

August 11, 2024

“The Love of God”
Lesson 2

I John 3:1-10

Intro

This is one of three epistles, or letters, written by the Apostle John, one of Jesus’ original 12 disciples. These letters were likely written in the AD 80’s or 90’s. John would have been an older man by this time, and filled with both dignity and wisdom.

His audience had apparently been confronted with threats to their faith. One of the more prominent threats at this time was Gnosticism. An important aspect to this belief system is that of having some kind of “secret knowledge”. If you possessed this, then you were one of the elite, and therefore God favored you. Morality and love were not valued by Gnostics, only this secret knowledge.

John combats this false teaching by stressing the connection between right belief, right actions, and right love. He addresses these things in this week’s lesson.

Read I John 3:1-10

1. vs. 1: John begins here by emphasizing God’s great love for humanity

He says in 2:2 that God “lavished” His love on us
Nothing humanity could do, not even loving God, can influence His great love for us
He calls them “children of God” as a result of their placing their faith in Jesus
We have been adopted into his family, a spiritual birth rather than a physical one
When John uses the word “world”, he means sinful people and structures that oppose God
The “world” doesn’t accept or relate to God, so if we are His, it won’t relate to us, either

2. vs. 2: John refers to his readers as “dear friends” a term he uses six times in I John

This is a term of endearment, which he continues by saying “we are children of God”
He places himself in with them in this relationship, not above them or better than them
What exactly will come we don’t get to know fully in this life
But John says there is a guarantee—“we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”
If we are like Christ, we will be able to be in His presence without fear
Christ will transform us somehow, allowing us to see Him “as He is”

3. vs. 3: The hope that John refers to here is Christ’s return, and our alteration by Him when He does

God is trustworthy—He does not change, so His promises can be relied on
So our hope is based His trustworthiness, not just some positive feeling or outlook
Because of this hope we have, John says we “purify” ourselves
We do this because Christ is pure, meaning sinless
We are made pure by His blood, shed for us on the cross
We are “off the hook” for our former sins
However, we are not then free to go back to sinning
We are to purify ourselves (grow in purity) so that we avoid the stain of sin
We know that being perfectly sinless is impossible for us in this life
However, as believers, we are to make every effort to live pure and upright lives

4. vs. 4: John acknowledges here that sin is breaking the law (of God)

He makes an equation: sin = lawlessness

Sin is described several ways in the Bible

Foolishness (Prov. 24:9)

Opposite of faith (Rom. 14:23)

Falling short of God's glory (3:23)

A willful failure to do good (James 4:17)

Any wrongdoing (1 John 5:17)

This verse is the simplest and clearest definition

Sin is lawlessness, breaking God's law

5. vs. 5: John uses the word "know here"

He uses this word 15 times in 1 John

This indicates his emphasis on knowing the person and work of Jesus Christ

Knowing is the first step, but not the ultimate step

Knowing should lead one to seek to understand Christ better, and conform their lives to that knowledge of who He is

Jesus came to take away our sins

Only He could do that, since only He was sinless

6. vs. 6: John presents two types of people here

The first is the one who "lives in Him" (Christ)

Jesus said we are to remain in Him as He is the source of spiritual life (John 15:4-7)

We remain in Him by receiving His teachings and then obeying them

We won't ever be sinless (perfect) even by doing this

However, we do this to pursue lives of holiness and righteousness

Our heart's desire is to do this and be this, even if we never achieve it

The second type is the one who has never "seen Him or known Him"

John says this type of person is one who continues to sin

Since we claim to be in Christ still sin, what does he mean here?

John is addressing people in his day who have a false belief

These people thought they could know God but continue to live sinful lives

John says it's not possible to love God and love sin

7. vs. 7: Again here, John uses the phrase "dear children"

He reminds them repeatedly of the care he felt toward those he writes to

He was a spiritual father to these who have come to faith in Christ

Apparently some in their group have tried to teach things contrary to the truth

John warns his "children" against following these incorrect teachings

In the context of this passage, one of their teachings deals with righteousness

It looks like they were teaching one could be righteous without behaving righteously

A quick note about righteousness here

We can do nothing to make ourselves righteous—we are sinful

The only way to gain righteousness is through faith in Christ's sacrificial death

After gaining this righteousness, we are to live upright lives in obedience to Him

This is what John is saying in the last part of the verse

8. vs. 8: John shows the contrasting type of person—the one who willfully sins
This type of person willfully opposes God and His truth
There is a spirit of disobedience in this person (see Eph. 2:1-2)
There are only two sides: God’s and the devil’s
Another name for the devil is Satan, who opposes God and His people
His opposition comes through temptation
Believers are “not to give the devil a foothold” (Eph. 4:27)
We are, instead, to make every effort to resist the devil (Eph. 6:10-17, James 4:7)
John concludes this verse by stating that Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work
This He did by dying on the cross as a sacrifice for human sin
9. vs. 9: John doesn’t mean here that Christians will never sin again; that isn’t possible in this life
He means that we will not live a *life of sin*, a life that is devoted to sinful practices
We have been “born of God”, he reminds us
That means that the Holy Spirit is now in our lives, which He wasn’t before our salvation
It is only through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that we can fight sin
Rom. 8:5-16, Gal. 5:16-17
10. vs. 10: John presents here a way of determining which side one belongs to
A person’s actions reveal their allegiance
Doing what is right shows they are children of God
Not doing what is right marks people as children of the devil
John ends the verse by noting the loving of other members of the family
This love toward the brethren also marks us as members of God’s family
This rubric is clear, and it’s simple—pass/fail, on one side or the other

Application: God’s love has transformed us, but we are still affected by the presence of sin. Until Jesus’ return, we will fail to behave or love as we ought to. But in the meantime, God has given us tools to help us grow spiritually. He has given us His Spirit to transform us into Christ’s likeness. He provided us with a spiritual family to encourage us to live according to God’s standards and not our own.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for showing us such tremendous mercy by dying for our sins and bringing us into Your family. Thank you for forgiving us of the times we have sinned. Show us how we might better notice the Spirit’s leading so that we won’t remain in sin. In Jesus’ name, Amen.