

TO KNOW CHRIST JESUS IS TO KNOW TO LOVE

1 John 3:1-10

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 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. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 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. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

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.

It has been said by many teachers or preachers of the Word of God, and I have even said it myself, that for a new believer, that is, a new Christian, it is best to start (in reading the Bible), in the book of John. It is not because John dumns down the gospel of Christ, by oversimplifying the truth of the gospel, but that by his personal encounter with Christ, and his passionate love for Jesus, as Jesus expressed His love for him, and then through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John leads his readers to understand the great love of God that He has for us, as he narrates his account of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in how the love of God is the key element to the gospel of Christ Jesus. John also expresses, with great passion, the love of God, in his first epistle or **1 John**. The book of John is a narrative of the ministry of Jesus with His disciples where 1 John gets down to explaining the love of God and how it pertains to us. John leads us to know and understand of God sending His Son Jesus to die on a cross for our sins (**John 3:16-17**). We can rejoice today, not **just** because Jesus died on a cross for our sins, but that He then rose from the dead on the third day, conquered death (and the devil) and has given us great hope that we too will overcome death (and evil), that is for all who believe on Christ and receive Him, we will have eternal life in Christ Jesus.

As a side note, throughout the Old Testament, you can see how Satan, the devil, tried to kill off the bloodline of Christ. That is one

theme that runs throughout the Old Testament. As that didn't work out for the devil, so he then sought to kill Jesus, beginning with having King Herod kill all of the male children, 2 years old and younger (**Matthew 2:16**). Yet Jesus took the love of God all the way to the cross, to die on a cross, taking our sins with Him to the grave AND He then conquered death and the devil-therein lies our faith! "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (**Romans 8:34-36**) Nevertheless, to know Christ Jesus is to know of the great love of God that He has for us!

The Apostle Paul knew also of the great love of God, for His people, and expresses it beautifully in the book of Romans. He also knew all too well what it means to have to suffer for the sake of Christ, as did the Apostles. Praise the Lord, that He is perfect in all His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**), which includes His great mercies and grace - in His longsuffering and love towards us. When we believe on, and receive Christ, He then works in us His perfectness in character which includes His longsuffering. While our journey in this life can at times seem long and arduous, this is truly just a blip in God's time. I don't know about you but I look forward to leaving behind this evil world and dwelling in the fullness of the glory and goodness and the love of God. Yet we can, and are expected to, even now, seek God to abide in His glory, goodness, and love. It just isn't in His fullness---not yet. We can be reminded of what God spoke through Jeremiah the prophet saying, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." (**Jeremiah 29:13**) Likewise, the writer(s) of Hebrews states that "he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (**Hebrews 11:6**) As the saying goes, you're going to get out of it what you put into it. I don't see those rewards as primarily being of a material nature, though God does bless us in that too, but I look at it as wanting and receiving more of Jesus-more of Him and His glory and goodness and love AND His longsuffering aka patience **to be able to overcome this world and all of its evil**, all the while being a blessing to God and to others. Getting a nice, new, big truck or a fancy mansion with a pool in the back isn't going to help me or anyone to overcome this world and all of its evil.

We know that the goodness of God first leads us to repentance (**Romans 2:4**), to have a change of mind to no longer live for sinning against God but to live for Him, in His Righteousness, as John put it in **1 John 2:15-16**, to not love the world or the things of the world but to seek to do the will of God. It is up to us though, to determine for

ourselves, if we want His Righteousness, and then to live in it. As the Apostle Paul tells us, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (**Romans 8:14**). He will lead us to spend time with Him in His Word, spend time with Him in prayer & worship, but it is then up to us to do just that. I'm not speaking about us **just** getting saved. That is important but God, through His Word, is telling us that we are to recognize Him as not only our Savior but also as our Lord and God who loves us this much [arms stretched out] and that He wants to abide in us, as Jesus said, "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." (**John 14:23**) My home isn't anywhere in Florida. It is in Him! We are to be reminded that He is our Way, Truth, and Life and that no one can get to God but through Him. (**John 14:6**) Jesus is not just a one-time experience of enlightenment. As Jesus also tells us, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (**John 15:5**) Jesus is supposed to be our Savior, Lord, and God. He is intended to be our Way, Truth, and Life because HE IS the Way, Truth, and Life!

Clarifying that whole process is summed up succinctly in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, [here it is!] which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." God's plan for us is to abide in Christ Jesus, which means through the good times and the bad, whether in the joy of the Lord or in His longsuffering. To go along with that is what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, that God, through Christ, is our 1. Wisdom 2. Righteousness 3. Sanctification 4. Redemption. THAT is what Paul is referring to as His workmanship. Think of it like this: By the revelation that comes from the Holy Spirit, He gives us wisdom to accept the free gift of God, His Righteousness, in Christ Jesus, and then He sets us apart to live in His Holiness, and we begin to live in our Redemption in Christ Jesus! That is what He is always working in us! It is then in our fellowship with God in Christ that we then love God, trust God, and honor Him which leads us to be living what Jesus said was the greatest commandment, to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then also to love others as ourselves. (**Mark 12:30-31**) It is not something that we can muster up within ourselves. When Jesus said "the kingdom of God is within you", (**Luke 17:21**) it is widely accepted to be more properly translated, especially in the context that Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, as "the kingdom of God is among you" or "in your midst". Even so, we are given the ability within our hearts and minds to know, by the revealing that comes from the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle Peter proclaimed, that Jesus indeed is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" AND that He is among us, even now!

For those of us who have believed on Christ and received Him, it is then through the Holy Spirit, that He works in us, the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) That is the evidence that is revealed to ourselves, as well as to others, of our being a child of God! Not that we are just doing a bunch of works in serving God, which can be all good, but that He is becoming us, in our minds and hearts! Paul tells us in **Romans 8:15-17**, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**" Through good and bad, times of evil and times of joy, Jesus is there with us, and experiencing what we are going through. It is truly in our fellowship with Christ, that His Spirit testifies to our Spirit that we are His children, as He becomes us, and we can rejoice in the Lord always (**Philippians 4:4**) as we are saved by the blood of the Lamb! We aren't just being obedient to be saved - we are being obedient because we are saved and are a child of God!

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (**Romans 8:35-39**) That process begins in our believing on and the receiving of Christ. "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." (**John 1:12-13**)

When Paul wrote to "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!", he continues with a great word of comfort, saying, "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 4:5-7**)

Getting to our Scripture in **1 John 3:1-10**, the Apostle John emphasizes two major themes throughout the epistle of **1 John**. **1**. The love of God and **2**. sin. One thing that helps in our understanding of 1 John is what has been noted by Bible scholars. John was addressing a rising sect of belief that was labeled as Gnosticism. **1 John 1:8-10** says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the

truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." Then in **1 John 2:1**, John assures God's children again saying, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Praise the Lord for His mercies and His grace. Yet then John uses a phrase such as in **1 John 3:6**, "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him." That can certainly take the wind out of someone's sails, to where you won't be rejoicing in the Lord always. For us, we should know and understand that God does indeed hate sin. He has called us "out of the darkness and into His marvelous light". (**1 Peter 2:9**) We have even been told by Jesus Himself to "**seek first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness**". (**Matthew 6:33**) As John mentions several times, we are to be practicing righteousness, not sin.

To address what appears to be a contradiction in Scripture, to where John seems to be saying that a child of God does not sin and then also says that if we do sin we have an advocate in Christ Jesus. The Expositor's Bible Commentary says this, "This verse [3:6] seems to contradict 1:8-10. However, ... the author simultaneously faced two different problems [involving the beliefs of] Gnosticism. There were those who claimed to be sinless by nature, ie, they were unable to sin because they were "born of God". There were others who claimed a standing with God apart from a life of righteousness."¹ Both of those ideas were false and it is possible obviously to sin after becoming "born-again" but that we are intended by God to not sin-that is in our covenant agreement with God, that we desire His Righteousness and forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:15-17**, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, **for instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" Yet we can't taken one verse and make it say what we want it to, it has to agree with the whole of Scripture. The Bible is God's instruction manual for us. Throughout the Word of God we can see His redemptive plan for mankind. His Word is "living and active" and you begin to experience that by having a sincere heart in diligently seeking Him. What we are ultimately being led to understand and believe on is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and then we are receiving His Holy Spirit, also referred to as the Spirit of Christ, to establish a covenant relationship between us and God through Christ, and we then are to live in Christ-in His Righteousness. As Paul said in **Ephesians 1:13-14**, "In Him [Christ Jesus] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were

1 Expositor's Bible Commentary, New Testament, pg. 1095.

sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession [we are His purchased possession], to the praise of His glory." To those who believe on Christ and receive Him, you are a very much beloved child of God, you are God's prized possession!

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 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." You see how, for someone that doesn't love God and doesn't want to live in His Righteousness, how that just wouldn't out for them. As God begins working in us His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, as He begins to work in us the fruit of the Spirit, He becomes us. Not that we aren't still our own person, but that we are becoming perfected in Him. Sometimes, at least it has been for me, a painful process-like growing pains. Yet, as His Way, Truth, and Life works in us, we just KNOW, that He is the WAY we should go and who we should become, to be like Jesus. John explains, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. [You recall how Jesus said in the last of days lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold? (**Matthew 24:12**)] It is though true, as John stated, Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins [practices and continues to sin] has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 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. Whoever has been born of God does not sin [practices and continues to sin], for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin [practice and continue to sin], because he has been born of God." The opposite then of practicing evil is in practicing righteousness-which is really living in HIS Righteousness. We purify ourselves by allowing ourselves to be purified in His Righteousness, His Holiness.

We are being called by God to love Him with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, as He loves us and then to love others as ourselves, AS HE LOVES THEM. John says, "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. 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? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." Therefore, it can be said, to know Christ Jesus is to know the love of God, so let us rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!