

Three reasons to pursue righteousness

1 John 2:28-3:10

Friends it's often the case isn't it,
 that when you join a new group or organization
 or even when you move to a new culture
 you soon find yourself asking questions about the habits of your new friends.

I heard one Japanese visitor to this country
 ask why Australians greet one another with a question
 that they don't expect an answer to! It's true isn't it?
 When we greet one another we ask "How are you?",
 but we don't actually expect to receive a full answer!
 And this habit of ours was very perplexing to my Japanese friend,
 "Why can't you just say *Hello?*" was the question she was asking.

And you yourself may have experienced something like this after joining a group;
 you may have had these questions ... after joining the church.

As a young Christian, there was one question that I asked for quite some time.
 I understood that our salvation was by grace;
 that through the death of Jesus
 God had done everything that was needed to cancel out my sins.
 But the question I was left with was this:
 If salvation is by grace, then why bother being good?
 If my good behaviour is *not* the ticket that God requires for eternal life,
 then why am I even bothering?
 I could see that other Christians were concerned about obeying the Bible,
 but I didn't know *why*.

I remember attending a Christian conference for young people
 where the speaker was talking at great length and with great enthusiasm
 about God's wonderful grace,
 how it's not our works but God's work that makes the difference.
 And so I cornered him after one of his talks and I asked
 "So why bother being good?"
 and I remember his gaze kinda lifted up and he looked off into the distance
 and with a hesitating voice he simply said "It's just the proper response".
 And I thought "That's a rubbish answer".

And I still think it's a rubbish answer!
 Thank goodness we have the Bible
 and we don't have to rely on preachers for our understanding of God.
 If you are only relying on me for your knowledge of God,
 let me be the first to tell you, you are shortchanging yourself.

My preaching ministry will never cover all that God's book has to say to us;
we must be reading the Bible for ourselves.

And it's in 1 John that we find an answer to this question
that was overlooked by that preacher almost 20 years ago

So why pursue righteousness?

Why pursue right living even though it's God's actions that save us?

Well, John has three reasons, and the first is introduced in Ch 2:28

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

John reminds us of an important fact which we should never forget:

Jesus *will* return one day.

At some point in the future, there will come a moment in the day,
it may be 6:45pm on a Tuesday, or 7:33am on a Wednesday – we don't know,
when Jesus will return and life on this planet as we know it will be over.

When Jesus appears a number of different things will happen.

Notice how John wants us to be confident and unashamed at Christ's coming;

Now why might confidence and shame be issues when Jesus returns?

Because his return will signal the beginning of God's judgment upon us.

What do you do when you receive notice that the landlord is issuing an inspection?

You run around getting the household in order, don't you?

You clean up so that you can stand in confidence that you'll pass inspection,
so that you'll dodge the shame of having a messy house.

What do you do at work

when you see on your calendar that performance reviews are approaching?

You go over your targets and KPI's to see that everything is in order.

I think I was in this job here only 3 or 4 weeks

when the Bishop made a surprise visit one Sunday morning.

"Surprise! I'm here to see how the new boy is doing!"

Now, my sermon was well prepared, and so I could preach with confidence.

Can we stand with confidence when Jesus returns?

Can we stand without the slightest trace of shame? Of course we can,
provided we remain in Jesus, provided we retain our trust in his work for us.

And as we successfully pass God's final and irreversible judgment,

Something else will happen too: seeing Jesus, we will be transformed.

Have a listen from ch 3 verse 2 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.

How we are now, is not how we will be in the future.

In the future, we will be like Jesus.
 We will perfectly love others as Jesus did,
 we will be in perfect relationship with God the Father as Jesus is,
 Our bodies will be death resistant and decay proof, as Christ's body is.

Why? Well, the reason given here is that in seeing Jesus, we will become like him.
 In 2 Corinthians Paul speaks of us reflecting something of Christ,
 and I think the same kind of idea is being presented here.
 When we see Jesus after his return, we'll take on and reflect his nature.

We've just had the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year.
 Don't you hate getting up in the dark?
 When the sun finally rises above the horizon
 it comes straight into our lounge room at eye level,
 and we have no blinds so it makes eating breakfast very uncomfortable.
 And we've managed to make matters worse by hanging a mirror in that room
 so now we can blind ourselves from lots of different angles.
 The other morning I walked into the room
 and got a beam of light straight into my eyes, and I thought
 "Where's that coming from? It's that stupid mirror", and so I turned the other
 way and *bang!* I got hit again straight from the sun itself.
 It's like we've got two suns in that room,
 because the mirror is doing a great job of reflecting the true sun,
 and so it will be when Jesus himself comes into full view:
 We will see him and be like him.

And so this is what's in store for us in the future: judgment and Christlikeness.
 But what does this have to do with being righteous in there here and now?
 John explains in v3: All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.
 While we have this glorious future ahead of us,
 it's not a matter of doing nothing in the meantime.
 John is calling us to anticipate this future by purifying ourselves from sin,
 by seeking to be like Christ *now* ahead of his return.

It's like those pre-school children who take the induction tour of their Kindergarten,
 And then as the tour ends they purchase their uniform from the school shop.
 If they're keen, what do they do when they get home?
 They want to put on the uniform!
 They're still some months away from attending
 but they start anticipating what's in store,
 and so it is with those of us who know what's in *our* future.
 We choose righteousness now, in anticipation of what is yet to come.

But we also look behind us.
 After asking us to think forward to Christ's second appearance,
 John now asks us to think back to the first time Jesus walked on earth.

