

# 1 John 3:1 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[1 John 3:1](#)  
[1 John 3:2](#)  
[1 John 3:3](#)  
[1 John 3:4](#)  
[1 John 3:5](#)  
[1 John 3:6](#)  
[1 John 3:7](#)  
[1 John 3:8](#)  
[1 John 3:9](#)  
[1 John 3:10](#)  
[1 John 3:11](#)  
[1 John 3:12](#)  
[1 John 3:13](#)  
[1 John 3:14](#)  
[1 John 3:15](#)  
[1 John 3:16](#)  
[1 John 3:17](#)  
[1 John 3:18](#)  
[1 John 3:19](#)  
[1 John 3:20](#)  
[1 John 3:21](#)  
[1 John 3:22](#)  
[1 John 3:23](#)  
[1 John 3:24](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 3:1 **See how great** a **love** the **Father** has **bestowed** on us, **that** we would be **called children** of **God**; and such **we are**. For **this reason** the **world** does **not know** us, **because** it did **not know** Him. (**NASB: Lockman**):

**idete** (2PAAM) [potapen agapen dedoken](#) (3SRAI) [hemin o pater hina tekna theou klethomen](#): (1PAPS) [kai esmen](#). (1PPAI) [dia touto o kosmos ou ginoskei](#) (3SPAI) [hemas hoti ouk egno](#) (3SAAI) [auton](#).

**Amplified:** SEE WHAT [an incredible] quality of love the Father has given (shown, bestowed on) us, that we should [be permitted to] be named and called and counted the children of God! And so we are! The reason that the world does not know (recognize, acknowledge) us is that it does not know (recognize, acknowledge) Him. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ASV:** Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

**BBE:** See what great love the Father has given us in naming us the children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not see who we are, because it did not see who he was.

**CEV:** Think how much the Father loves us. He loves us so much that he lets us be called his children, as we truly are. But since the people of this world did not know who Christ is, they don't know who we are. ([CEV](#))

**GWT:** Consider this: The Father has given us his love. He loves us so much that we are actually called God's dear children. And that's what we are. For this reason the world doesn't recognize us, and it didn't recognize him either. ([GWT](#))

**ICB:** The Father has loved us so much! He loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children. But the people in the world do not understand that we are God's children, because they have not known him. ([ICB: Nelson](#))

**ISV:** See what kind of love the Father has given us in letting us be called God's children! Yet that is what we are. For this reason the world doesn't recognize us, because it didn't recognize him either.

**KJV:** Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

**Macent:** Consider what proof the father has given us of his love, in allowing us to be called the sons of God: therefore the world does not know us, because it knew him not.

**MLB** (Berkley): SEE WHAT a wealth of love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God. And we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

**Moffatt:** Think what a love the Father has for us, in letting us be called 'children of God!' That is what we are. The world does not recognize us? That is simply because it did not recognize him.

**Montgomery:** Behold what manner of love the Father has given us in allowing us to be called "Children of God!" And that is what we are. For this reason the world does not recognize us, because it did not know him.

**NCV:** The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children. The reason the people in the world do not know us is that they have not known him. ([NCV](#))

**NET:** (See what sort of love the Father has given to us: that we should be called God's children--and indeed we are! For this reason the world does not know us: because it did not know him. ([NET Bible](#))

**NIV:** How great is the 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. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NJB:** You must see what great love the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God's children—which is what we are! The reason why the world does not acknowledge us is that it did not acknowledge him. ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called "children of God" - and that is not just what we are called, but what we are. Our heredity on the Godward side is no mere figure of speech - which explains why the world will no more recognize us than it recognized Christ. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**TEV:** See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children—and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God.

**TLB:** See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children—think of it—and we really are! But since most people don't know God, naturally they don't understand that we are his

children.

**Weymouth:** See what marvelous love the Father has bestowed upon us—that we should be called God's children: and that is what we are. For this reason the world does not recognize us—because it has not known Him.

**Wuest:** Behold what exotic love the Father has permanently bestowed upon us, to the end that we may be named children of God. And we are. On this account the world does not have an experiential knowledge of us, because it has not come into an experiential knowledge of Him.

**Young's Literal:** See ye what love the Father hath given to us, that children of God we may be called; because of this the world doth not know us, because it did not know Him;

**See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are: idete (2PAAM) potapen agapen dedoken (3SRAI) hemin o pater hina tekna theou klethomen (1PAPS) kai esmen (1PPAI):**

- 1Jn 4:9,10; 2 Sa 7:19; Ps 31:19; 36:7, 8, 9; 89:1,2; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 8:32; Ephesians 2:4,5; 3:18,19
- **Children** - Jer 3:19; Hos 1:10; Jn 1:12; Ro 8:14, 15, 16, 17,21; 9:25,26; 2Cors 6:18; Galatians 3:26,29; 4:5,6; Rev 21:7
- 1 John 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

1 John 3:1-3 would make a pithy and powerful sermon series which could be titled (credit to Dr Warren Wiersbe)...

## **1Jn 3:1: WHAT WE ARE**

## **1Jn 3:2: WHAT WE SHALL BE**

## **1Jn 3:3: WHAT WE SHOULD BE**

[Click to listen](#) to the timeless, raspy voiced exposition of 1Jn 3:1 by Dr J Vernon McGee

Keep the context in mind, remembering that John has just written these words...

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices (present tense = their lifestyle, it does not mean "perfection" but "direction" of their life - toward heaven rather than toward hell!) righteousness is born of Him. (1Jn 2:29)

In light of this truth about their new birth, John is prompted to explain that the basis for this new birth is the Father's great love by which He has made sinners His children. This truth distinguishes believers from unregenerate men and women of this fallen world and this distinction has significant spiritual consequences which he will explain.

As **MacDonald** puts it...

The thought of being born of God (1Jn 2:29) arrests John with wonder(**Ed: Beloved, when was the last time thoughts of your own "new birth" "arrested" you with wonder? This should be our continual mindset!**), and he calls on his readers to take a look at the wonderful love that brought us into the family of God. Love could have saved us without making us children of God. But the manner of God's love is shown in that he brought us into His family as children. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Hiebert** entitles this next section...

**The dynamic reality of the new life** (1Jn 3:1-2). Having become members of God's family through the new birth, believers find that their new life has **deep present** as well as **future significance** (**Ed: Perhaps you are in a state of despair - you need to read that previous sentence again!**). John calls upon his readers to contemplate the amazing reality of present membership in God's family (1Jn 3:1a), reminds them that this explains the reaction of the world toward them (1Jn 3:1b), and stresses that this new life as God's children has present and future implications (1Jn 3:2). ([The Epistles of John An Expository Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) (Bolding added)

**LOVE:**  
**BEHOLD IT!**

## MEDITATE ON IT!

**See how great a love** - Not just "love" but "**great love**"! John wants the children of God to take a supernatural (Spirit enabled) glimpse into the Father's supernatural love for us. **Beloved, have you ever asked Him to illumine this great truth in your mind and heart?** What will happen to our thoughts, words and deeds when He answers affirmatively? (cp 1Jn 5:14,15-note) Will not we "fall on our face" at having been shown to be unworthy benefactors of His ineffable, infinite, invaluable, never failing love? Will not this sense of His love poured out in our heart by His Spirit motivate us to live for Him rather than for ourselves?(!) ([Newsboys - Amazing Love](#)) ([Chris Tomlin - Amazing Love](#))

[And Can It Be That I Should Gain](#)

[Charles Wesley](#)

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

In the following passage, note that one "result" of **Paul's great prayer** for the saints at Ephesus is a **knowledge of the love of Christ** which "**surpasses knowledge**" (talk about mystical and supernatural!)...

For this reason (**Why?** see Ep 3:13), I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to (**not a portion of but proportionate to**) the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, (**What does God's love do for us here? Or how "foundational" is His love?**) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know **the love of Christ** (cp 2Co 5:14) which **surpasses knowledge**, (**And what is the purpose of this "surpassing knowledge" of Christ's love?** Paul explains... ) that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. (**Can we be confident that God will answer this incredibly rich prayer? How does Paul address that question?**) Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21-see notes)

And again notice what **Paul** prays for the saints at the church at Philippi...

And this I pray, that **your love may abound still more and more** in real knowledge (**i.e., based on truth like 1Jn 3:1, et al**) and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ (cp 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:3-note) (**Notice how a discerning, knowledge of God's love is the wellspring from which flows an obedient, holy life, even until the day we see our Lord face to face!**); having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Php 1:9, 10, 11-see notes) (**Are we beginning to see Paul's emphasis on the importance of a saint's deep understanding of God's love?**)

## FIRST LOVE: REMEMBER IT!

See the fearful exhortation of our **Lord Jesus Christ** to the **church at Ephesus** wherein He emphasizes the importance of believers continually recalling to their mind the **love of God** and conducting themselves in concord with this love (cp 2Co 5:14)...

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

**But** (Introduces a radical change of direction in His exhortation!) I have this against you, that you have **left (left, not lost!)** your **first love**.

**Remember** (present imperative = **command from our Lord to keep on remembering - we are all prone to forget, with the result that our heart and our love grows cold toward our Bridegroom Jesus and we begin to wonder and to wander! Ready recall reaps righteous "running"** - cp He 12:1-note) therefore from where you have fallen, and **repent** (aorist imperative = command from the Captain of the hosts [Jos 5:14,15] demanding our urgent, immediate attention and obedience! Don't procrastinate! Don't delay! Delay is disobedience!) and **do** (aorist imperative = **see previous note**) the deeds you did at first (**When He poured His love into your heart** [Ro 5:5-note, cp 1Jn 4:10] **and you first fell in love with Jesus**); **or else** I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.

Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God. (Rev 2:1-7, see notes [Re 2:1](#), [2:2](#), [2:3](#), [2:4](#), [2:5](#), [2:6](#), [2:7](#))

**Comment (Tony Garland's comments below on Rev 2:4-note are worth pondering):**

The disturbing reality is that it is possible to think one is actively "serving God," but without a true relationship with Him (**Ed**: Reference is to Jesus' words in Mt 7:21, 22, 23-note). Even in the case where we begin following after Him, **time and circumstances often turn our hearts aside**. (**Ed**: "Amen" or "Oh my!")

When Solomon grew old...

his wives **turned his heart after other gods**; and **his heart** was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the **heart** (cp 1Sa 13:14, Acts 13:22) **of his father David** (1Ki 11:4).

Our priority must ever be **relationship** over **service** (works). This is the essential message of the incident involving Mary and her sister Martha related by Luke. Martha's priority was serving whereas

Mary... sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word (Lk 10:39).

Martha was so focused on serving that she missed a golden opportunity to listen to her Lord. Jesus summarized the actions of the two sisters:

Martha, Martha, you are worried (merimnao [word study] from merizo = to divide - picture of a "divided" mind!) and troubled (turbazo = noise, uproar, disturbance - English "turbid"! ) about many things. But **one thing** is needed (chreia [word study]), and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:41, 42).

Time spent sitting at the Master's feet will never be taken away from us. Although some fret that such time reduces our ability to serve, the result is actually the opposite. Our devotion, motivation, and understanding of God are deepened causing an increase in the fruit of God's ministry through us.

**Our ministry and service must be grounded in and out of our love for Him** (Heb 6:10-note, He 6:11, 12-note).

We are "priests to His God," our primary focus is God-ward, only then man-ward. **Instead of waning, our love for Him is to be continually increasing** (Php 1:9-note).

The Ephesian church had lost its focus. They had taken their eyes off of Jesus (cp He 12:2-note) and were now focusing on their works done for His name. **This is the essence of idolatry**.

The condition of the Ephesian church at the time of John appears considerably different to that when Paul wrote his epistle. "See the **Ephesians' first love**, Eph 1:15-note. This epistle (Revelation) was written under Domitian, when thirty years had elapsed since Paul had written his Epistle to them."

**Lesson? Application?** Beware of the deceptive delusion of doing rather than being. The first command was, is and always will be "You shall **love the LORD your God** with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mk 12:30)

**See (Behold - KJV) (3708)** (idete - verb = **horao**) means to discern clearly (physical or mental), and does not call for the reader to merely "see", but also to have an actual perception of the object.

When **horao** is used of seeing God it also conveys the idea of knowing Him (i.e., horao is rendered "see" or "seen" and is coupled with knowing in the following = Jn 1:18; 14:7, 9; 1Jn 3:6; 4:20; 3Jn 1:11) and knowing His character as in the present context where

believers are charged to "see and behold and know" His great attribute of amazing, "other worldly" love (see short summary of God's attribute of **Love**).

Notice that John uses the **aorist imperative** which is a command calling for the reader to give immediate, effective, even urgent attention. Here's the idea...

**Stop everything else!**  
**Look at this!**  
**Think about it!**  
**Ponder its significance!**

John also uses the **plural** (of **See**) which calls for all of his readers to take a "heart moving look at the the amazing love which gave them membership in God's family" (Hiebert) Click [Alexander Maclaren's practical application of John's charge to "See"!](#)

**Wuest** adds that...

**Behold** is plural here, literally, "**behold ye**." The usual form is singular. John is calling upon **all the saints** to wonder at the **particular** (**Ed**: distinctive, noteworthy, remarkable, singular, uncommon, unique, special, exceptional, "peculiar" [in a good sense of course]) kind of love God has bestowed upon them. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Erdmans](#))

**By way of application, let me "put in a plug" for the spiritual discipline of Biblical Meditation (see also Meditate - but don't just read about it -- delight to do it that you might be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water (Ps 1:2-note, Ps 1:3-note) and that you might be careful to do according to all that is written in God's Word (~God's will), for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (Joshua 1:8-note)**

**Jackman** rightly says of the command to "**see**" that...

The force is that we need to take time to contemplate this love and allow its reality to sink down into the depths of our being. (**Amen!**) (The Bible Speaks Today) (Related Resources: Meditate; Primer on Biblical Meditation)

**Steven Cole** makes the point that it is sad but true of our human nature that...

Some things grow commonplace over time. We've heard about them and known them for years. Maybe at first, when it was new, an idea or experience affected us. But over the years, the effect grows weaker and weaker, until finally it's just a far-distant memory. **But the Father's great love for us is the kind of experience that should grow stronger and stronger over the years, until it totally dominates every aspect of our lives.** It should consume our thoughts and control our behavior (cp 2Co 5:14). It should motivate us to serve God and to live holy lives. It should give us comfort in all our trials. It should fill us with the eager hope of being with Him in heaven. It should fill us with awe and worship, that He, the holy sovereign of the universe, would set His love on a sinful, self-willed rebel like me! "[Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou, my God, should die for me!](#)" Don't let yourself ever hear of the Father's great love and think, "Ho hum!" It ought always to amaze you. ([The Father's Great Love](#)) (Bolding and color added)

**Spurgeon** in expositional notes comments on 1John 3 that it...

is a chapter in every word and a sermon in every letter. How it opens with a "**Behold!**" because it is such a striking portion of sacred Scripture, that the Holy Ghost would have us pay particular attention to it. "**Behold!**" says He,

**"read other Scriptures if you like, with a glance, but stop here. I have put up a way-mark to tell you there is something eminently worthy of attention buried beneath these words."**

**"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us."** Consider who we were, and who we are now; ay, and what we feel ourselves to be even when divine grace is powerful in us. And yet, beloved, we are called **"the sons (children) of God."** It is said that when one of the learned heathens was translating this, he stopped and said,

No; it cannot be; let it be written 'Subjects,' not 'Sons,' for it is impossible we should be called 'the sons of God.'

What a high relationship is that of a son to his father! What privileges a son has from his father! What liberties a son may take with his father! and oh! what **obedience** the son owes to his father, and what **love** the father feels towards the son! But all that, and more than that, we now have through Christ. "**Behold!**" ye angels! stop,



ye seraphs! here is a thing more wonderful than heaven with its walls of jasper. **Behold**, universe! open thine eyes, O world. "**Behold**, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Well, we are content to go with Him in his humiliation, for we are to be exalted with him.

"**Beloved, now are we the sons (children) of God.**" That is easy to read; but it is not so easy to feel.

### "Now are we the sons (children) of God."

How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow and suffering? "Now are you a son of God." Does corruption rise within your spirit, and grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? "Beloved, now are you a son of God." Does your faith almost fail you? and are your graces like a candle well nigh blown out by the wind! Fear not, beloved; it is not your graces, it is not your frames, it is not your feelings, on which you are to live: you must live simply by naked faith on Christ.

### Beloved, now are we the sons (children) of God."

With all these things against us, with the foot of the devil on our neck, and the sword in his hand ready to slay us—beloved now in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—now, as much in the valley as on the mountain, as much in the dungeon as in the palace, as much when broken on the wheel of suffering as when exalted on the wings of triumph—"beloved, now are we the sons of God."

"Ah!" but you say, "see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright; my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory." But read the next: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." We are not so much like him now, but we have some more refining process to undergo, and death itself, that best of all friends, is yet to wash us clean. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

## AN ASTONISHING LOVE!

**How great** (4217) (**potapos** possibly from **pote** = interrogative adverb [when?] + **pou** = where?) is firstly an interrogative adjective which means "of what sort or what kind?" (speaking of quality). When **potapos** is used (as in the present passage) in an exclamation, the context conveys the sense of admiration = "how great!"; "how wonderful!"; "how glorious!" (cp Mk 13:1) **John Stott** says **potapos** always implies astonishment.

**Vine** says it means "primarily, **from what country**," then, **of what sort**...

**Steven Cole** - It's as if John thinks about the Father's great love and says, "Where does this come from? It must be from heaven, because there's nothing like it in this world!" ([The Father's Great Love](#))

**Potapos** - 7x in 6v - Matt 8:27; Mark 13:1; Luke 1:29; 7:39; 2 Pet 3:11; 1 John 3:1. NAS = how great(1), what kind of(2), what sort of(1), what sort of person(1), what wonderful (2). Potapos is not found in the non-apocryphal Septuagint.

**Wuest**... comments on **how great** ("what manner of" 1Jn 3:1KJV)

"What manner of" is potapēn, "from what country, race or tribe?" The word speaks of something **foreign**. The translation could read, "Behold, what **foreign** kind of love the Father has bestowed upon us." The love of God is **foreign** to the human race. It is not found naturally in humanity. When it exists there, it is in **asaved** individual, and by reason of the ministry of the **Holy Spirit**. Smith suggests, "from what far realm? What unearthly love,... how other-worldly." ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

**Hiebert** notes that potapos...

implies a reaction of astonishment, and usually of admiration, upon viewing some person or thing. The expression conveys both a qualitative and quantitative force, "what glorious, measureless love!" This love, originating with God, ever seeks the true welfare of those being loved; it is amazing in-deed when we remember the personal destitution of those He loves. God's is a love that works visible, transforming results in the lives of its recipients. ([The Epistles of John An Expositional Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

## LOVE: FROM THE FATHER

**Love** (26) (**agape**) is unconditional, sacrificial love and Biblically refers to a love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that God demonstrates (Ro 5:8-note, Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and that God enables in His children (see note on fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22note).

**Agape** may involve emotion, but it **must** always involve **action**. **Agape** is unrestricted, unrestrained, and unconditional. **Agape** love is the virtue that surpasses all others and in fact is the prerequisite for all the others. Jesus when asked

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" replied "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment." (Mt 22:36, 37, 38)

**John** explains **love** in this letter noting that...

by this (by what? read on... ) the love of God was manifested (phaneroo = made visible) in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son (Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature [Heb 1:3-note] and He as the very personification of divine love shows us the Father's love) into the world so that we might live through Him (He is our life - Col 3:3-note? **Who is living your life today beloved?**) The only way to live an "other worldly", supernatural, **Christian** life is to surrender your rights each day and allow Him to live through you! cp Ro 12:1-note). In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us (Note that agape love is not manifest by gushy feelings, but an "action" verb, which gives without expectation of return or even of reception!) and sent His Son to be the propitiation (fully satisfactory sacrifice - the justice of the Father has been satisfied by the perfect sinless sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jn 1:29, 36) for our sins. (1Jn 4:9, 10)

**Steven Cole** offers the following practical applications of this section...

The Father's great love should instruct us about our relationships with one another. This is the apostle Paul's thought in Ephesians 5:1, 2 (notes),

Therefore **be** (**present imperative** = command for this to be our lifestyle, our general pattern - our direction not perfection) imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Imitate God by walking in love, with Christ's sacrifice on the cross as your great example! If you need more specifics about what walking in love really looks like, go to Paul's great chapter on love (1Cor 13:4-8a - see notes 1Co 13:4 v5-6 v7-8). He writes,

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (**Ed: Notice that love is defined by verbs not adjectives!**)....

Can you substitute your name in place of '**love**'? ("Steve is patient," etc.) Those qualities should increasingly describe your relationships with others, beginning with those that you live with.

We're all prone to excuse our lack of love by blaming those that we are supposed to love. We say,

"I am usually a very loving person, but if you knew how unloving my husband is, you'd understand why I treat him as I do."

Or,

"I work long hours to provide for my wife, but all she does is gripe and criticize me. Sure, I'm mean and angry sometimes, but who wouldn't be?"

But such excuses don't hold up because such unloving behavior does not in any way resemble God's great love for you. Where would you be if God made up excuses for why He should withhold His love from you? He doesn't need to make up excuses—He has legitimate reasons why you do not deserve His love! He would have been completely justified to leave you in your sins, with no remedy. But, instead, He so loved you that He sent His only begotten Son to bear the penalty that you justly deserved. Now He says,

"Imitate My love by loving those who are insensitive, mean, and unloving toward you."

John's words here also apply to how we as earthly fathers relate to our children. All of biblical parenting can be summed up in one sentence: Love your children as the heavenly Father loves you. Such love involves proper correction and discipline, of course. But, I think that most Christian parents fall short primarily in the realm of love, not discipline. God lavished His love and grace on us in Jesus Christ. As Christian parents—especially as fathers—we need to lavish grace and love on our children. It will motivate them to follow Christ far more



than strict rules ever will. I'm not saying that there is no need for rules. I am saying that if your children feel your love for them, the need for rules is greatly diminished. So John shows us that the Father's great love should both amaze and instruct us. Stop and behold it often! (Bolding and Links added) ([The Father's Great Love](#))

**Alexander Maclaren** has these devotional thoughts on the **love** that **is bestowed**...

We are called upon to come with our little vessels to measure the contents of the great ocean, to plumb with our short lines the infinite abyss, and not only to estimate the quantity but the quality of that **love**, which, in both respects, surpasses all our means of comparison and conception. Properly speaking, we can do neither the one nor the other, for we have no line long enough to sound its depths, and no experience which will give us a standard with which to compare its quality. But all that we can do, John would have us do—that is, look and ever look at the working of that love till we form some not wholly inadequate idea of it.

**We can no more 'behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us' than we can look with undimmed eyes right into the middle of the sun.** But we can in some measure imagine the tremendous and beneficent forces that ride forth horsed on his beams to distances which the imagination faints in trying to grasp, and reach their journey's end unwearied and ready for their task as when it began. Here are we, ninety odd millions of miles from the centre of the system, yet warmed by its heat, lighted by its beams, and touched for good by its power in a thousand ways. All that has been going on for no one knows how many aeons. How mighty the Power which produces these effects!

**In like manner, who can gaze into the fiery depths of that infinite Godhead, into the ardours of that immeasurable, incomparable, inconceivable love?** But we can look at and measure its activities. We can see what it does, and so can, in some degree, understand it, and feel that after all we have a measure for the Immeasurable, a comparison for the Incomparable, and can thus 'behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us.'

So we have to turn to the work of Christ, and especially to His death, if we would estimate the love of God. According to John's constant teaching, that is the great proof that God loves us. The most wonderful revelation to every heart of man of the depths of that Divine heart lies in the gift of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle bids me 'behold what manner of love.' I turn to the Cross, and I see there a love which shrinks from no sacrifice, but gives 'Him up to death for us all.' I turn to the Cross, and I see there a love which is evoked by no loveliness on my part, but comes from the depth of His own Infinite Being, who loves because He must, and who must because He is God. I turn to the Cross, and I see there manifested a love which sighs for recognition, which desires nothing of me but the repayment of my poor affection, and longs to see its own likeness in me. And I see there a love that will not be put away by sinfulness, and shortcomings, and evil, but pours its treasures on the unworthy, like sunshine on a dunghill. So, streaming through the darkness of eclipse, and speaking to me even in the awful silence in which the Son of Man died there for sin, I 'behold,' and I hear, the 'manner of love that the Father hath bestowed upon us,' stronger than death and sin, armed with all power, gentler than the fall of the dew, boundless and endless, in its measure measureless, in its quality transcendent—the love of God to me in Jesus Christ my Saviour.

**In like manner we have to think,, if we would estimate the 'manner of this love,' that through and in the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ there comes to us the gift of a divine life like His own.** Perhaps it may be too great a refinement of interpretation; but it certainly does seem to me that that expression 'to bestow His love upon' us, is not altogether the same as 'to love us,' but that there is a greater depth in it. There may be some idea of that love itself being as it were infused into us, and not merely of its consequences or tokens being given to us; as Paul speaks of 'the love of God shed abroad in our hearts' by the spirit which is given to us. At all events this communication of divine life, which is at bottom divine love—for God's life is God's love—is His great gift to men.

Be that as it may, these two are the great tokens, consequences, and measures of God's love to us—the gift of Christ, and that which is the sequel and outcome thereof, the gift of the Spirit which is breathed into Christian spirits. These two gifts, which are one gift, embrace all that the world needs. Christ for us and Christ in us must both be taken into account if you would estimate the manner of the love that God has bestowed upon us.

**We may gain another measure of the greatness of this love if we put an emphasis—which I dare say the writer did not intend—on one word of this text, and think of the love given to 'us,' such creatures as we are.** Out of the depths we cry to Him. Not only by the voice of our supplications, but even when we raise

no call of entreaty, our misery pleads with His merciful heart, and from the heights there comes upon our wretchedness and sin the rush of this great love, like a cataract, which sweeps away all our sins, and floods us with its own blessedness and joy. The more we know ourselves, the more wonderingly and thankfully shall we bow down our hearts before Him, as we measure His mercy by our unworthiness.

From all His works the same summons echoes. They all call us to see mirrored in them His loving care. But the Cross of Christ and the gift of a Divine Spirit cry aloud to every ear in tones of more beseeching entreaty and of more imperative command to 'behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.' (The Love That Calls Us Sons )

**The Father** - This description is at the end of the Greek phrase which gives emphasis to God as a Giver Who is also a Father. This emphasizes the intimate relation He has with His sons and daughters, a relationship which is so profound and deep and undeserved that it simply causes one to fall down and worship!

## LOVE: A GIFT

**Bestowed** (1325) (**didomi**) means to give, to bestow, to confer, to make a present of, to put something into another's possession. Didomi also conveys the added sense that the granting is based on a decision of the will of the Giver (in this case our Father) and not on any merit of the recipient (saved sinners). This love is a gift and which cannot be earned or purchased (it is priceless)! Beloved, don't fall into the trap even after salvation of trying to earn the Father's love! You can't do it! God bestows it upon those who do not deserve it (which sounds a lot like grace!)

The 1828 Noah Webster's Dictionary has an excellent definition of **give** as "to pass or transfer the title or property of a thing to another person without an equivalent or compensation". What a great description of the Father's gracious love. And this great love is not just for time but for eternity as indicated by the **perfect tense**, which signifies past completed action with ongoing effect/result! His love lavished upon saved sinners (cp grace lavished Ep 1:8-note) will endure throughout the ages. This love of which believers have become benefactors is a permanent gift. **Glory!**

**Wuest** adds that the ...

The **perfect tense** is used here to indicate that the gift becomes a permanent possession of the recipient. God has placed His love upon the saints in the sense that they have become the permanent objects of His love. One of the results of this love in action is that we are called **sons of God**.

Smith says: "The purpose of this amazing gift; a wise, holy love, concerned for our highest good, 'not simply that we may be saved from suffering and loss, but in order that we may be styled children of God.'

And we have not only the name but the character: '**so we are**.' ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

**Vincent** notes an interesting subtlety...

Emphasizing the endowment of the receiver. Compare **charizomai** [**word study**], from **charis** grace, favor, which emphasizes the good-will of the giver. See Gal. 3:18; Php. 2:9-note; Php 1:29-note.

**On us (hemin)** - Not on "**you**" but "**us**" - Thus John reflecting his humility includes himself among the recipients of this amazing love.

Paul describes **us** in Romans 5 as those who were **helpless, ungodly** (Ro 5:6-note), **sinners** (Ro 5:8-note), and **enemies** (of God - Ro 5:10-note), toward whom He choose to demonstrate "His own **love**" (Ro 5:8-note) and within whose hearts His **love** was "poured out... through the Holy Spirit who was given to **us**." (Ro 5:5-note)

**That** (2443) (**hina**) is explanatory, clarifying the love that the Father has given to His children.

**Alexander Maclaren** has an interesting thought on **that** writing that...

The text is, I suppose, generally understood as if it pointed to the fact that we are called the **sons of God** as the great exemplification of the wonderfulness of His **love**. That is a perfectly possible view of the connection and meaning of the text.

But if we are to translate with perfect accuracy we must render, not **that we should be called**, but 'in order that we should be called the sons of God.' The meaning then is that the love bestowed is the means by which the design that we should be called His sons is accomplished. What John calls us to contemplate with wonder and gratitude is not only the fact of this marvellous love, but also the glorious end to which it has been given to us and works. There seems no reason for slurring over this meaning in favour of the more vague 'that' of our

version. God gives His great and wonderful love in Jesus Christ, and all the gifts and powers which live in Him like fragrance in the rose. All this lavish bestowal of love, unspeakable as it is, may be regarded as having one great end, which God deems worthy of even such expenditure, namely, that men should become, in the deepest sense, His children. It is not so much to the contemplation of our blessedness in being sons, as to the devout gaze on the love which, by its wonderful process, has made it possible for us to be sons, that we are summoned here. (The Love That Calls Us Sons)

**Called** (2564) (**kaleo**) means to speak to another in order to bring them nearer, either physically or in a personal relationship, clearly the latter in this context. Undeserving sinners are called out of the morass of the miserable multitude and made sons and daughters of the Most High God (see **El Elyon: Most High God - Sovereign Over All**). As believers, we have been invited into His "palace" and given entree (freedom of entry or access) into the King's chamber (cp Ro 5:1-note, Ro 5:2-note, cp bold access into the Holy of holies, Heb 4:16-note). **Is this truth not beyond our finite comprehension beloved?**

## CHILDREN OF GOD

**Wiersbe** rightly reminds us that **children of God**

is not simply a high-sounding name that we bear; it is a reality! We are God's children! We do not expect the world to understand this thrilling relationship, because it does not even understand God. Only a person who knows God through Christ can fully appreciate what it means to be called a child of God. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

**Children** (5043) (**teknon** [4x 1Jn = 1Jn 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2] from **tikto** = to bring forth or bear children ) literally refers to those who are "born ones" and in the plural (**tekna**) refers to descendants, posterity or children, those viewed in relation to their parents or family. Here **teknon** is used figuratively to refer to those who have by grace through faith been born (by the Spirit - Jn 3:5, 6, 7, 8, Ep 2:8, 9-note) spiritually (Jn 1:12). How can we be certain we are children of the Living God? (See 1Jn 2:29, 3:7, 9, 10, 5:2, et al - present tense = as one's general lifestyle!) The Holy Spirit bears testimony to our human spirit that we are children of God, and our Spirit-energized spirit thus joins the Holy Spirit in a joint-testimony to that fact (Ro 8:16, 17-note)

Note that **children** (**teknon**) occurs while the related word "**little children**" (**teknonion**) occurs in 1Jn 2:1, 2:12, 2:28, 3:7, 4:4, 5:21.

**John** explains how this supernatural adoption into God's family has miraculously transpired writing that...

as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even 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 (It was God's plan for our life from the beginning - let us gratefully worship Him Ro 11:36-note). (Jn 1:12, 13)

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices (present tense = as one's general lifestyle!) righteousness is born of Him. (1Jn 2:29)

**Teknon** - 99x in 91v -

Matt 2:18; 3:9; 7:11; 9:2; 10:21; 15:26; 18:25; 19:29; 21:28; 22:24; 23:37; 27:25; Mark 2:5; 7:27; 10:24, 29f; 12:19; 13:12; Luke 1:7, 17; 2:48; 3:8; 7:35; 11:13; 13:34; 14:26; 15:31; 16:25; 18:29; 19:44; 20:31; 23:28; John 1:12; 8:39; 11:52; Acts 2:39; 7:5; 13:33; 21:5, 21; Rom 8:16f, 21; 9:7f; 1 Cor 4:14, 17; 7:14; 2 Cor 6:13; 12:14; Gal 4:19, 25, 27f, 31; Eph 2:3; 5:1, 8; 6:1, 4; Phil 2:15, 22; Col 3:20f; 1 Thess 2:7, 11; 1 Tim 1:2, 18; 3:4, 12; 5:4; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4, 6; Philemon 1:10; 1 Pet 1:14; 3:6; 2 Pet 2:14; 1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2; 2 John 1:1, 4, 13; 3 John 1:4; Rev 2:23; 12:4f

**And such we are** - Note that this phrase does not appear in the KJV (Textus Receptus) but is considered authentic by the modern critical manuscripts and this is found in most of the modern translations.

**Hiebert** comments that...

These words, "**and such we are**" (kai esmen, "**and we are**"), emphatically declare that we are not merely God's children in name but in reality. They express a ringing note of assurance, encouraging and strengthening the readers. Lias notes that "the words 'children of God' were no mere title, but the expression of a fact, a fact which was to colour all their thoughts and actions, to banish superstitious fear, and to fill them with a thought of ever-present love, which should sustain them in all the trials and distresses of the world." ([The Epistles of John An Expository Commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

**Alexander Maclaren** comments on **and such we are** noting that...

these words come with a very great weight of manuscript authority, and of internal evidence. They are parenthetical, a kind of rapid 'aside' of the writer's, expressing his joyful confidence that he and his brethren are sons of God, not only in name, but in reality. They are the voice of personal assurance, the voice of the spirit 'by which we cry Abba, Father,' (Gal 4:6, Ro 8:15-note) breaking in for a moment on the flow of the sentence, like an irrepressible, glad answer to the Father's call. With these explanations let us look at the words. (The Love That Calls Us Sons)

**Cole** comments that...

John adds, "and such we are" (the KJV and New KJV omit these words, but there is solid manuscript support for them). The idea is that we not only have the name or title, "children of God," but that that title reflects our true condition. Through His power, God causes us to be born again through His Holy Spirit (see John 3:1-8; Jas 1:18-note; ; 1Pet. 1:3-note; 1John 2:29; 3:9, 10; 5:1, 18). He imparts new life to us, so that we are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. We actually become partakers of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4-note), although we never become "gods" in any sense. But, we share His very life. ([The Father's Great Love](#))

**C H Spurgeon** (Morning and Evening) exhorts us to...

Consider who we were, and what we feel ourselves to be even now when corruption is powerful in us (Like the hymn "prone to wander, Lord I feel it... "), and you will wonder at our adoption (**Amen to that!**). Yet we are called "**the sons of God.**" (Ro 8:14-note, Ro 8:19-note, Gal 3:26). What a **high relationship** is that of a son, and what **privileges** it brings! What care and tenderness the son expects from his father, and what love the father feels towards the son! But all that, and more than that, we now have through Christ. As for the temporary drawback of suffering with the elder brother, this we accept as an honour:

**"Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."**

We are content to be unknown with Him in His humiliation, for we are to be exalted with Him.

**"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."**

That is easy to read, but it is not so easy to feel. How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow? Does corruption rise within your spirit, and grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? Does your faith almost fail you? **Fear not, it is neither your graces nor feelings on which you are to live: you must live simply by faith on Christ.** With all these things against us, now-in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be-now, as much in the valley as on the mountain,

**"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."**

"Ah, but," you say, "see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright; my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory. " But read the next: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him. " The Holy Spirit shall purify our minds, and divine power shall refine our bodies, then shall we see Him as He is.

---

**1John 3:1a Octavius Winslow** (Daily Walking with God - SEPTEMBER 13)

IT is not strange that the fact of his adoption should meet with much misgiving in the Christian's mind, seeing that it is a truth so spiritual, flows from a source so concealed, and has its seat in the profound recesses of the soul. The very stupendousness of the relationship staggers our belief. To be fully assured of our divine adoption demands other than the testimony either of our own feelings, or the opinion of men. Our feelings—sometimes excited and visionary—may mislead; the opinion of others—often fond and partial—may deceive us. The grand, the divine, and only safe testimony is "**the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit**" (Ro 8:16-note)

There exists a strong combination of evil, tending to shake the Christian's confidence in the belief of his sonship.

#### **SATAN**

**Satan** is ever on the watch to insinuate the doubt. He tried the experiment with our Lord: "If You be the Son of God." In no instance would it appear that he actually denied the truth of Christ's Divine Sonship; the utmost that his temerity permitted was the suggestion to the mind of a doubt; leaving it there to its own working. Our blessed Lord thus assailed, it is no marvel that His disciples should be exposed to a like assault.

## THE WORLD

The **world**, too, presumes to call it in question. "The world knows us not, because it knew Him not." Ignorant of the Divine Original, how can it recognize the Divine lineaments in the faint and imperfect copy? It has no vocabulary by which it can decipher the "new name written in the white stone." (Re 2:17) The sons of God are in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (Php 2:15), illumining it with their light, and preserving it by their grace, yet disguised from its knowledge, and hidden from its view.

## SELF

But the **strongest doubts** touching the validity of his adoption are those engender in the believer's own mind. Oh! there is much there to generate and foster the painful misgiving. We have said that the very greatness of the favor, the stupendousness of the relationship, startles the mind, and staggers our faith. "What! to be a child of God! God my Father! can I be the subject of a change so great, of a relationship so exalted? Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You should exalt me to be a King's son? (cp 2Sa 9:1-13, 8, 11 - see **Mephibosheth** and also see discussion of Mephibosheth in connection with **Covenant: Withholding Nothing from God**) Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?" And then, there crowd upon the believer's mind thoughts of his own sinfulness and unworthiness of so distinguished a blessing. "Can it be? with such a depravity of heart, such carnality of mind, such rebellion of will, such a propensity to evil each moment, and in everything such backslidings and flaws, does there yet exist within me a nature that links me with the Divine? It seems impossible!" And when to all this are added the varied dispensations of his Heavenly Father, often wearing a rough garb, assuming an aspect somber, threatening, and crushing, oh, it is no marvel that, staggered by a discipline so severe, the fact of God's love to him, and of his close and tender relation to God, should sometimes be a matter of painful doubt; that thus he should reason—"If His child, reposing in His heart, and sealed upon His arm, why is it thus? Would He not have spared me this heavy stroke? Would not this cup have passed my lips? Would He have asked me to slay my Isaac, to resign my Benjamin? All these things are against me." **And thus are the children of God constantly tempted to question the fact of their adoption.** (Octavius Winslow. Daily Walking with God)

---

On the chapel wall at Eagle Village, a residential treatment center for boys near Hersey, Michigan, hang the portraits of two twelve-year-old boys—Rick and Rosy. The pictures bring to mind a tragedy that happened several years ago. Boys from Eagle Village were on a canoe expedition on Lake Superior when they pulled ashore to make camp. Rosy spotted something floating in the water, so he pushed off in a canoe to retrieve it. Strong winds quickly blew him offshore. The staff recognized his peril and started off in two canoes to rescue him. When Rick saw that his best friend was in danger, he insisted on going along. The wind tossed all three canoes until finally they capsized. The staff members all made it to shore. But Rick and Rosy were both lost in the depths of Lake Superior. A plaque between the pictures is inscribed: Rick, who loved enough to give his life for another. Rosy, who was loved enough to have another pay that price.

This story calls to mind "what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us." (1Jn 3:1) He loved us enough to give His Son to die as payment for our sin. And we were loved enough that He would willingly make that sacrifice. Our salvation is the best demonstration of the power of love. —D. C. Egner

---

**MOTIVATING LOVE** - (From [The Father's Great Love - Steven Cole](#)) Love is one of the greatest motivators in the world. When someone loves you, it gives you hope and strength. When you feel unloved or rejected by someone you love, it can be devastating. [George Matheson](#) was a 19th century Scottish pastor. He was born with an eye defect that left him totally blind by age 18. Shortly after this, his fiancée left him, deciding she would not be content to be married to a blind preacher. Years later, at age 40, Matheson was alone on the night of his sister's wedding. Something happened, perhaps the memory of being rejected by his own fiancée years before, that caused him severe mental suffering. Suddenly, the words of a hymn came to him as if dictated by some inward voice. The whole thing was done in five minutes and he never had to edit or correct it (from Kenneth Osbeck, *Amazing Grace* [Kregel], p. 49).

### **O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go**

O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

In his blindness and loneliness, perhaps feeling forsaken by the love of a woman, Matheson sought and found comfort in the unchanging love of God. Here are Matheson's own words...

My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan [Argyleshire, Scotland] on the evening of the 6th of June, 1882, when I was 40 years of age. I was alone in the manse at that time. It was the night of my sister's marriage, and the rest of the family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high.

---

**Alexander Maclaren** has the following practical application from 1John 3:1...

**We Have Here, Finally, The Loving And Devout Gaze Upon This Wonderful Love.**

'**Behold**,' (See!) at the beginning of my text, is not the mere exclamation which you often find both in the Old and in the New Testaments, which is simply intended to emphasize the importance of what follows, but it is a distinct command to do the thing, to look, and ever to look, and to look again, and live in the habitual and devout contemplation of that infinite and wondrous love of God. (See also **Biblical Meditation**)

I have but two remarks to make about that, and the one is this, that such a habit of devout and thankful meditation upon the love of God, as manifested in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the consequent gift of the Divine Spirit, joined with the humble, thankful conviction that I am a child of God thereby, lies at the foundation of all vigorous and happy Christian life. How can a thing which you do not touch with your hands and see with your eyes produce any effect upon you, unless you think about it? How can a religion which can only influence through thought and emotion do anything in you, or for you, unless you occupy your thoughts and your feelings with it? It is sheer nonsense to suppose it possible. Things which do not appeal to sense are real to us, and indeed we may say, are at all for us, only as we think about them. If you had a dear friend in Australia, and never thought about him, he would even cease to be dear, and it would be all one to you as if he were dead. If he were really dear to you, you would think about him. We may say (though, of course, there are other ways of looking at the matter) that, in a very intelligible sense, the degree in which we think about Christ, and in Him behold the love of God, is a fairly accurate measure of our Christianity.

Now will you apply that sharp test to yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that, and decide how much of your life was pagan, and how much of it was Christian? You will never make anything of your professed Christianity, you will never get a drop of happiness or any kind of good out of it; it will neither be a strength nor a joy nor a defence to you unless you make it your habitual occupation to 'behold the manner of love'; and look and look and look until it warms and fills your heart.

The second remark is that we cannot keep that great sight before the eye of our minds without effort. You will



have very resolutely to look away from something else if, amid all the dazzling gauds of earth, you are to see the far-off lustre of that heavenly love. Just as timorous people in a thunder-storm will light a candle that they may not see the lightning, so many Christians have their hearts filled with the twinkling light of some miserable tapers of earthly care and pursuits, which, though they be dim and smoky, are bright enough to make it hard to see the silent depths of Heaven, though it blaze with a myriad stars. If you hold a sixpence close enough up to the pupil of your eye, it will keep you from seeing the sun. And if you hold the world close to mind and heart, as many of you do, you will only see, round the rim of it, the least tiny ring of the overlapping love of God. What the world lets you see you will see, and the world will take care that it will let you see very little—not enough to do you any good, not enough to deliver you from its chains. Wrench yourselves away, my brethren, from the absorbing contemplation of Birmingham jewellery and paste, and look at the true riches. If you have ever had some glimpses of that wondrous love, and have ever been drawn by it to cry, 'Abba, Father,' do not let the trifles which belong not to your true inheritance fill your thoughts, but renew the vision, and by determined turning away of your eyes from beholding vanity, look off from the things that are seen, that you may gaze upon the things that are not seen, and chiefest among them, upon the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you have never looked on that love, I beseech you now to turn aside and see this great sight. Do not let that brightness burn unnoticed while your eyes are fixed on the ground, like the gaze of men absorbed in gold digging, while a glorious sunshine is flushing the eastern sky. Look to the unspeakable, incomparable, immeasurable love of God, in giving up His Son to death for us all. Look and be saved. Look and live. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on you,' and, beholding, you will become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

---

**A GOOD FATHER** - Where do kids get the stuff they come up with? One evening as I was getting 8-year-old Steven settled in for the night, he looked at me and said, "You're my second favorite dad." Whoa, I thought. Am I missing something here? But then Steve quickly filled me in. "First, God. He's my number one Father. Then you."

I'm glad Steven is able to transfer his feelings of love for his earthly father to his heavenly Father. But some people have a tough time accepting that "other Father." All they know of a father on earth is desertion, abuse, neglect, hatred, and pain. To those who have seen nothing but bad from an earthly dad, turning their life over to another Father—even one who is God—is not easy. But it is not impossible.

If you struggle with loving the One who is our heavenly Father, remember that He is the ultimate Dad because He epitomizes love, grace, mercy, and compassion. J. D. Branon

**A good father reflects the love of the heavenly Father.**

[Play Chris Tomlin's Good, Good Father](#)

---

## **THE REASON THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW US**

**For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him: *dia touto o kosmos ou ginoskei (3SPA1) hemas hoti ouk egno (3SAAI) auton:*** (John 15:18,19; 16:3; 17:25; Colossians 3:3)

And these things (What things? = Jn 16:2) they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me. (John 16:3)

**Do not be surprised,** (present imperative = command to stop this - forbids the continuance of an action already going on) brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (1Jn 3:13, 14)

**Application: Are you surprised (like I am) when someone finds out you are a believer and their entire affect and relationship with you changes from that day forward? If you have walked with Jesus for a few years, you have undoubtedly experienced this subtle but surprisingly painful from of "hatred", but John says don't marvel when this occurs. Stand fast in grace and in faith based on the Truth, for our redemption is drawing nigh beloved!**

**For this reason** - The fact that we are children of God and as family members of this divine family are called to be imitators of Christ and to manifest His light and life to "a crooked and perverse generation" (Php 2:15-note).

**World (2889)** (**kosmos [word study]** related to the verb **kosmeo** = to put in order], to adorn literally [1Ti 2:9], to adorn figuratively [Titus 2:9-note]) means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. **Kosmos** as used here by John is the world composed of people who constitute the enemy of God and consequently of all of His children. In short, the world in the present context is the ungodly (unsaved) multitude, the whole mass of men alienated from God, and hostile to His Son Jesus Christ.

**Trench** has a well known description of **kosmos** - All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale. (Synonyms)

**Does not know us** - Not = absolute negation. The idea then is that the world **absolutely** does not know who we are (children of God). See following explanation.

**Not (3756) (ou)** is the stronger word for negation and here signifies the unredeemed of humanity absolutely don't know us because they absolutely don't know Jesus. Sure, many (but not all... So let us pray for the "**hidden peoples**" in the spirit of Mt 9:37, 38) have heard the matchless Name of Jesus (Acts 4:12) and all mankind one day will hear His Name (Php 2:9, 10, 11-note), but the truth is that have no intimate knowledge of Him and no personal relationship with Him by grace through faith (Eph 2:8, 9-note = a relationship with Jesus in the New Covenant). And furthermore their unregenerate heart even the Name of Jesus (witness their frequent use of this glorious Name as a profanity!) because He is the Light that exposes their sin (cp Jn 3:19, 20)

One distinguishing mark of God's children is that they know Him for in His priestly prayer Jesus prayed

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3, see believers and unbelievers contrasted - 1Jn 3:10 = note all mankind belong to one of these groups!)

**Know (1097) (ginosko)** means to know by experience and thus speaks of knowledge that goes beyond the mere facts. By extension, the term frequently was used of a special relationship between the person who knows and the object of the knowledge. It was often used of the intimate relationship between husband and wife and between God and His people, an intimacy that believers cannot experience with unbelievers because sadly they hate Jesus and they hate us. Jesus issued this warning to His disciples (and it still rings true!)...

If the world (kosmos) **hates** you (present tense = this is the continual attitude/action of those in spiritual darkness and under the power of Satan [1Jn 5:19] toward those who manifest the life and light of Christ, cp 2Ti 3:12-note, Php 1:29-note, Mt 5:10, 11, 12-note), you know (ginosko) that it has **hated** Me (Why? Jn 7:7) before it **hated** you. If you were of the world (kosmos), the world would (kosmos) love its own; but because you are not of the world (kosmos), but **I chose you out of the world** (kosmos), therefore the world (kosmos) **hates** (present tense) you. (Jn 15:18, 19)

Paul adds that another reason the world does not really know who we are in Christ (see **in Christ**) is because in this present evil age (Gal 1:4) our "life is hidden (**perfect tense** = emphasizes the believer's permanent condition - another truth affirming the doctrine of eternal security - genuine salvation cannot be lost!) with Christ in God" (Col 3:3, cp 1Cor 2:14).

The mystery of the new birth is foolishness to the proud heart, which considers the children of God at the very least as "deluded" and even a bit "off" mentally! Even **Nicodemus**, "the teacher of Israel", did not initially grasp the profound truth of the new birth in his nighttime encounter with the Master Teacher, Jesus (Jn 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

**It (the world) did not know Him** - Notice the **aurist tense** which defines this as a historical fact - the world failed to understand Jesus' Mission. In short, they had no personal relation with the Messiah Christ Jesus, which is tantamount to the fact that they were not born again, not regenerated by the Holy Spirit and were still dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-note). In one of the most frightening (my opinion) statements Jesus ever made He spoke these "frightening" words (especially if they are the last words a person will ever hear from Jesus!) to those who **did not know Him**...

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven (I.e., they are unsaved); but he who **does** (present tense = their lifestyle, it does not mean "perfection" but "direction" of one's life - toward heaven rather than toward hell! Note carefully - Their "works" do not save them but only serve as a clear demonstration that their faith is genuine - see exposition of Jas 2:14-26 [notes] for much more detail on this critically important topic) the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many (How does He quantify? Contrast the numerical evaluation in Mt 7:14-note) will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (Notice He does not dispute their claim. Implication? They carried out these "deeds"!)" "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew

you; **DEPART** (present imperative) FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE (present tense = their lifestyle, their continual attitude/action) LAWLESSNESS (anomia = sin in 1Jn 3:4).<sup>1</sup> (Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note)

**Wuest** adds that...

From their experience with us, the people of the world, while recognizing us as Christians, **children of God**, do not come to an understanding and appreciation of the nature of person we are, since unsaved people never have had a saving relationship with and knowledge of God. Intimate understanding and knowledge of another person is based upon fellowship (cp word study of koinonia) with him. Since the people of the world have nothing in common with the **children of God**, they have no fellowship with them, and therefore have no intelligent appreciation and understanding of them. The foreign kind of love produced in us by the Holy Spirit (cp Ro 5:5-note, Gal 5:22-note) constitutes us a foreign kind of person to the people of this world, and since they do not understand foreigners, people of a different race from themselves, they simply do not understand Christians. Children of God could just as well have come to earth from a strange planet so far as the people of the world are concerned. They are strangers to them. ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

Through **Isaiah** God foretold of Christ's rejection by mankind...

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isaiah 53:2,3)

**Stephen** shortly before being stoned by his Jewish audience, preached these "politically incorrect", "user unfriendly" words...

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit (Note - Clearly the implication is that the Spirit was "trying" to get their attention, so they are without excuse!); you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One (the Messiah, Zech 9:9NIV), whose betrayers and murderers you have now become (Acts 7:51, 52)

In **John's** introductory background on Jesus, he explains that...

He (Jesus) was in the world (His First Coming), and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own (Israel, the Jews), and those who were His own did not receive (aorist tense = decisive act) Him. (Jn 1:10, 11)

The failure of the world to know God is one of the basic themes of the Gospel of John (Jn 5:37; 7:28; 16:3). Those who belong to the world live in darkness. They cannot come to the light but must inevitably hate it (Jn 3:19, 20).

**Barker** concludes his comments with a pithy application...

**The author wants his readers to know that approval by the world is to be feared, not desired. To be hated by the world may be unpleasant, but ultimately it should reassure the members of the community of faith that they are loved by God, which is far more important than the world's hatred.**

**Steven Cole** sums up 1Jn 3:1 with the following exposition...

Because of this divide, if you know God's love in Jesus Christ, you are an alien in this evil world that has rejected Christ. You should feel like an alien when you are in the company of the world, or when you encounter the world's godless entertainment. You should not expect to be popular in the world's eyes. You should not seek to gain the world's approval; to the contrary, you should fear it (Luke 6:27). When you go into the world, you should not go to join them in their dissipation (1Pe 4:3, 4). Rather, go as Jesus did, to seek and to save the lost. He attended the gatherings of sinners, but not to join them in their frivolous revelry. He went as the Great Physician, to heal their terminally ill souls (Luke 5:29, 30, 31, 32).

Can you honestly say,

**"The world does not know me"?**

Can you truly say,

**"I am a stranger to this world"?**

If you cannot answer those questions affirmatively, you'd better examine how well you know and experience

the Father's great love. If you know His love and you are His child, you will be distinguished from this evil world that rejects His love. As the hymn writer put it,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace  
(Helen Lemmel, [Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus](#)).

**Conclusion** - Several years ago, John MacArthur had the opportunity to spend several days traveling with the well-known gospel musicians, Bill and Gloria Gaither. At one point, he asked Bill what, in his estimation, were the greatest Christian lyrics ever written, aside from the inspired Psalms. Without hesitation, Gaither began quoting the words from F. M. Lehman's "The Love of God":

### **The Love of God**

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,  
God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled,  
And pardoned from his sin.

#### ***Refrain***

***O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints' and angels' song.***

When years of time shall pass away,  
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,  
When men, who here refuse to pray,  
On rocks and hills and mountains call,  
God's love so sure, shall still endure,  
All measureless and strong;  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—  
The saints' and angels' song.

#### ***Refrain***

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry.  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

#### ***Refrain***

Gaither said that no lyrics in all hymnody surpass the third stanza of that song (MacArthur, *The Love of God*, pp. xi, xii). That third stanza, by the way, was part of an ancient lengthy poem composed in Arabic in 1096 by a Jewish songwriter, Rabbi Mayer, in Germany. The lines were found in revised form on the walls of a patient's room in an insane asylum after his death. The author of the hymn heard these words cited at a camp meeting, where he wrote them down. God later gave him the words for the first two stanzas and the chorus, which his daughter put to music (Osbeck, *Amazing Grace*, p. 47).

If you know God through faith in Jesus Christ, pause often to revel in the Father's great love that made you His child. If you do not know God, His great love calls you even now to the cross, where Jesus Christ shed His

**ILLUSTRATION OF 1JOHN 2:28-3:1 - TODAY IN THE WORD** - For years Sergei wanted to be a part of a family. At age ten, he had never known family life. He had orphanage friends, but it wasn't the same. With each birthday, his dream faded, but it never completely died. Then at age eleven it finally happened: an American couple adopted him as their son and brought him to the United States. Within a year, his self-confidence grew alongside his laughter and smile.

Deep down, all of us share this same desire for belonging, a desire that can only ultimately be fulfilled as a child of God. Perhaps the greatest privilege we have as children of God is the confidence to stand before Him. The shame to which John refers (1Jn 2:28) most likely has to do with the shame of those who have denied Christ. Remember John's encouragement about forgiveness and purification through the blood of Christ (1Jn 1::9). It's precisely because of this that these believers can stand confidently before the Father—a confidence that nonbelievers can never have.

Yet along with privilege comes responsibility: believers are to do what is right (1Jn 2:29). Recall that 1 John 2:3 says that doing His commands confirms that we know Him. In the same way, doing what's right doesn't make someone a child of God; rather, doing what's right confirms that a person has truly been born again. Both these privileges and responsibilities cause John to marvel at God's love for His children (1Jn 3:1).

It may be easier for us to understand what it means to be a child of God by considering newborn babies. Just as a baby does not bring about its own birth, so too becoming a child of God is not something that we could bring about on our own.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY** - Consider parallels between physical and spiritual birth. We've listed a few in today's study, but you'll no doubt come up with several more. For example, just as we are born into a certain physical family, so too we are forever born again into the family of God. Just as physical families have certain family resemblances, so too members of God's family resemble each other to the extent that they resemble their Father. What are some other ways in which physical birth and childhood illustrate being a child of God? ([Today in the Word](#))

---

**GOOD FOR LOVING** - Craig Massey, in an article in Moody Monthly, told about being in a restaurant when a young boy spilled his milk. The boy's angry father yelled, "What are you good for?" The boy put his head down and softly said, "Nothing."

Years later Massey was disgusted with his own son for a minor infraction, and he asked the same question. His son gave the same reply, "Nothing." Immediately Massey regretted the question, calling it "the cruelest question a father can ask." But as he thought about it, he realized that the question was all right but the answer was wrong.

A few days later when his son committed another minor offense, he asked, "What are you good for?" But before his son could reply, he hugged him and kissed him and said, "I'll tell you what you're good for. You're good for loving!" Before long, when-ever he asked the question, his son would say, "I'm good for loving."

Every child in this world is good for loving and, like adults, they need it most when they make mistakes. —D C Egnor [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

---

#### **1 John 3:1 J. C. Philpot (PEARLS) writing on "The world knows us not."**

Both the openly profane world, and the professing world, are grossly ignorant of the children of God. Their ...

real character and condition,  
state and standing,  
joys and sorrows,  
mercies and miseries,  
trials and deliverances,  
hopes and fears,  
afflictions and consolations,  
are entirely hidden from their eyes.

The world knows nothing of the motives and feelings which guide and actuate the children of God. It views them as a set of gloomy, morose, melancholy beings, whose tempers are soured by false and exaggerated views of religion—who have pored over the thoughts of hell and heaven until some have frightened themselves into despair, and others have puffed up their vain minds with an imaginary conceit of their being especial favorites of the Almighty. "They are really," it says, "no better than other folks, if so good. But they have such contracted minds—are so obstinate and bigoted with their poor, narrow, prejudiced views—that

wherever they come they bring disturbance and confusion."

**But why this harsh judgment?** Because the world knows nothing of the spiritual feelings which actuate the child of grace, making him act so differently from the world which thus condemns him.

It cannot understand our sight and sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—and that is the reason why we will not run riot with them in the same course of ungodliness.

It does not know with what a solemn weight eternal things rest upon our minds—and that that is the cause why we cannot join with them in pursuing so eagerly the things of the world (1Jn 2:15, 16, 17- see notes 1Jn 2:15 2:16 2:17, Jas 4:4-note), and living for time as they do—instead of living for eternity (Php 3:20, 21-note).

Being unable to enter into the spiritual motives and gracious feelings which actuate a living soul, and the movements of divine life continually stirring in a Christian breast, they naturally judge us from their own point of view, and condemn what they cannot understand.

You may place a horse and a man upon the same hill—while the man would be looking at the woods and fields and streams—the horse would be feeding upon the grass at his feet. The horse, if it could reason, would say, "What a fool my master is! How he is staring and gaping about! Why does he not sit down and open his basket of provisions—for I know he has it with him, for I carried it—and feed as I do?"

So the worldling says, "Those poor stupid people, how they are spending their time in going to chapel, and reading the Bible in their gloomy, melancholy way. Religion is all very well—and we ought all to be religious before we die—but they make so much of it. Why don't they enjoy more of life? Why don't they amuse themselves more with its innocent, harmless pleasures—be more gay, cheerful, and sociable, and take more interest in those things which so interest us?"

The reason why the world thus wonders at us is because it knows us not, and therefore cannot understand that we have ... sublimer feelings, nobler pleasures, and more substantial delights, than ever entered the soul of a worldling!

**Christian! the more you are conformed to the image of Christ—the more separated you are from the world, the less will it understand you.** If we kept closer to the Lord and walked more in holy obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we would be more misunderstood than even we now are! It is our worldly conformity that makes the world understand many of our movements and actions so well.

But if our movements were more according to the mind of Christ—if we walked more as the Lord walked when here below—we would leave the world in greater ignorance of us than we leave it now—for the hidden springs of our life would be more out of its sight, our testimony against it more decided, and our separation from it more complete.

---

**John MacDuff** in his book [The Thoughts of God](#) writes about this great, precious, exotic **love of God** for the unlovely in a chapter entitled "Paternal Pity"...

"How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!"

The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear Him. For He understands how weak we are; He knows we are only dust. Psalm 103:13, 14

What feelings on earth are to be compared, in depth and intensity, to those that link a parent to his offspring? Has some member of his family been unjustly wronged? Many a man would willingly himself submit to unmerited injury and ridicule—bear in silence the tongue of calumny and slander—receive in silence the arrows of unkindness, who could not rest thus unmoved under the affront or stigma attempted to be fastened on his child.

Or does the parent see his child in suffering? He could himself bear pain with comparative composure; but when he sees slow, torturing disease ploughing its furrows on the young cheek, and dimming the luster of the young eye, the iron enters into his soul; he would gladly even risk his own life were that of his loved one endangered. Many a father has stood by an early grave, and said, through anguished tears, "I wish I could have died rather than you!"

Behold, in the loving, pitying thoughts and tender pitying deeds of the earthly parent, a picture and symbol, O believer, of God's thoughts and God's love to you. No, more—He identifies Himself with the sufferings and wrongs of His children. Injure them, and you injure Him. He that touches them touches the apple of His eye.



He says, as David said to Abiathar, "Abide with me, for he that seeks your life, seeks my life—but with me you shall be in safeguard."

When and where does this pitying love of God begin? "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him!" God's thoughts of pity were upon us when we had not thought of pity on ourselves. And at this hour, too, is He pitying us—in our weakness, our sorrows, our temptations, our difficulties, our perplexities. Many an earthly father can make only a little allowance for the weakness and feebleness of his offspring. Not so our heavenly Father. "He remembers that we are but dust." When Job was greatly perplexed and downcast by the bitter reflections of his adversaries, this was his comfort—"But He knows the way that I take."

See how these same thoughts of pitying love, like the ivy clasping the battered ruin, cling even round His wayward, backsliding children—"Is not Israel still My son, My darling child? I had to punish him, but I still love him. I long for him and surely will have mercy on him." Oh, blessed assurance, this great Being loves me, pities me—pities me and loves me even in the midst of my truant forgetfulness, ungrateful wandering—and continues to call me His "darling child." I have in Him a love in which fatherhood, brotherhood, sisterhood, are all combined!

Arise, go to your Father! He is waiting and willing to welcome you to His embrace. He asks elsewhere, in a passage which touchingly describes His thoughts (His loving, paternal thoughts) at work—"How shall I put you among the children?" The gospel plan of salvation has answered that question—solved that Divine problem of parental love. Jesus has opened a way of access to the heavenly household—and made us heirs to all these precious thoughts of a Father's heart. Seated under Calvary's cross, we can exclaim in grateful transport—

**"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"** 1 John 3:1 ([Paternal Pity](#))