will affect us without our realizing it.

Every year or so we get a report from Anne Arundel county about the quality of our water. They want us to know that the water quality is pretty good. But it isn't perfect. the water is not pure.

The report tells us what impurities are in the water. But they assure us that the levels are in the safe range.

I read those statements and wonder if maybe that stuff is doing me harm and they don't know it. It may be that those impurities are affecting me on such a low level that I don't notice the effects on my health. It may be that the long-term cumulative effects will result in illness, cancer, or early death. But day to day and week to week I'll notice no effects.

That is how sinful impurities work on us. When we allow some impure attitude or practice in our lives, its effect on us is too small to notice immediately. We don't notice how it affects our prayers. We don't notice how it affects our worship. We don't notice how it affects our relationships. We don't notice how it affects our theology. But it does. And the longer it is allowed in our hearts the further from living out God's will we will grow.

You may think that it doesn't have any effect on you, but if it is sinful impurity, you are wrong. A little dirt in your water may not hurt you. But a little sin in your heart does.

Don't make excuses for the sin that is in you. A little dirt is still dirt. A little impurity is still impurity. A little sin is still sin. A little lust is still lust. A little greed is still idolatry. A little lying is still deceit. A little rebellion against God is still rebellion. None of these are okay. None of these should we allow to be in us.

Are you becoming more and more pure? Are you sinning less with each year as a follower of Jesus? Or have you made compromises with impurity? Have you reached a level of morality that you are happy with? Have you reached a level of purity that you are satisfied with? Have you quit growing more pure? Have you compromised with the

values of the world? If so, you are unclean. You are contaminated. You are impure. Is this really the condition in which you want to meet Jesus?

You want both. You want to be with Jesus when He returns and realize those benefits. But you also want to play the world. You don't want to be pure. But friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God.

I encourage you to stop being satisfied with impurity in yourself, in your lifestyle, in your entertainment. I urge you to take definite steps towards greater purity.

Prayerfully examine yourself for sinful impurities. Prayerfully, examine your thoughts, desires, speech, and conduct. Prayerfully examine your devotion to your spouse, your family, your friends, and to God.

Are you overlooking some sins? Are you rationalizing some sins? Are you explaining away some sins?

Stop making excuses for the sinful impurities in you. Stop saying things like,
"Everyone is like this."
"Everybody does it."
"Nobody is perfect."
"It isn't hurting anyone."
"It is only a little thing."
"It won't affect me."

Instead of compromising with the world's impure values, let us resolve that all the purity which can be had we will have. Let us resolve that all the holiness which can be reached we will reach for. Let us resolve that to whatever extent we can be conformed to the likeness of Jesus, before His return, we shall so be conformed. Let us strive for this. Let us pray for this. Let us encourage each other to this.

Prayerfully examine yourself for sinful impurities.

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If you are not a Christian, I hope you did not get the wrong message today. You cannot be saved of your sins and inherit eternal life in heaven by purifying yourself. You cannot purify yourself enough to satisfy the demands of God's holy justice for your sins.

Yet, there is a way of salvation from the consequences of your sins. Jesus is that way. Jesus came, the first time, to die a death for your sins so that by faith in His death for you, you can be forgiven. Today, believe on Jesus as your Savior from sin and turn your life over to Him as your Lord, and you will be saved.

Then work to clean yourself up, with God's help. We purify ourselves as His followers, not in order to be saved, but out of gratitude that we already are saved. Pray yourself right now into His grace and mercy. Turn your life over to Him in prayer.