

## 1 John 3:1-3

“What Love Is This?”

It's a familiar scene, found in John Ch 3. Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees a leader among the Jews comes to Jesus under the cover of night requesting a personal and private meeting with Him. He begins to butter Jesus up a little bit in order to break the ice, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus quickly brushes aside the peripheral matters and gets right to the point, the primary concern that was resonating in the heart of Nicodemus. Jesus answered him and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus said listen Nicodemus, unless one is born of both the water *and* the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh (as Paul told the Corinthians flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God), this body as is can't make it to heaven, it's corrupt through a sin nature. So the nature I've been born with is unacceptable to God, I'm a sinner from conception. What then do I need to do? That was Nicodemus' question, I can't be *born again* physically...and that was exactly Jesus' point as well. “You're right; you can't be born again of the flesh, and even if you could be it wouldn't matter because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. (Throw approaching perfection through reincarnation out the window). However that which is born of the *Spirit* is spirit.” So in order to inherit the kingdom of God it's true, you've got to be born again, you can't make it as you are, but we're to be born again *of the Spirit*.

Nicodemus was still stumped, “How can these things be?” It's a great question really, “How is it that I can be born again of the Spirit?” I'm so glad that Nicodemus asked that question; it prompted the Lord to give him a powerful illustration of salvation by grace through faith. He said, “Nicodemus do you remember that passage found in the book of Numbers whereby the people were grumbling against God in the wilderness and so God sent fiery serpents among them (judging their sin as it were)? and God told Moses to fashion a bronze serpent upon a pole and lift it up in the midst of the camp and it would be that whoever would look upon that serpent would be saved, they wouldn't die. Even so Nicodemus the Son of man must be lifted up (a reference to the cross) so that whosoever will believe *in Him* should not perish but have everlasting life.”

“What’s that? You’re saying that the Lord was like that serpent that Moses fashioned and fastened to the pole so that if we (having been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin and are dying) would simply look *upon* and believe *in* Jesus we won’t perish but we’ll live, that is eternally? Forgiveness of sin and everlasting life, the born again dilemma is solved through faith in Jesus Christ?” That’s exactly what I’m saying? “How does that work?” I don’t know, it’s called God’s grace being accredited to you through faith in Jesus Christ who became sin for us upon that cross so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He was judged on our behalf and if we’ll just look upon Him, believe *in* Him we’ll be *born again* as by the Spirit. That’s the context that we’re coming into here in 1 John Ch 3. In Vs 29 of Ch 2 John said this...

### Vs29

Think it through, what kind of transaction takes place, what is the motivation that makes us children of God? Can I just say with out trying to be facetious or offensive, what kind of love would take *you*, think about who you are, not who people *think* you are. Who you really are, where you’ve been, what you’ve done, the things you’ve entertained in your heart. What kind of love would take such a one, such a one as you, such a one as *me*, and make me, make you a child of the Most High, Holy and Righteous; completely Pure God? You’ve been *born again* as by the Spirit of *God*...

### Vs1

A number of weeks ago we were watching the “Preach The Word” series on a midweek and Chuck Swindoll was sharing and he said that every now and then when it comes to the word of God we need to simply pause and “let the wonder in.” That’s the essence of this very 1<sup>st</sup> word here found in Vs 1 of Ch 3 of 1<sup>st</sup> John. “Behold...” and the word is in the plural form here meaning that John is calling upon *all the saints* to *wonder* at this particular kind of love that he’s drawing our attention to that God has bestowed upon us.

“Behold,” take it in, see it in your mind’s eye, perceive the magnitude of what God has done for you. God wants us to see it; He is not ashamed to call you His own, He’s not ashamed to be identified *with* us and to be a Father *to* us. Let that resonate in you...I think that if we were to simply tell the truth we’d say that there have been many times that *we’ve been* ashamed to be identified with God; and what for? Is it because of His love, perhaps it’s His grace, or His willingness to forgive, maybe it’s His honesty or integrity... you see I can’t think of a single reason that I would justifiably be ashamed of God. Yet I can think of *all kinds of reasons* that God could be justifiably ashamed of me, or ashamed of you, but He’s not. See that, be awed and overwhelmed by that. “Behold” the word even speaks of becoming acquainted with through experience. The call goes out to experience the manner of love that God has bestowed upon us.

Now with that we could almost take an evangelical spin couldn't we? Oh, we know that the interpretation of this Vs belongs to the believer, the child of God. Yet the appeal, the plea, the petition goes out, "Experience the magnitude and the manner of love that makes us children of God," that's a beckoning, a call that we could apply to *whosoever will*. Like those words found in the final Ch of our bible, Rev 22:17, "*And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*" "Come experience the love of God." Jesus says to those hungering for more than what this life has to offer, "*I am the bread of life.*" John 6:48 To those who've realized that the "wells of this world" don't quench their deepest thirst Jesus says, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*" John 7:37 To the weary and overwhelmed the offer is made, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Matt 11:28 "Come be refreshed in My love, come experience My love." It's a personal invitation.

Now listen, if the appeal is made to the unbeliever to come and experience the love of God, how much more should the *believer* be readily aware of and experiencing on an ongoing basis the overwhelming magnitude of God's love for them? You are His child...

John says, "Behold what *manner* of love." What does that mean, the *manner* of love?

The word *manner* speaks of a certain *quality* of love, literally John could be understood as saying, "Behold, from what country, or tribe?" "Behold what *foreign kind of love.*" The idea being that this kind of love that the Father has bestowed *upon* us is a love that's completely *foreign to* us, you might say that God's love is a love that is *out of this world*... It's not something that's found in humanity naturally, yet God wants us to know (experience) His love, to get a grip *on* it and be changed *by* it. This was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. He prayed for them in this way, "...*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*" Eph 3:17-19

God's love is different than man's love, it's an *unconditional* love. He doesn't wait for you to clean your act up before He starts loving you. He loved us before we were ever even aware of who He was, when we didn't care who He was. Paul tells us in the book of Romans, "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Rom 5:8 He didn't wait for us to turn *toward* Him, or reach out *to* Him, He didn't wait until we wanted to be right *with* Him, He died for us while we were still His enemies standing *against* Him. What love is this...it's too high for me.

The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) isn't really the story of a wayward and returning son so much as it is of a loving father. It points us to the heart of God that says, "When you've had your fill of the world I'll be waiting here for you ready to receive you, just come home."

Perhaps you're familiar with the prophet Hosea. God had him marry a woman who was a prostitute. After they'd been married for awhile and had a couple of kids she went back to work...as a prostitute. God told Hosea that rather than get rid of her He wanted him to pursue her and take her back to himself and love her. Why? Because Hosea's marriage was a picture to the nation of Israel of their relationship to God, how they were unfaithful to Him, but He still continued to *love* them and was ready to receive them if they would but *return* to Him, He was pursuing them. God loves us unconditionally.

2<sup>ndly</sup> He loves us *sacrificially*. The world's kind of love is give and take; "I'll do something *for* you as long as I receive something in return *from* you." God's love is completely one sided, it's only *give*. We opened this morning considering the context of John Ch 3; it's there that we read that God has so *loved* the world that He (what) *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him would never perish but have everlasting life. We just quoted Rom 5:8, while we were still sinners Christ *died* for us. He loves us sacrificially, He gives unsparingly.

He loves us *continually*, it doesn't wax and wane, come and go, it's unending. Isaiah 49, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;" Isa 49:15-16 Jesus will bear the marks of His love for you throughout eternity...Leave 1<sup>st</sup> John and turn to Romans Ch 8 (Vs 35-39) God loves us *continually*, that is, *eternally*.

On and on we could go; He loves us *truthfully, compassionately, tenderly*, though we don't deserve it personally, yet His love is one that *forgives* us *faithfully*. Time would fail us to speak of the manner of love with which God has love us. Yet this love God has just *bestowed* upon us *liberally*, the word bestowed speaks of *lavishing richly*, wave upon unrelenting wave of this kind of love has been *lavished* upon you in Christ.

The word *bestowed* also has the idea of a one-sided giving, it's not a return for something earned; your boss doesn't *bestow* your paycheck upon you, you've earned it; God gives what we don't deserve. Listen, try and absorb what I'm saying to you, take it in, allow it to permeate you, penetrate and infiltrate you, think about it, be blown away by it...

Then let this sweep you away into new heights altogether; as if the all giving, self sacrificing, never relenting love of God wasn't enough, God takes it yet another step further and through such love makes us His very own, that is His sons, and daughters.

“That we should be called the children of God!” Think about it you guys, was it absolutely necessary for God to make us His sons and daughters to save us? God might have been moved by pity, or some form of charitable compassion and through that set a plan of salvation in motion that would've made us His objects of pity throughout eternity and we'd have been grateful even for that! But He went beyond that, He's made us His children, it's a demonstration of how deep His love for us is.

Perhaps you've seen a guy on the side of the road holding the sign, “Will work for food” “Please help, disabled veteran” or whatever. You see him all the time but one day your heart stirs in you, you turn your car around and you don't give him money but you say, “Hop in.” He gets in and you take him to your house and you say, “I have a guest home and I'm going to let you stay there, you're not going to need to be out on the street anymore, the closet is full of clothes, there's food in the pantry, help yourself and just live there from now on.” I think that if you were to do that any of us here would say, “Wow, you've gone way above and beyond the call of duty, you've blessed him immeasurably.” Who wouldn't be thankful for such a rescue, who wouldn't be filled with gratitude for such a gesture of kindness?

But that's not what God did, God took the guy on death row who was there because he murdered His Son, and He not only forgave Him, He took him and *didn't give him a place in the guest house* but rather took him into His own very home; said, “You're going to eat at My table and I'm going to adopt you as my very own child and make you a member of my immediate family. All that's Mine is your inheritance.” As much as we were *against* Him and running away *from* Him He was all the more *for* us and reaching out *to* us; and being in Christ we gain something much greater than Adam ever possessed. We never read of Adam being called a “child of God” not in the sense that John is speaking of here. He was never adopted as a son of God as believers are in Christ. Don't think of redemption as simple a restoration of what Adam lost, we gain way more in Christ than Adam *ever* lost...

Every now then you'll hear someone say something like, “Well, we're all God's children.” They mean that God created us all therefore we're all His children, that's not true. There are children of God and there are children of this world who ultimately are children of the devil (as we'll see in Vs 10). God gave Jesus for the sins of the world, but that doesn't make all the world His children, what makes us God's children is receiving Christ into our hearts, being *born again*. John 1:12-13, “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”

“Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” “The world” speaking of those who are a part of the system that stands in opposition to God as defined in Vs 15-17 of Ch 2. The foreign kind of love that God has bestowed upon us and placed within us through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives makes us strangers and foreigners to the world. I don’t know if you’ve ever been in a foreign country where the people aren’t like you, they don’t speak your language; it can make you real nervous. People in the world have a tendency to get real nervous around Christians. We’re different; not weird or eccentric, but peculiar nonetheless. Therefore the world will treat you different, look at you different, think of you differently.

Ultimately we shouldn’t expect that the world would treat us any better than it treated Jesus. Jesus said, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”* John 15:18-20 Which is to say that there will be those who respond positively (and we’re fishin for those folks all the time), but by and large people will reject both you and what you have to say and in some cases it can get hostile. We’re in the world, but we’re not of the world so the world has a hard time trying to figure out what to do with us. Generally they pin all their problems on us, we have the solution but we’re framed as the problem.

Vs2

We weren’t the children of God before, but we are now, and you’ll never be more of a child of God than you are right now if you’re in Christ. Your present standing is *clear* (you’re a child of God), however our future destiny is *clouded*. Oh, we’ll still be God’s children, but as for what exactly takes place once we leave these bodies behind is a bit of a mystery. We don’t have the details that we’d like concerning exactly what we’ll become when we’re with the Lord. The bible gives us hints here and there, it speaks vaguely but not clearly as we’d like. In 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 15 Paul speaks in agricultural terms, the planting of a seed, it goes into the ground one way, but surfaces from the ground in completely different way, it’s still what it is, but it’s been changed. So to in the resurrection, our bodies are in “seed form” now, it hasn’t been revealed what we *will* be. Right now it’s like seeing through a glass darkly, but on that day we’ll see clearly.

However having said that the bible is not elusive at all about God's plan for us ultimately; God has a plan for you now which will culminate in eternity, what does God desire for you presently? This may sting a little but it's not to create circumstances that surround you that keep you happy continually, it's not to ensure that you're a success financially, it's not to make sure that you're always in the best health physically. His plan is to make you like Jesus specifically. Remember these words? Rom 8:29, "*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,*" God's ultimate goal for your life is to make you like Jesus, it begins here, it's fulfilled there; that it when you see Him. "We know that when He is revealed (be it when He receives us personally, or at the rapture of the church collectively) we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Again that doesn't mean you'll cease being yourself, your personality and character will be intact. You won't be a "clone" of Christ, but you'll be made perfect; like Jesus.

I love the idea of being like Jesus, because the more I learn of Him the more impressed with Him I become. Can I just say that it doesn't work like that for any other person who's ever lived or ever will live. The more you get to know me, the more disillusioned you'll become with me. You'll start to see my flaws, the cracks in my armor, the way I don't always hit the mark but fall so often short of it. The same holds true for you, the more I get to know the real you, the more I'll realize you're a whole lot like me, faults and frailties included. However that's not true regarding Jesus, the more I learn *of* Him, the more I study *about* Him, the more impressed I become *with* Him. I can't wait to see Him...

"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." What that means is that we in essence *must* be made like Him in order to see Him as He is. Because no one can see Him and live, but when we're made like Him we'll be able to behold Him as He is.

You guys I'm of the persuasion that perhaps the greatest glory of heaven will be just that; it won't be the gate of one enormous and beautiful pearl, it won't be street made of gold that is so pure that it's clear, it won't be the foundations of precious gems, it won't be the angelic hosts and the various magnificent creatures we see in the book of Revelation, the crystal sea and the river of Life. All of that's wonderful I'm sure it'll take our breath away, even seeing our own glorified bodies will blow our minds, and seeing those whom we love who've gone before us in Christ. But all of that will pale (at best) in comparison to being in the unhindered, in no way restricted presence of our Lord as He is.

I think the application can be made fairly noting the connection that John made between seeing Jesus as He is and being made like Him that even now to the degree that we see Him as His is, to that same extent we'll be like Him in our lives today. You meet someone who doesn't *know* Jesus, doesn't act anything *like* Jesus, it's because they've never truly *seen* Jesus. The more we *see* Jesus as He is, the more the transformation takes place in our lives that makes us *like* Jesus.

Vs3

Few things here then we're done. 1<sup>st</sup> of all I always think it's important to draw attention to the word "hope" when we find it in our bibles. Because biblical hope is not an "optimistic wish," that's the way we have a tendency to view the word "hope," like it's an optimistic wish, it may happen, it may not, but we're wishing optimistically that it will. The bible doesn't employ the word "hope" like that in any way, shape or form. Biblical hope speaks of guaranteed certainty, a concrete reality, there's no room for even a notion of doubt when it comes to biblical hope.

So John is saying here that when our hope is in Christ, when we have the hope (the certainty, the guaranteed reality) that when we see Him we'll be like Him that it yields a certain consequence in our lives. What is that? What is the ramification of having the guaranteed expectation of being like Christ when I get to see Him face to face? Purification, it will produce purity in my life. The process of me decreasing and Him increasing, of me leading a life of real time holiness in the here and now, it brings about a certain sense of accountability, causing me to lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily ensnares me that I might run with endurance the race that's set before me, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of my faith.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing I was going to share with you I just did, when it comes to our hope as believers we need to realize our hope isn't heaven, it's not a place, or a certain premise or possession, our hope is a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ Our hope of being made *like* Christ is found specifically in the Person *of* Christ trusting that He who began a good work in me will be faithful to complete it.

Finally I want you to note who this promise pertains to, this promise of purity through hope in Jesus Christ ... "Everyone," there's no so much as a single exception, if you love the Lord, and have placed your hope *in* the Lord, it will show in your life, you can't hide it, things change, you'll start looking less like you and more like Jesus, you'll decrease and He'll increase in your life.

All of this (you guys) is to remind us of the Father's love for us, it's the love of God that sent Jesus to die *for* us, it's the love of God that longs to have a relationship and to live eternally *with* us, it's the love of God that makes children *of* us. Salvation from the beginning to the end is an expression of God's love. Oh, it's by grace *that we're saved*, (love can't save you, grace can) but the provision for our salvation *originated* in God's love.

“What love is this?” It's the love of God, let it wash over you, renew and restore you, rejoice in it, thank God for it...

#### Prayer Points:

God how can we hear such things and not want to worship You and praise You with all that we are? Help us O God that we not keep silent, but that worship would ascend from our hearts, from our lips unto Your throne, and may it be as a sweet aroma unto You. Jesus help us to see You, to maintain our hope *in* You that we might be more *like* You and lead lives that are pure *before* You. Teach us what it means to decrease, to die to self that You might increase in our lives to the glory of Your name.

You know ultimately God will give to man exactly what they want. If they want to *see* Jesus as He is, and become *like* Jesus, God will honor that and affirm them in that. If they don't want to be like Jesus, God will honor that, and affirm them in that; but the call goes out, whosoever will may come. Last time I checked “whosoever” meant “whosoever,” the offer is on the table. You can submit your life to Christ, be forgiven of your sin and made brand new, You can experience the love of God for yourself, you don't have to just hear about it, you can know it for yourself. Or you can walk out of here and choose to simply let these things fall to the wayside but not really take root in your heart. God loves you so much, why resist it, why reject it, why not receive it right here, right now, today?

