

1 John 3 – The Love of God and the Love of Life

Read 1 John 3

Vs 1 How has God bestowed (*to give something to someone*) His love on us? By calling us His children. When did He do this? Romans 5:8 He did it while we were yet sinners. Notice John He wants us to behold it (*look at it and study it intently*). “Bestowed on us” speaks many things. First, it speaks of the measure of God’s love to us; it could more literally be translated lavished on us. Secondly, it speaks of the manner of God’s giving of love; bestowed has the idea of a one-sided giving, instead of a return for something earned (i.e. grace). The God-head calls us the children of God - The Father in 2 Corinthians 6:18, The Son in Hebrews 2:11, and the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:16. As a child of God, we gain something greater than Adam ever possessed. We never once read of Adam being called one of the children of God in the sense John means here. He was never adopted as a son of God in the way believers are. We err when we think of redemption as merely a restoration of what was lost with Adam; we are granted more in Jesus than Adam ever had. John 1:12 Why doesn’t the world know us (what is the “therefore” there for)? Because of our unique parentage from God, we are strangers to this world (or should be). We can not be surprised or offended to find out that the world does not know us. Instead, we should expect the world to treat us as it treated Him. John 15:18-19

Vs 2 What amazing truth does this verse show? Our present standing is plain. We can know, and have an assurance, that we are indeed among the children of God. Can we know now the full extent of this truth? No. Though our present standing is plain, our future destiny is clouded. We don’t know in the kind of detail we would like to know what we will become in the world beyond. In this sense, we can’t even imagine what we will be like in glory. We are limited by our physical senses so we can’t clearly understand life in eternity (although we are certainly given glimpses in Scripture). Quoting Charles Spurgeon - “...*this is not the time for the manifestation of a Christian’s glory. Eternity is to be the period for the Christian’s full development, and for the sinless display of his God-given glory. Here, he must expect to be unknown; it is in the hereafter that he is to be discovered as a son of the great King.*” The Bible speaks of God’s great plan for our lives like this in Rom 8:29. God’s ultimate goal in our lives is to make us like Jesus, and here, John speaks of the fulfillment of that purpose. How shall we see Jesus? I think this is the greatest glory of heaven - to be in the unhindered, unrestricted, presence of our Lord and see Him in all His Glory. 1 Cor 13:12, Rev 1:13-16 Today, when we look in a good mirror, the image is clear. But in the ancient world, mirrors were made out of polished metal, and the image was always unclear and somewhat distorted. We see Jesus now only in a dim, unclear way, but one day we will see Him with perfect clarity.

Vs 3 When you have this hope of our eternity (being like Jesus and seeing Him as He is), what does that cause you to do? Purify (*to make ceremonially or morally clean*) yourself. And what is our standard? Jesus. Knowing our eternal destiny, and living in this hope, will purify our lives. When we know our end is to be more like Jesus, it makes us want to be more like Jesus right now. Having the anticipation of being with Jesus, of the soon coming of Jesus Christ, can have a marvelous purifying effect in our lives. It makes us want to be ready, to be serving Him now, to be pleasing Him now. Ultimately, our hope is not in heaven or in our own glory in heaven. Our hope is in Him. We must never set our hope on other things; not on a relationship, on success, on mutual funds, on our health, on our possessions, or simply just on ourselves.

Vs 4 When you commit (*to willingly do or act*) sin, what are you really committing? Lawlessness. At its root, sin is a disregard for the law of God, which is inherently a disregard for the law maker, God Himself.

Vs 5 Why was Jesus manifested (*to make visible, known*)? To take away our sin. That was the whole reason God, in the body of Jesus, came in the flesh. John 1:14 Was there any sin in Jesus? No! John 8:46, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22

Vs 6 What will happen when you abide (*make your dwelling in*) Jesus? You won’t sin. It is very important to understand what the Bible means, and what it does not mean, when it says “does not sin”. According to the verb tense John uses, “does not sin” means does not live a life style of habitual sin. John has already told us in 1 John 1:8 if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If you do live in sin, what does this imply? You haven’t seen Him nor known Him. As we saw in 1 John 2, if you are ok living a lifestyle of known sin, you are a liar if you also say you know Jesus.

Vs 7 John does not want anyone to deceive those under his care. Notice the word “practice” in this verse. Verse 6 talked about those who practice (*do on a consistent basis*) a sinful lifestyle. What is this verse talking about? Those who live a righteous lifestyle are righteous like Jesus. As today, there were people who taught that you could be righteous before God with no evidence of righteousness in your life. John is rebuking this idea. Charles Spurgeon

said it well: “The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.” We can live lives characterized by righteousness, not sin, because we have been given the righteousness of Jesus, and He is righteous. We have the resource we need to live righteously! Rom 3:22,2 Cor 5:21

Vs 8 If you practice a lifestyle of sin, who are you like? Satan. When did Satan start sinning? In the beginning, that is; before Gen 1:1. Isa 14:12-15, Eze 28:12-19 What was the purpose of Jesus coming to earth as a man? To destroy the work of Satan. What was this work? To cause man to die (Gen 2:16-17) which is being separated from God.

Vs 9 Is this verse a contradiction to what we already studied in 1 John 1? If not, why not? It is not. It is talking here about our born-again spirit, made perfect by God, sealed with the Holy Spirit, forever reconciled to God. That part of you cannot sin. The change from being of the devil to being children of God comes as we are born of God; when this happens, our old nature, patterned after the instinctive rebellion of Adam, dies. Col 3:3, Gal 2:20 We are given a new nature, patterned after the instinctive obedience of Jesus Christ. John here is simply emphasizing what it means to be born again. It means that a change comes into our lives – it is a change that will be worked out into every area of our lives as we grow in Christ, but it is a real, observable change. Eph 4:22,24

Vs 10 How can you tell children of God from the children of the devil? Everyone is either a child of God or the devil. John 8:41-45 There is no other option. It is practicing righteousness and loving your brother that defines (*is an observable byproduct of*) a child of God.

Vs 11 John had already emphasized the command to love as being the word which his audience heard from the beginning (1 John 2:7). In remembering this message to love one another, he remembered the command of Jesus in John 13:34.

Vs 12 What does John use as an example of the concept “practice righteousness/loving brother = child of God, doing neither – child of the devil”? Cain! Gen 4:5-10, Heb 11:4

Vs 13 Should we be surprised when the world (i.e. children of the devil) hate us? No! John 15:18

Vs 14 – 15 What one thing proves you are born-again unto eternal life? You love other Christians. If someone hates their brethren, where do they live? In death! What are you if you hate your brother? You are a murderer. Matt 5:21-22 What do murderers NEVER have? Eternal life living in them. Being a Christian is more than saying, “I am a Christian.” There are some who claim to be Christians who are not. How can we know if we are one of these? John’s reply has been constant and simple. There are three tests to measure the proof of a genuine Christian: the truth test, the love test, and the moral test. If we believe in what the Bible teaches as true, if we show the love of Jesus to others, and if our conduct has been changed and is becoming more like Jesus, then our claim to be a Christian can be proven true.

Vs 16 – 18 What is the proof of knowing love? John 15:13 Real love isn’t merely “felt” as an inward feeling; it is also shown by demonstration – and the ultimate demonstration was the life Jesus gave on the cross. Because of what Jesus did, what should we do? Lay our lives down for our brethren. What does that look like? Ministering to those in need. If you don’t give to your brother in need, does the love of God really dwell in you? No.

Vs 19 How do we know we are of the truth? When we love by our actions. When we act in love toward others, we assure (*have confidence of, fully persuaded*) our hearts before Jesus. In other words, we know our heart is right with God.

Vs 20 – 21 What happens if we walk in love as best we know, but still feel condemned in our heart? John assures us that God is greater than our heart, and so reminds us that we cannot base our relationship with Him purely on how we feel in His presence. Why is this important? If we feel condemned (i.e. not right with God) it will kill our confidence before God. In other words, we won’t come boldly before the throne of grace to obtain help in our time of need (Heb 4:16) because we don’t feel worthy. We’ll think He doesn’t hear us, etc.

Vs 22 What awesome promise do we have when we come before God in confidence (without condemnation – keeping His commandments and doing things that please Him)? We receive what we ask for!

Vs 23 What commandments is John talking about? Believe on the name of Jesus Christ and love one another.

Vs 24 When we keep His commandments, what assurance do we have? We abide in Him and He in us. And what is the proof of this abiding? The Holy Spirit given to us!