

1 John Chapter 3

1 John 3:1 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

“Bestowed”:

This is in the perfect tense, suggesting the enduring effect of the love God has given.

Believers are children of God by virtue of being born of Him (2:29).

Jesus stressed a connection between how the world related to God and how it would in turn relate to Christ’s true followers (John 15:18).

After God the phrase “And we are” should be added, according to many ancient manuscripts.

“What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us”.

This out-burst of wonder introduces the third feature of the believer’s hope (in 2:28-3:3).

The believer’s hope is strengthened by the fact that God’s love has initiated his salvation (see Ephesians 1:3-6).

Christ’s return will unite the believer with the heavenly Father who loves His child with an immeasurable love.

John expresses utter astonishment at God’s love for believers in making them His children (Romans 8:17).

The Love of God for the people of the world is hard to understand.

Behold, means stop and notice.

The love the that Father has "bestowed", tells us that we did not earn that love; it was a free gift from God.

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that we might be saved.

“The world knoweth us not”:

The real aliens in the world are not extra terrestrials, but Christians.

Having been born again, given a new nature of heavenly origin, Christians display a nature and lifestyle like their Savior and heavenly Father.

A nature totally foreign (or worldly), to the unsaved (1 Col. 2:15, 16; 1 Peter 4:3-4).

No wonder Scripture describes Christians as “aliens,” “exiles,” and “strangers” (see Heb. 11:13; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:11).

The Lord Jesus was unearthly in origin, and so are those born again.

Our true transformed lives have not yet been manifested.

Jesus paid the price of adoption for us to be adopted children of the Father.

Jesus is the only begotten Son.

We are sons by adoption.

We have been bought and paid for by the precious blood of Jesus.

We have been presented to the Father by the Son.

The world does not know God.

It did not know the Son.

It does not recognize us as adopted sons, either.

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons 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; for we shall see him as he is."

“Now are we the sons of God”:

Everyone who exercises genuine saving faith becomes a child of God at the moment of belief (John 1:12; Romans 8:16; 2 Peter 1:4).

Though the truly heavenly, divine life in that person (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), will not be revealed until Jesus appears.

In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is working into us the image of Christ.

“We shall be like Him”:

This phrase introduces the fourth feature of the believer’s hope (in 2:28-3:3).

When Christ returns He shall conform every believer to His image, i.e., His nature.

A tension exists between the first part of the verse (“now we are the sons”), and the latter part (“we shall be like Him”).

Such tension finds resolution in the solid hope that at Christ’s return the believer will experience ultimate conformity to His likeness.

The glorious nature of that conformity defies description, but as much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity believers will be, without becoming deity.

At Jesus’ coming (2:28), we shall be somehow transformed into His likeness.

This process has already begun in the believer’s life (2 Cor. 3:18).

This is speaking of the beloved of God.

In the 15th chapter (of 1 Corinthians), it speaks of our spiritual body that comes forth from this physical body.

We know that God is a Spirit.

We also, know that Jesus is the Quickening Spirit.

We will be like Him, in the fact that we will no longer be flesh and blood, but will have a spiritual body.

This also, speaks of a great knowledge of God that will come upon us when we leave this physical body and go to heaven in our spiritual body.

Jesus is the Son of God, and we will be sons of God.

These are things of God that we do know.

There are many things that will not be revealed unto us, until we are in heaven with Him.

The eyes of our understanding will no longer be darkened.

We shall have our eyes of understanding opened, and know, and understand Him.

1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

1 John 3:3 "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

At Christ’s coming His followers will be transformed, but in the meantime, they need to be diligent in growth in holiness.

He is pure, and it is the “pure in heart” who shall see God (Matt. 5:8).

“Purifieth himself, even as He is pure”:

This is the key verse to (2:28 - 3:3), and it also introduces the fifth feature of the believer’s hope in this section.

Living in the reality of Christ’s return makes a difference in a Christians’ behavior.

Since Christians someday will be like Him, a desire should grow within the Christian to become like Him now.

This was Paul’s passion expressed (in Phil. 3:12-14).

That calls for a purifying of sin, in which we play a part.

The hope, spoken of here, is the hope of the resurrection.

The Christian should not put too much value on this world, but on the world to come.

Christians should endeavor to be more Christ-like every day.

Notice, it is in the will of man to purify himself.

If our Leader (Jesus), is pure, then we must attempt to be pure also.

Verses 4 – 10

Deal with the Christian’s incompatibility with sin.

The false teachers that John combated, because of their Gnostic-like concepts, discounted the significance of sin and the need for obedience.

Because of their philosophical dualism, they viewed matter as inherently bad, and as a result, any sins committed in the physical realm as inconsequential.

In this section, John gives four reasons why true Christians cannot habitually practice sin (John 8:31, 34-36; Romans 6:11; 2 John 9).

1 John 3:4 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

This verse begins speaking of “committeth sin” which the verb in the Greek conveys the idea of making sin a habitual practice.

Although genuine Christians have a sin disposition (1:8), and do commit and need to confess sin (1:9; 2:1), that is not the unbroken pattern of their lives.

A genuinely born again believer has a built-in check or guard against habitual sinning due to a new nature ("born of God"; verse 9; Rom. 6:12).

"Sin is the transgression":

The first reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because sin is incompatible with the law of God which they love (Psalms 119:34, 77, 97; Romans 7:12, 22).

The term "transgresseth" or lawlessness, conveys more than transgressing God's law.

It conveys the ultimate sense of rebellion, i.e., living as if there was no law or ignoring what laws exist (James 4:17).

John turns from stress on Christ's and Christian purity to the need for all of the believers to abstain from sin.

The verse means: "Everyone who sins is indulging in unlawful behavior; sin is in fact lawlessness."

This does not specifically mean the old Mosaic Law.

This is that law that God has placed in the heart of the believer.

Anything we do in disobedience to God is sin.

The law of God for the Christian is to love God with everything within us, and to love our neighbor as our self.

If we do that, we will be pleasing God.

To live in sin, is to turn away from God.

1 John 3:5 "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

"He was manifested (made visible, appeared), to take away our sins":

A second reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because it is incompatible with the work of Christ.

Christ died to sanctify (make holy), the believer (2 Corinthians 5:21; Eph. 5:25-27).

To sin is contrary to Christ's work of breaking the dominion of sin in the believer's life (see Romans 6:1-15).

Jesus was completely without sin.

He had never sinned.

His body had no broken bones.

He was the Lamb without blemish.

He took our sin upon His sinless body.

Our sin died on the cross.

Our sins are not covered; (as they were with the sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament), they are done away with by the blood of Jesus.

Then He gave us His righteousness.

1 John 3:6 "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

"Whosoever abideth ... sinneth not":

Like the phrase "practices sins" (of verse 4), the sense conveyed here is the idea of habitual, constant sinning.

"Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him":

If no check against habitual sin exists in someone who professes to be a Christian, John's pronouncement is absolutely clear, salvation never took place.

To abide in Christ is to be dead to sin (Romans 6).

The one who habitually lives in sin has never been transformed by Christ's life-changing power and purity.

"Abideth":

This means to continually live.

If we are hidden in Christ, we do not sin.

The desire to sin is taken away from us, if we are in Him and Him in us.

The following Scripture shows us how it is possible for us to live this life.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Christ would no longer live in me, if I walk back into a sinful way of life.

We are not in Him and Him in us, if we desire to live in sin.

Verses 7-8

There could well be a temptation to water down God's Word at this point.

John resists such a move.

Sin is of the Devil.

Christ came to destroy the Devil's deeds.

To do the Devil's deeds is to declare allegiance to him, not to Christ.

Thus, sin and being a Christian are mutually exclusive.

1 John 3:7 "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

"Let no man deceive you":

The word "deceives" means "to lead astray."

Since false teachers were attempting to pervert the fundamentals of the faith, the possibility existed that some Christians might be fooled into accepting what they were advocating.

To prevent this deception from occurring, John repeatedly emphasized the basics of Christianity, e.g., the need for obedience, the need for love, and the need for a proper view of Christ.

"Doeth righteousness":

The genuine believer's habitual lifestyle of righteousness stands in sharp contrast to those false teachers who practiced sin (verses 4 and 6).

Since Christ died on the cross to transform sinners, those truly born again have replaced the habit of sin with the habit of righteous living (Romans 6:13-14).

“Even as He is righteous”:

Those who are truly born again reflect the divine nature of the Son.

They behave like Him, manifesting the power of His life in them (Gal. 2:20).

This verse is just saying to walk in the righteousness He has provided for us daily.

1 John 3:8 "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Committeth means continues to commit.

Jesus defeated sin, and the devil, on the cross.

Christians, who have put their faith in Jesus, are no longer to serve sin.

Sin is not our master; neither is the devil controlling us.

The one who “committeth” or practices sin (meaning habitually practice sin).

“Of the devil”:

The phrase gives the source of the false teachers’ actions.

The term “devil”, means “accuser” or “slanderer.” Not only does Satan (“adversary”), oppose God and His plan, but he is the originator and instigator of sin and rebellion against God and His law (verse 4).

Therefore, all the unsaved are under the diabolic influence of Satan.

Their sinful lifestyle reflects their satanic origin.

John contrasts the children of God with the children of Satan in terms of their actions.

While those who are truly born again reflect the habit of righteousness, and then Satan’s children practice sin.

“From the beginning”:

Since Satan was originally created as perfect and only later rebelled against God (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-17), John probably means the moment of his rebellion against God, the beginning of his rebellious career.

Since sin characterizes him completely, so everyone characterized by sin must derive from him (John 8:44).

“For this purpose ... might destroy”:

A third reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because Christ came to destroy the works of the arch-sinner, Satan.

The devil is still operating, but he has been defeated, and in Christ we escape his tyranny.

The day will come when all of Satan’s activity will cease in the universe and he will be sent to hell forever (Rev. 20:10).

“Works of the devil”:

This summarizes a variety of the devil’s activities: sin, rebellion, temptation, ruling the world, persecution and accusation of saints, instigation of false teachers, and the power of death.

We have been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus.

We are servant of the Lord Jesus and His righteousness.

Those who desire to continue in sin, do not belong to God, they belong to the devil.

1 John 3:9 "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

The 4th reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because it is incompatible with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who has imparted a new nature to the believer (John 3:5-8).

“Born of God”:

John wrote here of the new birth (John 3:7).

When people become Christians, God makes them new creatures with new natures (2 Cor. 5:17).

Believers have God’s characteristics because they have been born into God’s family.

This new nature exhibits the habitual character of righteousness produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24).

John repeats this phrase twice for emphasis.

“His seed”:

The new birth involves the acquisition of a seed, which refers to the principle of life of God imparted to the believer at salvation's new birth.

John uses this image of a planted seed to picture the divine element involved in being born again.

“Remaineth”:

The word conveys the idea of the permanence of the new birth which cannot be reversed, for those who are truly born again are permanently transformed into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10).

“He cannot sin”:

This phrase once again conveys the idea of habitual sinning (see verses 4 and 6).

John is not teaching sinless perfection (see 1:8, 10; 2:2).

He speaks here of habitual practice of known sinful acts.

The true believer's actions will conform to the character of his true father, either God or Satan.

The person born of God will reflect this in his behavior.

This does not mean that it is impossible for you to commit a sin.

It means it is not your nature to sin, when you have been born again in the spirit.

When Christ takes up His dwelling place within you, the desire to sin is gone.

This is speaking of the new birth, when we bury the flesh man and raise the spirit man in Christ.

1 John 3:10 " In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

This summary verse is the key to (verses 4-10).

Only two kinds of children exist in the world: children of God and children of Satan.

No one can belong to both families simultaneously.

Either one belongs to God's family and exhibits His righteous character or one belongs to Satan's family and exhibits his sinful nature.

“He that loveth not his brother”:

This phrase introduces the readers to the second aspect of the moral test, i.e., the test of love (as in 2:7-11).

John develops this thought through (verses 11-24).

The false teachers not only had an erroneous view of Christ's nature and displayed disobedience to God's commands, but they also displayed a distinct lack of love for true believers, who rejected their heretical teaching.

For John, a mere "profession of faith" in Christ was insufficient if not accompanied by the outward marks of divine parentage.

Further, he links love for other Christians closely with righteous living (see John 13:35).

The walk we take through life reveals to the world whether we belong to the devil, or to God.

God created every one of us, and His desire was that we would all be His.

He gave us a free will, however, and some chose to follow the devil, instead of God.

The fruit we bear reveals who we are.

People who habitually sin are of the devil.

Those who choose not to sin are of God.

This does not mean that a Christian might not commit a single sin; it means that is not their way of life.

Verses 11-24

John elaborates on the love life of genuine believers.

For those who are truly born again, love is an indispensable characteristic.

The new nature of "seed" (verse 9), that God imparts not only exhibits holiness but also love as a habitual characteristic (John 13:35; Romans 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:9).

Those who practice love give proof of the new birth and those who do not, it shows that they have never been born again.

1 John 3:11 "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

“From the beginning”:

Since the beginning of gospel proclamation, love has been a central theme of Christianity.

John emphasizes what they heard “from the beginning” to emphasize that the false teachers were preventing that which God, through the apostles, proclaimed.

“We should love one another”:

This phrase highlights the habit of love displayed by those possessing the new nature.

Love is not merely an optional duty for someone claiming to be a Christian, but proof positive that one truly has been born again (John 15:12; 1 Peter 1:22-23).

It is one of the 2 things Jesus said covered all the law and prophets, to love others.

Love of God and love of neighbors covers it all.

We may not like what they are doing, but we must love them.

Verses 12-24

As noted throughout this epistle, John often repeated the same truth, expanding on them to allow his readers to hear them in new and fresh ways.

Each time he presents the same truths in “new” packages, which expand on a particular aspect of their significance or approach the subject from a slightly different angle.

Verses 12-17

Address the characteristic lack of love displayed by the children of the devil, while (in verses 18-24), he talks about the characteristics of love displayed by the children of God.

1 John 3:12 "Not as Cain, [who] was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

“Cain”:

Scripture presents Cain outwardly as a God-worshiper who even offered sacrifice (Gen. 4:3-5).

However Cain’s murderous actions, quickly revealed that inwardly he was a child of the Devil (see John 8:44).

“Who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother”:

In verses 12-17, John presents the first of three behaviors of the devil's children manifesting their lack of love, murder, the ultimate expression of hate.

"His own works were evil":

Cain's offering was not acceptable because he was sinful (Gen. 4:5).

Jealousy was behind his hate and murder, as in the case of the religious leaders who had Jesus Christ executed.

See (Genesis 4:8).

"Of that wicked one" refers to a child of the Devil (verse 10). Cain killed Abel because their conflicting allegiances (Cain to Satan, Abel's to God), were plain to see by their respective actions. John seems to be saying: "If even wicked Cain could see that a man's character is revealed ultimately, not in what he says he believes, but in what he does, should not Christians be able to see this as well?"

The two brothers, Cain and Abel, typify the two conditions of man.

Abel pleased God, and Cain did not.

We see the good and evil in the first two sons of Adam and Eve.

One followed God, and the other lived for the flesh.

1 John Chapter 3 Questions

1. What are the Christians called in verse 1?
2. Why does the world know us not?
3. What does the word "bestowed" show us?
4. Jesus is the only begotten Son, we are sons by _____.
5. When He shall appear, we shall be _____.
6. We shall see Him as ____.
7. What does the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians say about our body?
8. What are some of the things we do know about death?
9. What is the hope of the Christian?

10. Because we have this hope, what should we do?
11. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the _____.
12. What law is this speaking of?
13. What is the law for the Christian?
14. Who was the Lamb without blemish?
15. What happened to our sin, if we are Christians?
16. What does "abideth" mean?
17. What name are the Christians called by in verse 7?
18. He that committeth sin is of the _____.
19. Whosoever is born of God doth not _____.
20. How can the general public tell who is of God?
21. What is the message that we heard from the beginning?
22. Which of Adam's sons was evil?
23. What do the two sons of Adam typify?