

1 John 3

1. Behold ***what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us***, that we should be ***called children of God!*** Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
2. Beloved, now ***we are children of God***; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for ***we shall see Him as He is***.
3. And everyone who has this hope in Him ***purifies himself, just as He is pure***.
4. Whoever ***commits sin also commits lawlessness***, and sin is lawlessness.
5. And you know that ***He was manifested to take away our sins***, and ***in Him there is no sin***.
6. Whoever ***abides in Him does not sin***. Whoever sins has ***neither seen Him nor known Him***.
7. Little children, let ***no one deceive you***. He who ***practices righteousness is righteous***, just as He is righteous.
8. ***He who sins is of the devil***, for the ***devil has sinned from the beginning***. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.
9. Whoever has been ***born of God does not sin***, for His ***seed remains in him***; and he ***cannot sin, because he has been born of God***.
10. In this 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.
11. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that ***we should love one another***,
12. not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.
13. ***Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you***.
14. 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.
15. Whoever ***hates his brother is a murderer***, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
16. 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.
17. But whoever has this world's goods, and ***sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart*** from him, how does the love of God abide in him?
18. My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but ***in deed and in truth***.
19. And ***by this we know that we are of the truth***, and shall assure our hearts before Him.
20. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.
21. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.
22. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.
23. And 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.
24. Now 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***.

MORE THAN FELLOWSHIP

John builds on the relationship that is possible with God, it speaks in amazement in that we are so intimate that we are family, and so unique that the world in general cannot understand such a thing.

Four previous themes echo in this chapter:

#1 God reveals God, we don't reason or experience our way to God, "we shall see Him as He is."

When we see what God is; the ***response is to become like God is***. There is accountability on our side, even though God alone is the revealer. Our response is to allow God to purify us and we turn from our sin nature.

#2 This was a powerful rebuff of the growing thought of the day. As Greek ascetic philosophy was teaching that the body was sinful anyway and so immoral physical action was completely acceptable. We are reminded that God was made manifest, the works of the cross were physical as well as spiritual. Christ was the “logos” that was seen, heard, and touched.

#3 The works of the Cross (expiation, atonement, propitiation) are the way our sins are removed, and not by anything else. Even in modern Christianity, we suffer corruption of this idea. Some hold that there is no salvation without believer’s baptism. Some hold that there is no salvation until one has a charismatic experience and spirit baptism. John refutes this. “Let no one deceive you” on any of these points.

#4 The greatest thrust in the chapter is that the transformation of the Christian is so thorough, that we “cannot sin.” That is not to say that it becomes impossible for us to sin, but that the new nature of God within, does not have any desire to sin. We now have a choice other than the old nature.

SIN & “SPIRITUAL GENETICS”

Remember, John spoke in terms of BALANCE, and DYCHOTOMY- either/or. Either you have truly entered a living relationship, in God’s family, or you have not. If you have, there will be change. If you have, you will nurture the new nature within. If you have that new nature will show; it will instinctively move away from sin and cause the believer to be more like God. It is the inevitable consequence of the relationship.

In his letter to the Ephesian church (Eph. 1:5) the Apostle Paul speaks in terms of adoption into God’s family. This idea is very pertinent to his gentile audience, as we are grafted into the promise of the Old Testament. But John balances this with another imagery that is equally true. By using the terms “born of God” and “His seed remains in him”, John is emphasizing another truth. There is no secondhand relationship with God, to be born, and to have the seed is to be of the actual bloodline. It is to carry the genetic markers of the parent. There are features of a child that are involuntary, they cannot help but look like, or act like the parent.

On the other hand, the same can be said of the devil. It has been pointed out that people sin in the hope of pleasure, Satan sins as a matter of principle. Satan spurs to sin, not for the pleasure of it, but for the strategy of destroying God’s work. In that destruction, comes our death; death in many ways in this life, and ultimately eternal death. The manifestation of Christ is to destroy the destruction of the destroyer.

IF THIS; THEN THAT

John continues into the natural consequences that happen when we are actually in this relationship:

If we are actually in this relationship- The world will not simply be confused, they will hate what they see. Death does not love life; and evil does not love innocence.

If we are actually in this relationship- we will not hate. As we learned this morning, “hate” is not only to detest, it is to “love less.” It is anti-Christ to practice partiality in the Gospel. Hate is equal to murder in the nature of God.

If we are actually in this relationship- we will love. Love is in word and deed. The balanced truth demands action in both. Love cannot “shut up the heart” in the face of another’s need, either physical or otherwise.

The attitude and exercise of love in our hearts is the tangible proof that we are born of God. In typical fashion, John is saying; if it is, we are, if it is not, we are not. -One or the other.

Our hearts are the proof, but John balances this because, there are times our hearts don’t tell us, or see the truth as it really is; but God is greater than our hearts- God is greater than our hearts because He sees more clearly than our hearts. God is greater than our hearts, in that; if our hearts need changing, He can transform them as we seek Him.

John makes another rebuff of the Greek trends of “secret knowledge” and “mystery religions”; if you want to know the truth, the truth is, you are in God if you love in word and deed. Love is the truth.

You are truly in relationship with God if you “keep” His commandment, which is to believe in Christ as the Christ, and to love. To “keep” is to obey. To “keep” is to do what you now know to do.

The chapter ends with a beginning theme- God abides in the believer. It ends with balance- God is within, but there is an outer life that shows. It ends with dichotomy- God is in one’s physical deeds, but God is spirit within.

DISCUSSION

- WHAT WAS MOST SIGNIFICANT TO YOU IN THIS CHAPTER?
- WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “KNOWING” GOD AND BEING GOD’S “CHILD”?
- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE PASSAGE THAT THE CHILD OF GOD “CANNOT SIN”? (V. 9)
- HOW DOES GOD DEFINE “HATE”? “LOVE”?
- THE CHAPTER ENDS WITH- IF GOD ABIDES IN US WE WILL KEEP HIS COMMANDMENT; WHICH IMPLIES IF WE DON’T KEEP HIS COMMANDMENT, HE DOESN’T ABIDE IN US. WHAT IS THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATION OF THIS STATEMENT IN “REAL LIFE”?