

1 John 3 Notes

Characteristics Of Fellowship (2:28-3:24)

- Purity of life (2:28-3:3).
 - This chapter is the beginning of the second half of the letter, which deals more directly with Christ. The word "fellowship" is not found in this section at all. Instead, John emphasizes being "born of God" (3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). In this chapter, John states that the true Christian will prove his spiritual birth by obedience to God's word.
 - John was overcome with wonder by the fact that sinners by divine grace became God's children. The opening phrase is both a command and an exclamation. The love of God for His own stands as one of the unshakeable foundations of eternal hope.
 - God has identified us as being His own. The failure of the world to know God is one of the basic themes of the gospel (John 5:37; 7:28; 16:3). Those who belong to the world live in darkness. They cannot come to the light but inevitably hate it.
 - At the end, Jesus will appear and we will see Him as He truly is; His full glory will be revealed (John 17:1, 5, 24). Heaven is attractive for Christians because there they will not only see the Lord Jesus, but will become like Him.
 - All who have their hope in Jesus will also be committed to keeping themselves from sin. They will put away every defilement; they will aim to be like Him in purity and righteousness.
- Righteousness and brotherly love (3:4-18).
 - John uses two words to describe sin: "sin" and "transgression." "Sin" was used to describe the breaking of God's commandments. "Transgression" defines sin as rebellion against God.
 - Not only is sin lawlessness, but Jesus appeared in the flesh to remove it. Because Jesus was sinless, the devil had no hold on him (John 14:30), and Jesus was able to destroy the works of the devil (John 12:31; Hebrews 2:14-15). In addition, Jesus' sinlessness reveals the kind of lifestyle required of those who abide in Him. John uses the present tense to emphasize that sinlessness is characteristic of Jesus' eternal nature, and Christians should no longer be marked by lawlessness.
 - The warning to not let any of them "deceive you" was probably directed at the false teachers. John shows the diabolical nature of sin -- its source is the devil, who has sinned from the beginning. John sees the enmity of God against the devil as absolute. God will destroy the devil and all his works, including those children of the devil who accept sinning as a way of life.

- No one who abides in God can practice a life of sin. If we live in Him, then we are removed from a life under the dominion of Satan. And if He lives in us, then our life will be His life in us and we will live as He lived.
- Vs. 10 reveals the heart of the entire thought and furnishes a transition to the next one. Love for one's brother is the true test of righteous behavior. If God is love, and if He lives in us and we in Him, then love for fellow Christians will occur as an expression of righteousness without exception.
- The mention of Cain points back to 3:8 and reminds us that hatred is also from the beginning. "Slew" is a vivid term that means to butcher or slaughter an animal. It was used of animals killed in sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 1:5, LXX) and implies a violent death. The choice between hatred and love goes back to the earliest moment of human existence. It is not that Cain by murdering his brother became the child of the devil; but, being a child of the devil, and belonging to the kingdom of darkness, his actions were evil and culminated in the murder of his brother. Righteousness draws hatred from the devil and hatred from the children of the devil. Darkness cannot tolerate light.
- Whenever Christians act so as to expose the greed, avarice, hatred, and wickedness of the world, they must expect rejection. By their hatred, the children of the devil have always revealed their true character. "Brethren" occurs only here in 1 John as an address. If they receive his letter and obey it, persecution will come because they have identified themselves with him rather than with the false teachers.
- Love will not, of course, cause one's passage to spiritual life but will give evidence of it. Conversely, to be unable to love means that a person is without spiritual life and remains in death. In vs. 15, hatred is linked with murder. In the heart there is no difference; to hate is to despise, and murder is the fulfillment of that attitude.
- The test of true love is identified as a willingness to sacrifice one's life for one's brother (cf. Philippians 2:25-30). Love is used absolutely and its reference point is Christ's death. The demand for love arises from His command, and the meaning of love is found in His example. Love had never before been manifested as it was by Christ.
- We can know if we would sacrifice our life for a fellow Christian by being compassionate toward such a one in his or her present need. If we are unable or unwilling to sacrifice material advantage for the safety of our fellow Christians, we know that the love of God is not in us. To withhold help is to deny the presence of God's love in our heart.

- Answer to prayer (3:19-24).
 - “We know,” used in the future tense, indicates that what John’s readers would eventually grasp was not something intuitive or indefinite, but a promise based on an existing reality.
 - Our loving actions show that we are of the truth. How do we “appease” our consciences? Our conscience is by no means infallible; its condemnation may often be unjust. We can, therefore, appeal from our conscience to God who is greater and more knowledgeable. Indeed, He knows all things, including our secret motives and deepest resolves, and it is implied, will be more merciful toward us than our own heart. We will not excuse ourselves of any sin, but neither will we needlessly accuse ourselves.
 - “Confidence” means “boldness” and “freedom of speech.” It describes the privilege of coming before someone of importance, power, and authority, and feeling free to express whatever is on one’s mind. Those who are at peace in their hearts will have confidence not only at His appearing but in the ordinary here-and-now relationship to the Father. The fruit of this boldness is God’s own openness to His children. He never withholds anything good from those who ask. This points us directly to the words of Jesus (John 8:28-29).
 - The final verse acts as a summary. The evidence that we abide in Him is our obedience to His commands. We follow the Spirit when we follow the commands of God. The Spirit’s working in our lives is manifest and those who see that work will know that Christ abides in us (cf. John 3:8).