

The Hope that Purifies

1 John 3: 1-3.

Notes of an Address by F. B. Hole.

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There is great need to lay special emphasis upon this fact, that all truth — everything that God has been pleased to make known to us and which we have enshrined in Holy Scripture — is intended to have a present effect upon our souls. If we have set before us the truth of God, it is in order that it may powerfully affect our lives; that what we know of His Word should have a commanding and mighty influence over all our thoughts and ways.

Now here in three short verses you have a wonderful summary of truth. It would not perhaps be easy to quickly find three other verses, in which so much is compressed. You find when you get to the third verse that all these blessed realities are to have a very powerful effect; they are to exert a purifying influence over all our lives, and, depend upon it, this is something that is greatly needed. Oh! if there were a purifying work in our hearts and in our ways and in our lives, how mightily the truth of God would grow and prevail even in these days.

I want in speaking of these verses, to give you a few words which I hope you will easily remember, and which will furnish a kind of little summary of what these verses contain. Now looking at them, you at once see that the story as told us here begins with love. Of course that is just where the great story we know so well does begin. Behind everything lies the mighty living love of God, though it is not exactly the love of God that we have in these verses. If you want the love of God, you turn to John 3: 16, where you read of the love of God, and the measure of that love, "God so loved . . . that He gave His only begotten Son." Here you have the manner of the love rather than the measure of the love, and it is the Father's love that comes before us in this verse — "Behold," says the apostle, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." This contemplates the Christian circle, that is, the whole family of God; upon us there has been bestowed all the Father's love, and love of this manner, that we should be called the "sons" or the "children" of God. In the New Translation you have it more correctly rendered. The word here is the word "children" rather than "sons." 1 John 2: 29 is really intimately connected with it.

The paragraph really begins with the last verse of chapter 2, and there we are told that everyone that practises righteousness is born of Him. We are children of God, as born of God. Frequently, you know, people talk about our being God's adopted children just as though God adopted us as the late Dr. Barnardo adopted orphans into his great and growing Institution, but that is hardly correct. The truth represents far more than that. It is not that God has been pleased to adopt us, leaving no nearer connection between ourselves and Himself than is established between the homeless child when it has been adopted into this Institution and the Directors of the Institution; no, we are the children of God, because born of God, and the manner of the Father's love is this, that such a wonderful place, as children of God, is ours. Now the word I give you to summarise this point, is AFFECTION.

This affection, however, shows itself in relationship. We are put into relationship with the Father Himself. Oh, dear friends, is this a great reality, I wonder, to every one of us? Are we living our lives in the sweet and blessed consciousness that this relationship has been established, that we do stand in this new and near and intimate place with the Father Himself? Affection has expressed itself in relation, which involves the children's place in regard to God. But then there is another fact in connection with.

this new place of relationship in regard to God, and that is this, we are correspondingly put out of relation with the world. My second word then will be RELATION.

First AFFECTION, secondly RELATION, but thirdly DISCONNECTION. It says, "Therefore the world knoweth us not." You cannot, my good friend, have it both ways exactly. If you are brought into this new and wonderful relation, why then you will find there is carried out a process of disconnection from the world, and as the world knew not our Lord Jesus Christ, so it will not know you. You will not be the kind of man it will understand. How often does this kind of thing take place: an earnest, sincere, out-and-out young Christian enters some house of business, and in a week they are all saying, "Look here, he is a funny man, we don't understand him; he always seems to do the unexpected thing! We knew he was a bit religious, so we said to him the other day so and so, thinking it would suit him, but it did not. We can't understand him; he will not fit anyway into our system of things." He is like a stone cut on such a plan, with such angles and corners about him that he does not fit. You see, he has some resemblance to his Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ, when He came here, was the Stone that the builders rejected.

The builders had their ideas of how to build; they wanted a stone of a certain shape, and the Lord Jesus Christ was of such a nature that they found they could not build Him according to their fashion. The kind of building that the leaders of that day had in their mind was such that the Lord Jesus would not, could not, did not fit in with their schemes. He was the Stone that the builders rejected, and you know what happened; how that in turn God rejected the builders, and the rejected Stone He made the chief corner Stone and Foundation of a building which is according to His thoughts, and it will abide, and into that you and I are brought by Christ. Here it is not the building; it is the family; we are put in relation with the Father made known to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is His Father and our Father; His God, and our God; but equally He has disconnected us from the world's system and put us outside that.

It is possible of course for you to try and disguise that fact, and if you do I tell you plainly what you will be; you will be a bit of a hypocrite. Remember there are two kinds of hypocrites; there is the man who wants to appear to be what he is not, and there is the man who does not want to appear what he is. I quite admit the common-place hypocrite is the one that wants to be on the surface what he is not inside; he poses as being something very wonderful when he is not; he would like everybody to take him as the finest mahogany when, as a matter of fact, he is common deal. But there is another kind of hypocrite who is the finest mahogany, but lest he should not please those whom he is amongst he will pretend to be but deal, that is, he is quite prepared to accommodate himself to what is the popular and expected thing in the circles where he moves. Are there any young believers here a little inclined to hypocrisy of that kind? Would you, in order to have the smile of the world, appear not to be what you are — a child of God in relation with God the Father, disconnected therefore from the world? If true to your character, the world does not know you; you *are* a child of God, but as far as the world is concerned you travel through it unknown.

The next verse goes on to speak of this, "Beloved, now are we the children 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." What we shall be has not yet been manifested. You *are* a child of God, but you never yet have been manifested as such, just as the caterpillar which crawls on your cabbages, and works havoc there, has not yet been manifested in its true character — a butterfly. To all appearance it is but a crawling grub, yet presently it will go into a state of apparent death, what naturalists call the pupa stage. Then it will emerge later as the perfected insect, and instead of crawling on the earth, soar in the air, a butterfly. Here is one of God's parables in natural things. Children of God are we, but in the caterpillar stage, no outward signs

mark us out as the heirs of glory. An hour is coming when we shall be manifested in such fashion that all must see who and what we are.

MANIFESTATION, then, is my fourth word. And when will the day of manifestation be? Oh, it will be when He is manifested. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes forth shining in His glory, then and not till then, will you come forth. What a wonderful thing it is; the One who is our Saviour, our Head, is hidden in the heavens. He is like that little King who was rescued out of the wreck of David's line, when the wicked Athaliah usurped the throne. Little King Joash was secreted by the wife of the godly High Priest, and for six years was hid in the house of the Lord. The populace did not know the King was there, but one day, Jehoiada the priest, knowing that the moment had arrived to bring things to a crisis, brought forth the King and manifested him to the people. Athaliah was slain that same day, and the King of David's line was restored, and the people rejoiced and said "God save the King." When the King came forth it was the day of his manifestation. And the Lord Jesus Christ is hidden in the heavens; He has gone into the true Tabernacle, and a moment is before us, a grand day for this poor world, when the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to shine forth in His glory. We might say, in regard to His first advent, that He travelled incognito through His own creation, just as Kings occasionally do not officially travel as such; they travel incognito when they do not want to be recognized as Kings, but to enjoy a quiet untrammelled holiday. Thus it was when the Lord Jesus Christ came in humiliation. He travelled unknown through His own creation. Now is the day in which He is hidden, having done the mighty work of Redemption, and we His people also travel incognito, waiting for the manifestation of the King; and it says we know that when He shall be manifested we shall be like Him.

Thus my fifth word is CONFORMATION. What a great thing to know that when He shines out in His glory, you and I are going to shine forth in His likeness. When He appears we shall be like Him. We are coming forth at His side, forming part of His triumphant train from the heavens. It is perfectly clear that somehow or other we have got to be with Him before He comes. How we are to be with Him is brought out in the 4th chapter of 1st Thessalonians, which I must not stop to speak of; but when He comes we shall be *with* Him, and we shall be *like* Him, for *we shall see Him as He is*. Oh the privilege, the blessedness of that!

Now, I have seen King George. I saw him before he was King; I saw him after he was King, on the day of the Armistice; I saw him the following day when he went to return thanks to Almighty God; but I have never yet seen him as he is. I have seen him in his official uniform; I have seen him as a General of the British Army, and as an Admiral of the British Navy; but I have not seen him as he is. Indeed, in keeping with this, it seems to be one of the penalties that is imposed on Royalty in regard to things in general, that they rarely see things just as they are. If His Majesty were to come amongst us the loyal citizens of this city would hardly allow him to see the main street just as it is; no, they would insist upon putting flags all over the place, stringing them across the thoroughfares, and dressing the houses in bunting. But if I were put in relation with the King; if I were a child of the King, I should see him as he is. I should have entrance into the royal presence. I should not only go into the State Apartments, but should have access into the private apartments of His Majesty, and should see him stripped of all that outward formality that state imposes upon him, and in the quiet harmony and freedom of the domestic circle I should know him. Think, oh! think, my Christian friends, of that which is the privilege of such as ourselves as children of God. When He comes forth we shall see Him; we shall see Him with the crowns upon His Head; we shall come with Him conquering and to conquer. What a splendid thing it will be! But there is something more splendid than that — to know Him as He is; to see Him as He is; to be brought into His secrets; to be treated as His friends — oh, this is a privilege of surpassing worth! And since there is to be this day of manifestation, then there will be the

most absolute conformation of every saint to His likeness, because brought into such nearness to Himself that we see Him as He is. No wonder, that to the word *conformation* we can add the word PERFECTION.

Now comes the definite call of the Spirit of God to your conscience and to mine. It says "And every man that hath this hope in Him [that does not mean in your heart and in my heart; it means that everyone that hath this hope in the One who is soon to be manifested] purifieth himself even as He is pure." There is a progressive, steady work of PURIFICATION going on with everybody who entertains such hope in Christ. Can you measure the holiness of Christ? Can you tell me the standard of purity that marks our Lord? Why, absolute purity in every detail. He is essentially the holy, spotless, undefiled One. Yes, that is the standard. If that is the standard, you may depend upon it there will be room for purification every hour of our lives in this world. There will never be a moment when we shall say, "Now then I am absolutely up to the standard; I am as pure as He is pure," until clothed in a body of glory we shine forth in His likeness and see Him as He is.

But notice this purification is not something that is going to be done *for* you; the responsibility as to it rests upon your shoulders. We purify ourselves. Does some young Christian say — I would like to know exactly what this means; how does it work? Well, I should reply — Have you ever formed the godly habit of self-judgment? Do you ever sit down and consider your ways, and test yourself somewhat and judge yourself in the light of the presence of God? If you were to look over some of those fine old works of the so-called Divines of the 17th and 18th centuries, you will find that these good men did a tremendous amount of this examination, indeed they carried it to excess; they were too much, perhaps, occupied with themselves, but I venture to say that in this rather superficial day when everybody is in a constant hurry, we do not stop nearly enough to solemnly examine ourselves in the presence of God. We do not sufficiently judge ourselves in the light of what was accomplished on the cross of Christ, and thus overhaul our motives. All our lives are far too much like a broad bubbling river curving under the boulders and stones and making a great deal of noise, but without very much force and volume. If you inquired as to the horse-power of the river you would find it very small. It is the still waters that run deep.

Form, then, the good habit of self-judgment. If you learn to know yourselves, to test your ways, and to set your eyes upon the glorified Christ who is coming, you will surely say — If that is the standard; if that is my destiny, I want to be like Him now, and by the grace of God, that and that and that are going to go. One of the surest signs of progress in the Christian life is when there is an enlightening as to those things that please the Lord, and firmness and diligence to have done with things that defile and enfeeble and weaken the soul.

When I was a little boy electricity was in its infancy. I remember we had a great day at the little school that I went to, when a man came with a machine that generated electricity as the handle was turned. The most remarkable thing to our childlike minds was this, he brought in a dozen tumblers, turned them upside down on the table, and on the top of the tumblers a board was placed and then we were allowed to stand on the board. I was a little child, and was picked up by the demonstrator and placed there. Then I was told to grasp a handle. Well, I had a strange tingling coming in my limbs and then I was told to put my fingers to the gas which was turned on. I did so, a spark jumped out of my finger, and I lit the gas with my finger! Of course as a child I was very pleased with that. But never would that have been except for one thing. You know of course that glass is an absolute non-conductor of electricity. They had to have the tumblers to insulate me. My friends, the amount of trouble that comes into our lives by reason of breakdown in insulation is remarkable. We have meetings and we work the machinery, so to speak, and pump a little spiritual energy into the people of God; but alas! it

seems to be lost at once. Insulation from the world is sadly lacking. Insulation and purification are in practice closely allied.

Keep then your eye on Christ, the coming One, wait for His manifestation, purify yourselves, exercise self-judgment, remove defilement, keep up spiritual insulation and there will be in your lives something of the power of God.