

1 John 3 • Chapter Study

INTRO

John was the youngest of the disciples & began following Jesus at about 14.

He lived the longest of all of them & died of old age in the City of Ephesus at the end of the 1st C.
John not only got to **walk with & talk to** Jesus, he helped launch the Movement that came to be called **The Christian Church**.

And as a disciple, he understood **the goal** was to be Just like Jesus.
John had watched how **people changed** from their encounter with Christ.

Yes, there were some who went away the same.

But many others experienced a **profound change**, affected by their experience of Jesus.

John was one of them.

But the 3 yrs John spent w/Jesus, he also spent with a guy named **Judas Iscariot**.

The 12 disciples were a motely crew of very different guys who **never** would have paled around w/each other had it NOT been for Jesus.

But after they settled into their roles as His disciples, they accepted the fact that they were now **a team**.

None of them knew Judas was going to go so blatantly wrong.

At the Last Supper when Jesus told them 1 of them would betray Him, they were stunned & wondered aloud who it was.

They **didn't** all point at Judas & say, "It's gotta be that guy!"

As John penned this, his goal was to show what a genuine relationship w/God **looks like**; how it'll play out in our daily lives.

Jesus changes people! And if we've been born again, we'll live different from the world.

But there are Judases who may hang out with us for a while.

We need to be hip to their jive & not fall apart when they bail, as they inevitably will.

In vs. 1-9, John says just as children **look like** their parents, God's kids will "look" like Him

Not physically of course, but **spiritually & morally**.

¹ Behold

See! – Pay close attention to – Gaze steadfastly on
what manner

What **kind** – what **form**

of love the Father has bestowed on us,

Given – Deposited – Set on – Made over to –

John wants to be sure we're aware of just how **awesome & amazing** God's love is.

What it's done & the difference it's made.

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

"Called" doesn't mean merely "labeled."

The word refers to the call **to an assignment**.

Think of this call as the **issuing of an identity**.

All of what John writes here plays out against the backdrop of **ancient Roman adoption customs**.

The Jews didn't practice adoption.

Children who lost their parents were taken into the closest relative's family.

The Romans followed a highly formal custom of adoption.

Family was very important to the Romans so they didn't adopt as a general practice.

Abandoned children didn't fare well until the Christians came along.

If a Roman adopted, it was because some wealthy patrician had no heirs.

Passing on the family name, heritage, and estate was crucial.

So if a patrician had no heir, he'd adopt, not a child, but a young man.

They believed a child's personality was set at birth and parenting had little real impact.

So, it was too risky adopting a baby – you never knew what kind of a person it would grow up to be.

Romans adopted young men of proven character.

Once a patrician selected a young man to be his heir, he'd announce it to the city leaders, then in a formal

ceremony, the young man would be given a new set of clothes and a new name.

From that moment on, that young man was no longer considered adopted – He WAS in fact, the same as a biological child.

His **identity** changed **utterly** as he became a son of a new father.

That's the idea behind what John writes here.

Christian – realize what Love God's placed on you.

You've given a new identity as God's daughter or son.

The big difference between God's & Roman adoption is that God didn't choose us because of our great character!

He picked us by Grace – when we totally DIDN'T deserve it.

He picked us because by grace He saw what we WOULD become BY His adoption.

What John wants us to know is how God's giving us this new identity **sets us apart** from the world we're called OUT of.

Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

John **echoes** what Jesus warned in John 15:18-19 when He said the world would hate His followers because it hated Him first.

How crucial it is we remember we're the followers of Someone the World executed in the most heinous manner because it hated Him.

We can't truly be like Him & expect the world's admiration & acceptance.

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.

Even though we already are in fact the children of God, we're not in a final state.

That awaits our arrival in glory in heaven where we'll see Jesus face to face.

When John says in that day we'll be like Jesus, he doesn't mean we'll be gods.

Don't forget that Jesus retains His humanity and now in heaven he's in his resurrected body.

So will we be.

One of the things Christians love to ponder is **how old** we'll be in heaven.

How old will we be?

Will we be the 18 year old us, the 30 year old us, the age we are when we die or are raptured?

We'll be the person God created us to be.

Age won't have any relevance in eternity.

We'll have perfect bodies that realize the potential God created in us without any evidence of the Fall or sin.

Heaven will see the full use of all our faculties.

They say we only use 25-20% of our brain's capacity.

We'll have 100% of it – and it won't be like in the new movie **Lucy**.

We're going to NEED the full use of our brains in heaven because of all the wonders there.

Full use of our senses.

New bodies to enjoy the pleasure & glory.

³ And everyone who has this hope [the hope of heaven] in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

John knows those who yearn for heaven, who think about it often & stay reminded that's where they're headed, will exercise care in how they live here & now.

Have you heard the old dig, "you can be so heavenly minded you're of no earthly good?"

I supposed someone who **daydreams** a lot can do that.

But the fact is, it's been **precisely those** who thought much of heaven who've been of the MOST earthly good.

Tell me: Where are the **atheist** relief organizations;

The atheist **hospitals, orphanages, poverty remediation programs?**

Last time I checked it was called the **Red CROSS**, not the *Chartreuse Nothing*.

Even a cursory review of history reveals it was **Christians** who built the schools, colleges & universities.

Hospitals & orphanages.

Literacy & Feeding programs.

Installed child-labor laws & fought for better work conditions.

It was Christians who **led** in all these areas because their love of God resulted in a **love of & concern for** people.

In a more practical & daily application of v. 3 The reminder that at any moment we could find ourselves before God is a great motive for walking in holiness.

⁴ Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

This seems like a no brainer.

John has to spell it out because there were people who were **quibbling over terms**.

Sin is the Greek word **harmartia**.

You may have heard it was an **archery term** & meant to **miss the mark**.

In the **1st C** it described a warrior whose attack w/sword or spear missed his enemy.

It was also used for a traveler who missed the right path.

Lawlessness was far more serious than simple **ignorance** of the Law.

It was a **flagrant disregard** for it;

An **attitude of haughty indifference**,

A **disdain** for the law **& those who keep it**.

There were some in the Church who'd begun advocating an attitude of compromise & accommodation to the world.

They said the holiness advocated by the Apostles was too rigid, too strict & that it was getting Christians in trouble with the world.

If they would just ease u a bit and learn to go along with the flow, maybe they wouldn't face so much hostility from unbelievers.

You know – lighten up on the morality stuff.

In other words, there's a **certain level of sin** that ought to be tolerable, admissible.

Not outright lawlessness & rebellion mind you.

But let's just look the other way when it comes to visiting pagan temples, eating meat sacrificed to idols, & what consenting adults do in private.

John makes it clear that iniquity isn't 2-tiered.

There aren't some sins God gives a pass to while prohibiting others.

All sin IS lawlessness. It's all a flagrant violation of God's holiness.

It's something Jesus died for, so we also ought to die to IT!

Not play clever semantic games with the words we use to describe it. // Look

⁵ And you know that He was manifested [in the Incarnation] to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Jesus came to end sin – all of it.

If Jesus came to take away our sins, how can we justify clinging to them?

That's absurd!

⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Okay—this ha troubled not a few for the categorical way John delivers it.

Does this mean if I commit A moral failure after I profess faith in Christ, I'm not really BA?

This is where the **grammar** is crucial.

The tense of the verb "sin" is **present** & refers to continuous action.

An amplified translation of v6 is

"Whoever is abiding continuously in Christ does not constantly sin.

Whoever is continuously sinning has not had a saving encounter with Jesus."

Let me illustrate it this way: Can you take a walk in Central Park in NY & Plaza Park in Oxnard at the same time?

Of course not! Because to be in one is to automatically be excluded by geography from the other.

In the same way, if you are living in Christ & walking in the Spirit, you can't be living in the flesh & walking in sin because the 1 spiritually excludes the other.

A great gulf is fixed between them.

John ratchets up the intensity somewhat with the second half of v6.

He says the person whose lifestyle is marked by a pattern of consistent sin, hasn't even yet encountered

Christ.

Please understand John isn't saying those who are BA never sin.

Back in 1:8 he said those who say they don't sin occasionally are liars.

What John refers to here is the person whose regular mode of operation is sin.

They don't struggle with sin because it doesn't even register as something wrong.

On the contrary, they do their best to avoid anyone & any sitch where what they're doing may be called into question.

John was compelled to address all this because there was a movement afoot to redefine sin & the attitude Christians ought to have toward it.

⁷ Little children, let no 1 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.

We see once again that John makes a massive assertion of spiritual truth but feels no need to prove it.

This is true because it's what Jesus said so. // SoHey, that's good enough.

Not only was Jesus manifest to "**take away** our sins," as v. 5 says, He came to **destroy** the devil's works.

"**Take away**" means to **remove utterly**; to lift off & carry away.

We all have a big problem = Sin!

Jesus get's rid of that problem.

He lifts the guilt of our sin off us, carries it to the cross, and totally satisfies the righteous justice of God.

Then, that done, He goes to work by His Spirit to destroy the devil's works.

All the many ways sin and evil has infected us.

He heals our brokenness and makes us strong where we've been weak.

Ebola is a devastating disease that's killed over 900 in Africa now.

They have a promising new treatment that seems to be working on a few patients.

But the Ebola virus attacks healthy organs & literally **dissolves** them.

After the medication is given that kills the virus, the damage has been done to the body.

Only continuing treatment in a fully-equipped hospital can see a patient recover as new, healthy tissue replaces what was damaged.

You & I have been given the antidote to sin's poison; Jesus' blood.

The virus has been killed but it did a lot of damage to us and we bear the evidence of its ravages.

What we need to realize is that being a child of God means being in a really well-equipped spiritual hospital where we can recover – if we'll just submit to Dr. Jesus' ministrations.

He wants to give us a **heart & brain transplant**.

He wants to **heal** our **emotions & attitudes**.

He wants to give us **mouth to mouth** resuscitation.

A **spiritual CPR** so that our hearts beat with a new rhythm – in time w/His.

⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin [same as before – "continuously sin"], for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

The old life is dead & gone and the new life from Christ has come.

It's obvious by John's constant hammering of this there was a problem with some in the Church who'd taken a morally lazy attitude & said sin wasn't a big deal.

If sin wasn't a big deal then Jesus never would have come.

The Cross pretty much says it all about God's attitude toward sin.

Since we took an in-depth look at vs. 10-12 Sunday, we'll just read them tonight.

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.

Rather, we ought to **expect** the world's hatred as Jesus warned in John 15.

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.

Love for other believers is proof we've been BA.

A **lack** of such love is a worrisome evidence of a **lack** of spiritual life.

Don't miss how John links **righteousness & love**.

Righteousness w/o Love is just a **cold moralism**.

Love w/o Righteousness is nothing but **sloppy sentimentalism**.

Righteousness infused by Love; or Love operating thru Righteousness can change the world .

¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

This at first seems a gross overstatement until we remember something Jesus said in Matt 5:21-22 -

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, '**You shall not murder**, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Jesus says the motive for murder begins in the heart, w/an angry hatred!

John draws a contrast btwn vs14 & 15.

Those who possess eternal life are marked by love.

The **alternative** to love is hate; there's no middle ground.

Just as there's no middle ground btwn being saved & lost as we saw Sunday; there's no *gray zone* between love & hate.

There are various **degrees of hate**, just as there are different intensities of love.

But John's point is that **love for other believers** is THE determining factor on whether or not a person is truly BA.

Before we read the next vs, I want to say something important.

We're just going to read vs16-18.

I'm not going to explain or comment on them, except to tell a story.

These words really don't **need** any explanation.

They need obedience.

And sometimes I think we do a dis-service to a passage of God's Word by covering it with a lot of our own words.

So, again, let's just read it, then I'll share a true story this reminds me of.

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.

Some years ago, the pastor of a large church who was well-known as a gifted preacher, stood up on a Sunday morning to deliver the sermon.

He rarely disappointed so everyone expected another dynamic message.

He said, "Please turn to John 13:34-25" Then read

"Jesus said, 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'"

He looked out over the large congregation. They looked back expectantly.

But he just smiled and returned to his seat on the platform and sat down.

This was different.

Everyone assumed someone **else** was supposed to step up and say something.

Maybe the choir was going to sing a special number.

Maybe the youth group was going to come in and do a drama.

Nothing happened & several minutes passed.

The silence was uneasy. // It became downright awkward.

People began to mumble; a few grumbled.

Several cleared their throats or coughed.

Finally the pastor stood up and returned to the pulpit where he again read the text
“Jesus said, ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’”

People thought, “Okay, this time he’ll preach & tell us what all that was about.”

But he didn’t.

He returned to his seat and sat down, looking out at them w/a smile.

They went thru the whole ordeal a third time.

Then during the 3rd long season of sitting in a low murmur as people offered their ideas on what was going on, a woman got up from where she always sat, & walked down the aisle to where another woman sat; a 1-time friend she’d had a falling out with.

They’d not talked since.

She knelt down in the aisle and asked the other woman to forgive her & asked if they could pray together.

They held hands, bowed their heads, and were reconciled before their Lord.

Others sitting around them saw this & realized there were people in that room w/whom they had unfinished business.

They rose and sought them out and made things right.

Some knew of people in the church they could help with specific needs.

They rose and went to them offering assistance.

Those who couldn’t think of any of these needs for those present, just turned to each other and began conversations that turned into glorious times of prayer.

When it came time to wrap things up, the Choir rose & sang the final hymn.

As the pastor stood at the back door, the people left with tears in their eyes saying what an amazing service it had been.

They were surprised the next week when the pastor rose at sermon time to read the same passage, and again sat down just as the previous week.

The people stared back at him – and this time the looks weren’t of bewilderment.

In some cases it was anger / hostility.

You’re not supposed to give the same message 2-weeks in a row.

What did he think he was doing?

He knew what they were thinking. So after an uncomfortable period of silence & no one moving, he stood up, returned to the pulpit & said, “**Loving one another as Jesus commands us isn’t something we are to do 1 Sunday.**”

“**What I did last week wasn’t a clever trick; a pulpit stunt.**”

“**Jesus commands us to love one another & quite frankly, I don’t need to explain this or suggest ways to fulfill it. WE JUST NEED TO DO THIS – Today, tomorrow, and the day after that till we all go home to heaven!**”

Then he turned around, and went and sat back down.

Immediately people got up all over and began doing what they’d done the week before.

When they came to church the next Sunday, they didn’t even wait to be told; as soon as they arrived they began praying for and speaking to each other.

They had to be called to service, & asked to sit down so service could begin.

The life that broke out in the church transformed their entire City.

¹⁹ And by this [that is, a practical love for others] we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

Again, God’s kids love God & His people.

Having mentioned the **assurance** that comes from loving 1 another, John flips it to speak of a **lack** of assurance

²⁰ For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

Even the mature Christian who’s doing great in their walk with the Lord can have times of doubt.

Because when we’re at our very best, there’s still crud in there that bums us out.

And we can get so consumed by where we need yet to grow we forget how far we’ve come.

Never forget that you have an adversary who’s called the Accuser of the Brethren.

Even after you've just shown love to someone, he'll suggest you could have done MORE!

Should have done MORE.

When you find your emotions pulling you down, remember to trust God's WORD.

It is a spiritual life-preserver when the waves of depression and doubt threaten to drown you.

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.

If 16 year old Brittany is loyal to, honors & obeys her parents, she's not going to ask them for something contrary what they want for her.

Her requests will be an expression of her obedience & devotion.

It's the same with God's kids.

If we're walking in the Spirit, our requests will line up with His heart & will.

And central to His heart & will is abiding in Christ & loving each other.

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.

John keeps circling round the same issue.

True followers of Jesus truly follow Him. // They obey Him. They do what He says.

And pre-eminently what He says is to do what's right & love 1 another.

Jesus had made this real clear in John 14:23 -

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

God makes his home in us by His Spirit, whom John says has been given to us.