

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**11-1-17**

**1 John 3**

***Children of God - Verses 1-10***

<sup>1</sup> See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. <sup>4</sup> Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup> Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup> The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. <sup>9</sup> No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. <sup>10</sup> This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

**3:1** As believers, our self-worth is based on the fact that God loves us and calls us his children. We are his children now, not just sometime in the distant future. Knowing that we are his children should encourage us to live as Jesus did. For other references about being part of God's family, see Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26-27; 4:6-7.

Verse 1 tells us who we are—members of God's family, "children of God." Verse 2 tells us who we are becoming—reflections of God. The rest of the chapter tells us what we have as we grow to resemble God: (1) victory over sin (3:4-9); (2) love for others (3:10-18); and (3) confidence before God (3:19-24).

**3:2-3** The Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ (see Romans 8:29). This process will not be complete until we see Christ face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12; Philippians 3:21), but knowing that it is our ultimate destiny should motivate us to purify ourselves. To purify ourselves means to keep morally straight, free from the corruption of sin. God also purifies us, but there is action we must take to remain morally fit (see 1 Timothy 5:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22).

**3:4** There is a difference between committing a sin and continuing to sin. Even the most faithful believers sometimes commit sins, but they do not cherish a particular sin or continually choose to commit it. A believer who commits a sin can repent, confess it, and find forgiveness. A person who continues to sin, by contrast, is not sorry for what he or she is doing. Thus, this person never confesses and never receives forgiveness. Such a person is in opposition to God, no matter what religious claims he or she makes.

**3:5** Under the Old Testament sacrifice system, a lamb without blemish was offered as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Because Jesus lived a perfect life and sacrificed himself for our sins, we can be completely forgiven (2:2). We can look back to his death for us and know that we need never suffer eternal death (1 Peter 1:18-20).

**3:8-9** We all have areas where temptation is strong and habits are hard to conquer. These weaknesses give the devil a foothold, so we must deal with our areas of vulnerability. If we are struggling with a particular sin, however, these verses are not directed at us, even if for the time we seem to keep on sinning. John is not talking about people whose victories are still incomplete; he is talking about people who make a practice of sinning and look for ways to justify it.

Three steps are necessary to find victory over prevailing sin: (1) Seek the power of the Holy Spirit and God's Word; (2) stay away from tempting situations; and (3) seek the help of the body of Christ—be open to their willingness to hold you accountable and to pray for you.

**3:9** "No one who is born of God will continue to sin" means that true believers do not make a practice of sinning, nor do they become indifferent to God's moral law. All believers still sin, but they are working to gain victory over sin. That God's seed remains in them means true believers do not make a practice of sinning because God's new life has been born into them.

**3:9** We are "born of God" when the Holy Spirit lives in us and gives us Jesus' new life. Being born again is more than a fresh start; it is a rebirth, receiving a new family name based on Christ's death for us. When this happens, God forgives us and totally accepts us; the Holy Spirit gives us new minds and hearts, lives in us, and begins helping us to become like Christ. Our perspective changes, too, because we have a mind that is renewed day by day by the Holy Spirit (see Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24). So we must begin to think and act differently. See John 3:1-21 for more on being born again.

### **When We Practice Real Love- Verses 11-18**

<sup>11</sup> For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup> Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. <sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other.

Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. <sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

**3:12-13** Cain killed his brother, Abel, when God accepted Abel's offering and not his (Genesis 4:1-16). Abel's offering showed that Cain was not giving his best to God, and Cain's jealous anger drove him to murder. People who are morally upright expose and shame those who aren't. If we live for God, the world will often hate us, because we make them painfully aware of their immoral way of living.

**3:15** John echoes Jesus' teaching that whoever hates another person is a murderer at heart (Matthew 5:21-22). Christianity is a religion of the heart; outward compliance alone is not enough. Bitterness against someone who has wronged you is an evil cancer within you and will eventually destroy you. Don't let a "bitter root" (Hebrews 12:15) grow in you or your church.

**3:16** Real love is an action, not a feeling. It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others. How can we "lay down our lives"? By serving others with no thought of receiving anything in return. Sometimes it is easier to say we'll die for others than to truly live for them—this involves putting others' desires first. Jesus taught this same principle of love in John 15:13.

**3:17-18** These verses give an example of how to "lay down our lives" for others—to help those in need. This is strikingly similar to James's teaching (James 2:14-17). How clearly do your actions say you really love others? Are you as generous as you should be with your money, possessions, and time?

#### **Courage Before God - Verses 19-24**

<sup>19</sup> This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: <sup>20</sup> If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup> Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God <sup>22</sup> and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. <sup>23</sup> And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. <sup>24</sup> The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

**3:19-20** Many are afraid that they don't love others as they should. They feel guilty because they think they are not doing enough to show proper love to Christ. Their consciences bother them. John has these people in mind in this letter. How do we escape the gnawing accusations of our consciences? Not by ignoring them or rationalizing our behavior but by setting our hearts on God's love. When we feel guilty, we should remind ourselves that God knows our motives as well as our actions. His voice of assurance is stronger than the accusing voice of our conscience. If we are in Christ, he will not condemn

us (Romans 8:1; Hebrews 9:14-15). So if you are living for the Lord but feeling that you are not good enough, remind yourself that God is greater than your conscience.

**3:21-22** If your conscience is clear, you can come to God without fear, confident that your requests will be heard. John reaffirms Jesus' promise that whatever we ask for will be given to us (Matthew 7:7; see also Matthew 21:22; John 9:31; 15:7). You will receive if you obey and do what pleases him because you will then be asking in line with God's will. Of course this does not mean that you can have anything you want, like instant riches. If you are truly seeking God's will, there are some requests you will not make.

**3:23** In the Bible, a person's name stands for his or her character. It represents who he or she really is. We are to believe not only in Jesus' words, but also in his very person as the Son of God. Moreover, to believe "in the name" means to pattern your life after Christ's, to become more like him by uniting yourself with him. And if we are living like Christ, we will "love one another."

**3:24** The mutual relationship, living in Christ as he lives in us, shows itself in Christians who keep these three essential commands: (1) Believe in Christ, (2) love the brothers and sisters, and (3) live morally upright lives. The Spirit's presence is not only spiritual and mystical, but it is also practical. Our conduct verifies his presence.