

02-10-20a Revelation

As we continue our worship this morning, let's take a moment at the outset of our study of the Word of God to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, shall we pray? Father, we thank you for this worship day. We thank you for the opportunity to set aside the busyness that characterizes our daily life to gather with believers of like mind and spend time in fellowship and singing great hymns of the faith and then spending time in communion through your Spirit and through your Word with you and your truth for us. We ask your blessing on us as we fellowship in your Word this morning.

We thank you that we have freedom to do so. We thank you for our government and our leadership and we pray that you'll continue to preserve this environment for us. And we pray especially that as we examine and attempt to understand correctly what your Word teaches, that God the Holy Spirit will make it clear and understandable and will impress it on our hearts in such a way that it will come back to our conscious mind as we go through the daily routine and the daily tasks that face us, that we can remember who we are and why we are here in your plan and accomplishing your purpose.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. For our script reading this morning, we're going to return to a passage we looked at right at the end of our previous study and that's 1 John chapter three. In our study of the letters to the seven churches, we're concluding our study of the letter to the church at Philadelphia.

And our conclusion is, the conclusion of the letter that is impressed on us is hold fast what you have so that no one takes your crown. We've looked at the idea of crowns, we've looked at the idea of holding fast and we finished up last time asking ourselves the question, I understand the opportunity for reward. We've seen the crown of life, the crown of righteousness, the imperishable crown that is laid up as a result of competing steadfastly and without wavering in an athletic contest, which is the picture that Paul uses in several passages.

But the question is, how do I do that? What is the essence? We can hear a lot of language and this is the thing that used to frustrate me in my younger days, in my teenage years especially, as a believer, having grown up in the church and having heard all my life what the characteristics of a good Christian life were. I knew that I should love God, that I should honor Him in my life and in my thinking. I knew that I should have an interest in the Bible and in prayer and in reaching the lost and in all of the things that you grow up in church hearing and understanding that are a part of Christian life.

But the thing that was missing for me was the means. How do I make this happen? Because my will alone was insufficient. And even praying to God and saying, God make me a faithful Christian was insufficient.

Those things, as I came to understand later, do not come by the will of man and they don't come simply by prayer. There is a lot of misunderstanding of how things are accomplished in our lives as believers. We know that we're supposed to be moral.

We know that we're supposed to be spiritual. We know that we are supposed to be dedicated and faithful and holy. We don't have any trouble understanding those concepts.

I think the great failure in the church, and it has ever been thus, every generation has faced this challenge, is how do we do what we are supposed to do? The Israelites, going back to the time in the wilderness with the giving of the law, they had a clear idea of what the law required. It was the fulfilling of that requirement where, you know, in Shakespeare it says, aye, there's the rub. You know, that's the problem.

How do you accomplish what you know is necessary? People can understand the dangers of any particular bad habit, but breaking that habit is the challenge. So I ask myself, and I think this letter forces us to ask ourselves the question, how do I hold fast? Going back to the very first letter to Ephesus, he says, you've done all of these things well. You're performing these works and you're enduring and you're eschewing evil and identifying falsehood, and we do that, don't we? We've seen falsehood creep up in our generation.

We've seen, going way back, I'm always picking on experiencing God in some of the modern manifestations, but I can remember way back in the 60s when the big fad at that time was spirit-controlled temperaments, and you had to try to figure out, I think that might have been Tim LaHaye, before he did what he's famous for now, which is the Left Behind series. He, Tim, and Beverly LaHaye came out with a series of books, and among other things, they talked about spirit-controlled temperament. They said, well, there's four basic kinds of temperaments.

You're either a choleric or a phlegmatic or a melancholy or one other. I forget what they all are. Sanguine, sanguine was the other.

And there was description of each of these personality types, and you would go in there to try to find out, well, what am I? Am I a sanguine or a choleric or a phlegmatic or a melancholy? And then they said, well, sometimes you're a combination of the two. And by understanding these, then they said, well, here are your weak and strong areas, and here's what you, and people got all fascinated, and hundreds of thousands of books were sold. But where is that today? How many people have you heard lately say, oh, well, you know, it's the old, this is the key to unlocking the spiritual life is knowing that I'm a choleric, melancholy or whatever.

It was just a fad, but it was an attempt to try to organize and try to figure out how to live the Christian life. But generation after generation, succeeding fad after succeeding fad, postulates some sort of human effort that goes beyond the Bible, that partakes of something other than what we're told in scripture. Here, five, six, seven years ago, there was a huge emphasis on personal

accountability.

You still hear it talked about a lot, discipling, and let's get up early in the morning and meet at 6 a.m. and hold each other accountable and ask each other hard questions about our mental attitudes, sins. And with the experiencing God, that was another attempt. And it seems right, it sounds good.

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. And that's death in the sense of production. It doesn't ultimately produce spiritual fruit.

So our question is, instead of just sharpshooting everything that didn't work, what is the thing that does work? What is it that accomplishes God's plan? Well, we know ahead of time that whatever it is, it's not going to be human in origin. It's not going to be human in design. It's not going to be human in accomplishment, in the energizing power that makes it come to pass.

It has to be something that God gives us, because we do not have the wherewithal to accomplish God's plan. We don't have the willpower. We don't have the attitude.

We don't have the motivation. We don't have the sticking power. We don't have the endurance.

We don't have the strength. We do not have the means. We do not have the motive.

And we do not have the opportunity to do anything pleasing in God's sight, apart from what God gives us. So whatever it is, it is going to be detailed in the pages of Scripture, and we're going to find it linked to God's Word and God's Spirit, because that is how the power of God comes into the life of the believer. So our Scripture reading, that's a long introduction, but our Scripture reading this morning is from that inquiry.

How do we hold fast? How do we not lose our first love? Look at that language, the agape that was protos, the agape that was first. And this is not first in the sense of chronology. This is first in the sense of importance.

And to lose, going back to that first letter to the Ephesians, is aphiemi, which is the word that is classically translated forgive. Every time you find forgiveness in the New Testament, it's a form of aphiemi. And aphiemi at its root means to release, to dismiss, to send away, to let go.

So how do we release, send away, or let go of our foremost love? If you translate that, and I should have done this when we did the Ephesian letter, and I failed to do so, so I'm attempting to make up for that now. But the translation of what Jesus says, the criticism of the Ephesian church is, you have let go of your foremost love. The love that ought to be first.

The love that you were taught about at the first. The love that ought to be the most important thing in your life. You've dismissed it.

You've released it. You've sent it away. You've let it go.

And every time you find *aphiemi* in any of its forms, in any of its senses, it has the idea of conscious decision. You have to decide to forgive someone. God decides to forgive us on the basis of the work of Christ.

It's conscious. If you send away a slave, if you send away a person, *aphiemi*, it's a conscious volitional choice. So this was volition.

This was choice. This was conscious choosing that resulted in this foremost love no longer being in its place and being in the picture. And loss is not there.

This is not *perdere* in the Latin, to lose, to, oh, I had it and it slipped through my fingers and it's gone. It just slipped away somehow. *Aphiemi* has the idea, you made a series of conscious decisions that resulted in this going away, this loss, this sending away of the foremost love.

So we're beginning to hone in on our subject here and the answer to our question, how do I hold fast what I have? Hold fast is in contrast to send away, dismiss, lose. Right? Those are opposites. The Ephesians had already done so.

Jesus doesn't say to them, you've done well, now hold fast. Don't send away or dismiss or lose your first love. He says, you've already done it.

It's past. It has already taken place. You've done these things and you continue to do them.

You've not denied my name. You identify those who are in error and so on. But I have this against you.

Somewhere in the past, you sent away your foremost love, your most important love. Here, the Philadelphians have not done that, but they are cautioned. They are warned.

Hold fast to what you have so that no one takes your crown. You have a crown. Don't lose it.

So, we're focusing in on this love because that's the key. That is, you can endure, you can be correct, and yet you can lose your love. And losing your love, you will lose your crown.

1 John chapter 3. See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we would be called children of God. And such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure.

We've already seen two of the three great virtues, the triad of Christian virtues, faith, hope, and

love. We start out with love that the Father has bestowed on us, right? Already we begin to see there is a divine origin for this. We know that we will be like Him.

That's faith. We trust the statement of Scripture that says He is going to return. We are going to be raised.

We are going to be raised incorruptible. We will be like Him. Everyone who has this confident expectation purifies himself just as He is pure.

Faith is the means. Hope is the motivation. Love is the result.

It is the energizing force that makes what we do worthwhile. So, these first three verses state positional truth, and positional truth is the basis of our hope. If you find your confident expectation, if you find the joy of your salvation and that ability to see into the future and see it as real, if you find it waning, where do you go to bolster your hope? How do you reinflate the life raft of hope that is the motivation for faith and the part of the foundation for this love that's supposed to be in our soul? This is part of holding fast.

What if your hope fails? What if you look and all you can see is darkness and gloom on every side? What if like Peter, your eyes have drifted away from the Lord and you're looking at the billows and the waves and the tempest and you start to sink? You're no longer held up by that hope. Where do you look? John says, look at your positional truth. Positional truth.

Forget about experience. Forget about the present. Forget about your failures.

Forget about your experience. Look at God and look at what God has done. What is it that fuels hope? You start with positional truth.

That's what John gives them here. He says, look. His very first word here is behold.

Look at the manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God. We sang the hymn this morning, Amazing Love. Can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood? Died He for me who caused His pain? Who Him to death pursued? Amazing love, that Thou, my God, couldst die for me.

What manner of love the Father has bestowed on us and as a result of the work of Christ on the cross, we are children of God. And we have been separated out from the world. The world no longer knows us because it didn't know Him.

Now we are children of God. It hasn't been yet revealed what we shall be. We know what we were.

We were immersed in the world. We were hopeless, helpless, and useless. Now we are children of God.

That's positional truth. Positional sanctification is what it's called in theology. In position, in status, on paper, legally, we are children of God.

It has not yet appeared, it's not yet been revealed what we shall be. We have no concept in this physical universe with our limited intellect, our limited observational ability to know what lies in the eternal future. But one thing we do know, we know that when He is revealed, we're going to be like Him and we will see Him as He is.

We have not yet seen Christ as He is. We've seen a form and we've seen a manifestation, but we have not yet seen Him as He is, but we're going to and we will be like Him. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself.

That's an interesting statement because is it the hope itself that purifies or does the hope motivate us to purify ourselves? Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself. And I think it's the latter. I think when you have that expectation, when it's real to you that we're going to see Christ as He is and we're going to be like Him, it motivates us to purify ourselves.

We think, I can't keep going in this sinful attitude. I can't keep going with this sully and soiling and corrupting and defiling attitude or thought pattern or behavior, pattern of life. When you look at that, when it's imminent and real that Christ is coming back and we are in union with Him, that positional truth and that hope motivates us to purify ourselves, sustaining that hope, fueling that hope, meditating on positional truth.

If you have a hard time and I know it is hard. Everybody has trouble. We have trouble setting aside the time and when we do set aside the time, sometimes we say, well, I know I need to spend time thinking about God's truth.

How do I do that? What should I think about? I'll give you an encouragement. Get yourself a copy of a good old hymnal. Not a modern hymnal, not a praise and worship song book.

Get you a copy of Inspiring Hymns or the Baptist hymnal or some old hymnal. Get something published before 1970. And if you want something to meditate on, just open that hymnal and start leafing through and read the words of the great believers who had that hope.

Read hymns by Fannie Crosby, read hymns by C. Austin Miles, read hymns by William Bradbury and Iris Sankey and some of the other great hymn writers of the past. And they have the ability to put into verse and to put into English expression great truths that are sustaining and able for us to motivate and concentrate on. That is good grist for the mill.

Now back to our scripture reading in 1 John 3. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness. This makes sense out of the transition now, doesn't it? From talking about positional truth to talking about overcoming sin. Because the motivating hope of being like Christ and thinking about His imminent return, the one who has that hope purifies himself.

So now John's going to talk about sin. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness. You know that He was manifested to take away our sins and in Him there is no sin.

Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you.

He who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning. People have wrestled with this because you mean if I commit a sin and I'm of the devil you mean if I commit a sin I'm not in Christ? I'm not saved? If I'm saved I would be perfect? Obviously not because this same John says if we sin we have an advocate with the Father.

If we confess our sins be faithful and just and forget of the sins. All of these verbs are in the present tense and it's talking about a pattern of sin, a practice of sin. He who practices sin, He who is in an ongoing condition of sinning.

Whoever you can put keeps on in front of a lot of these and it helps make more sense. Whoever keeps on abiding in Him does not keep on sinning. Whoever keeps on sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him.

And so what's the solution? If we find ourselves continuing to sin and being ensnared in a complex of sins, in a cluster of sins, in a pattern of sin that we can't seem to break, what's the problem? We need to see Him. We need to know Him. We need to go back to verses 1 through 3. Go back and concentrate on the manner of love that the Father has bestowed on us.

Think about the return of Christ and that we know that we're going to be like Him and there's no sin in Him. A lot of times people say, well, I've got this problem, I've got this certain area of sin. This might be setting sin.

I can't seem to break free of it. I keep repeating this sin. And they concentrate on the sin.

What is its origin? What is its nature? What is its source? What are the circumstances? And what the Bible says is, that's not where you're going to find power over that sin. The answer is in looking at divine truth, concentrating on divine truth, meditating on divine truth. The clearer picture you have of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you think on these things, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just and pure and lovely and of good report, if there's any virtue and if there's any praise, He says, think on these things.

Think on these things. That's in Philippians chapter 4. It's up here on our wall. It's one of my favorite passages of Scripture because He who has this hope in Him purifies Himself.

We say, I've got a problem of impurity. I've got a problem of this besetting sin. I've got a problem of a practice of sin, a pattern of sin.

And I can't seem to get over it, no matter what I do. I pray about it. I talk to other people about it.

I try to hold myself accountable or have other people hold me. Nothing seems to work. I've gone through all of my personality types and I've experienced God and I've done this, that and the other.

Nothing seems to craft the power of sin. Well, here's the answer. Do you want to hold fast to what you have? Do you want to not lose your foremost love? Do you not want to dismiss it and have it go away? This is the answer.

This is the how-to for breaking the power of sin experientially. Go back to positional truth. What does the old song say? Turn your eyes upon Jesus with full and His wonderful face.

The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. There is no, in my opinion, there is no better way outside of dwelling in Scripture itself than dwelling on the lyrics of some great hymns of the faith. Get some good recordings.

I've got some great cassettes of a cappella hymns. And I like a cappella not because I don't enjoy instrumentation, but it's really hard to find outside of our church, well-accompanied hymns. And so a cappella, you can hear the tunes and you can hear the harmonies, but most of all, you can hear the words.

They're not drowning it out with drums and overproduced accompaniment. It's in the words where the power is. And the words are as close, in many cases, they incorporate divine Scripture.

So this is the answer. If you want to hold fast, if you want to not lose your first love, turn your eyes on Jesus. Look at positional truth.

Look at what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us. We are called children of God because of Christ. We're going to be like Him.

We're going to see Him as He is. If you maintain this hope, John says, you purify yourself. That's what we want, isn't it? Purification.

Be ye holy, for I am holy. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

He who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has practiced sin from the beginning. This is the purpose for which the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not continue to practice sin.

For His seed remains in him. What is the seed if you wanted to hazard a guess? How many parables do we have that tell us what the seed is? What is the seed that remains in us? It is the Word of God. Jesus said, the seed is the Word, but it depends on the soil.

Are you going to nurture and cultivate that seed? Is it going to spring up in a day and wither away? His seed remains in Him, and He cannot practice sin. He cannot continue in a pattern of sin because He has been born of God. Notice He doesn't say He keeps on being born of God.

That is a past final act. He has been born of God. As long as that seed remains in us, and it is not picked away by the bird, it is not in the shallow soil where it dies for lack of nurture, in this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest.

And here we find the manifestation of that purification. If we have succeeded in focusing, if we have succeeded in maintaining that hope and that faith, this is how the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

This is the message that you have heard from the beginning. What is the foremost message? That we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. Why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers were righteous.

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. And this is experiential death.

We have passed from fruitlessness to fruitfulness. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Who is the brother, by the way? Who are the Adelphos? That is supposed to be a copy of him. He lost. Philadelphia, what is the name of our church that we are studying? Brotherly love, love for the brother.

Hold fast to what you have so that no one takes your crown. Do not lose that foremost love. That is the key.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren, the Adelphoi. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

By this we know love because he laid down his life for us and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him, then how does the love of God abide in him? Notice, this is practice. We're talking about practice among believers.

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth. By this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence for God. Whatever we ask, we

receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. In these verses, verses 19 through 24, if you break down this chapter of 1 John 3, you have positional truth.

That's the starting point in verses 1 through 3. We have the means of overcoming sin by maintaining a focus on that hope in verses 4 through 10. He has his discourse on love of the brethren in verses 10 through 19 and especially verse 11. And then he talks about the fire of conscience in verses 19 through 24.

This is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment. You have the beginning and the end. We not only believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, for deliverance from the lake of fire, but we have to keep on believing in His name.

We have to keep on looking at Him. We have to keep on focusing, meditating, dwelling on that position, that calling, that place that we hold in God's plan. And the outworking of that is love for one another just as He gave us commandment.

He who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in Him. And by this we know that He abides in us by the Spirit whom He has given us. And then you get into 1 John 4 where you test the Spirit, you test the influences, you test the winds that blow.

The Ephesians were able to test the Spirit. They tested the prophets, they tested the messengers, they tested the teachings that came their way to see if they were erroneous or not. And they had the ability to weed out error.

But look down at verse 6 of chapter 4. We are of God. He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us.

By this we know the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God. It's from God.

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, Paul tells us in Romans chapter 5 and verse 5. He is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God for God is love. So if we are lacking in the love area, if we are lacking in the ability to focus on positional truth and have that love shed abroad in our hearts, then we get to know God and we go back to His word.

In this, the love of God was manifest toward us that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. And this is an ongoing life, not just rescue from destruction. In this is love, not that we love God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. And when you focus on the love that God had for us, the love that Christ had for us, it's an awful lot easier to love one another. No

one has seen God at any time.

If we love one another, God abides in us and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit and we have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him and He in God and we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in Him. Once again, remember that these are all present tense. You can turn these all into gerunds, into I-N-G words in English.

When He says whoever keeps on confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, God keeps on abiding in Him. These are conditions that pertain in a durative sense. John is the king of the durative present tense.

When he uses the present, he generally means it in an ongoing sense. Whoever keeps on confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, God keeps on abiding in Him and He keeps on abiding in God. Love has been perfected among us in this that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

Well, that sounds familiar. Love has been perfected among us in this that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because as He is, so are we in this world. The more we focus on Christ, the more we concentrate on His love expressed toward us, the more we are going to be able to reflect that love.

It is a part of the energizing power that God imparts to us. The love that is shed abroad in our heart is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. Paul understood that in Romans 5. John understood it in 1 John 4. It is the power of God.

It is not a love that we generate. It is not a love that we imitate. It is from God.

There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. He who fears has not been made perfect in love.

We love, and it says Him in the New King James, but in the New American Standard and really in Greek, it says we love because He first loved us. Any love that is of value in our soul is a result of the love that God had for us. Our love for God.

You say, I have a hard time feeling a love for God, having an emotion toward God. You don't have to work up an emotion toward God. You don't have to get worked up into a state.

That is the human effort that we see all around us today. When you see a speaker in a large auditorium and they've got someone playing the organ and they are using rhetorical techniques and they are using the music and they will make a statement and they will repeat it and the organ

will play and then they will go up a half step and play again and go up a half step and repeat and repeat and repeat. That does not generate love for God.

No human inspiration or perspiration can create love for God. Love for God comes from understanding who God is and what He has done. It is the natural response of a regenerative heart.

We are regenerate. We have been born again and in the same way that a baby and an infant and a child has a natural love for its mother and for its father because that's who it sees. That's who it knows.

Adopted children who are adopted in infancy don't have some pining at the age of three or four and they don't have some instinct that this is not my parent. It's the person that they're close to. It's the person that they know.

That's their parent. That's their true mother and their true father. The one who nurtures them and cares for them.

The one that they see and the one that they know. And children have a natural love for their parents regardless of their biological origin. I saw somebody here recently who is a couple and the girl the wife the young lady ever since she was young she was diagnosed at nine as having some congenital absence of a uterus and she knew from childhood that she could not have children and so her mother carried children.

She had eggs and things she just didn't have a womb and so they got the eggs and got the husband and fertilized these eggs and implanted them in this lady's mother. And this lady from the time her daughter was small had said either I or your sister will carry your children so don't be worrying about being childless. That's exactly what she did and they said well there's a 50-50 chance of this implanting and taking hold and being successful so we'll implant too and that'll up the odds.

Well both of them took and they had them on and here was the happy mother with her twins and her husband was there and her mother was there who carried them and brought them to birth. But regardless of who carried them or where they came from they're going to love their mother and their father because that's who they know. That's who they know the best.

The first faces that they see and come to recognize. So if we feel like we ought to have a love for God and we don't where does it come from? Well we are regenerate. We're born again.

The spirit of God is within us and He will speak the truth to us. He will take of the things of Christ and the things of the Father and impart them to us. All we have to do is look.

I love the phrase from the hymn that says there's life for a look at the Savior. It's from that same

song Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. There's life for a look at the Savior.

And it's not just saving life at the point of our rebirth. Every time we look at the Savior it is like the Israelites looking on the brazen serpent. They had a disease they were bitten by the vipers and they were dying from the poison in their system.

All they had to do was turn and look as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. And we tend to think well that was when I got saved.

Every day every time we have a problem every time our spiritual vitality begins to flag there is life there's ongoing life. There's that present tense durative sense that John uses so often. There is life in looking at the Savior.

I was telling somebody earlier this week Halloween is coming up and a lady I work with gave me a little plastic glow in the dark spider ring a little two cent thing but she got it as Burger King or something she said oh your girls will like this. And I was looking at that and I thought of something I hadn't thought about in decades. Something about that glow in the dark made me think back to when I was a small boy.

The very first thing I ever saw that glowed in the dark and it just fascinated me was a cross it was a white cross that I got at church. And you know most things when they glow in the dark now they have kind of a greenish hue this had a purplish hue when it glowed in the dark. And it impressed itself on my mind and I thought about it for years when I was a little boy because I would see it at night it would pick up light during the day and I would forget but I would after the lights were out and I would look around in my room and everything was dark all I could see was this glowing cross.

And wherever it was in the room sometimes it was laying on top of my chest of drawers sometimes it was in the floor sometimes I had stuck it up on the wall but you could always see the cross even late at night it still had this eerie purple glow. And you know when you are playing with something like that it will glow for a while and then it tends to get dimmer and dimmer and so you turn on the light and you wave it under the light and it refreshes the glow your alarm clock that has the glowing dot you know you put it under the light and turn it off and you can see it for hours but it will eventually fade just like the glory in Moses face faded over time. If we find our life fading our vitality fading our joy of salvation our hope our confident expectation fading we are like that phosphorescent object we need to get back exposed to the light.

Turn your eyes on Jesus there is life for a look at the Savior. That is where that love comes from that is what eradicates fear. We have a lot of uncertainty you can imagine people on the east coast we have had tragedies over the last 12 to 14 months in our country where for various reasons people have died unexpectedly through acts of terror.

There is no fear in love perfect love and that idea of perfect love is completed love. Love that has

been brought to maturity love that is not partial it is not incomplete it is completed it is all of it is there everything that is supposed to be there is there. Perfect love casts out fear.

Fear involves punishment and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If someone says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar.

For the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And we see here a very strong bold statement of the relationship between our love for one another and our love for God. If there is a problem in our horizontal relationship and our ability to forgive and to turn loose of grudges and to have a positive meaningful relationship with our brethren John says there is a problem in the vertical.

Your love for God has faded because if you are not loving people whom you have seen it is because you are not loving the one whom you cannot see. At this commandment we have from him that the one who loves God should love his brother also. Our love for one another is sourced in our love for God.

John was the apostle to the churches in Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Laodicea, and Philadelphia. All of these towns were ministered to by John. Do you not think that the message contained in these epistles which probably circulated in those very churches is not what the Lord Jesus is calling to mind when he addresses them and he says the love, the commandment that you had from the beginning, your foremost love, you've dismissed it, you've released it, you've turned it away, you've got to get that back.

Well, how do you hold on to your crown? How do you not lose your foremost love? These chapters in 1 John give the answer. Turn your eyes on Jesus, behold the love that the Father has bestowed on us. And when you look at the cross, when you look at the Father, when you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, that hope purifies us.

It motivates us to purify ourselves. It motivates us to overcome the nagging and besetting sins. It gives us the power of the love of God that we cannot generate, we cannot imitate, that we cannot emulate, we can only receive by faith, by nurturing hope, by spending time in fruitful meditation on the character of God, the person of God, the plan of God, the love of God.

If you want to hold on to your crown, if you want to be pleasing in God's sight, this is the how-to, this is how it's done. And it's a wonderful encouragement to know that it doesn't depend on us, it doesn't depend on our strength, our perspicacity, our intelligence, it just depends on our willingness to turn and look. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see what it means to be a pillar in the temple of God.