

# 1 John 3

Today's message "on being a child of God" might also be titled  
"I hate the English Language"

While we are going to focus on our position of being His children, we are going to be looking at some of Greek words John chose, their meaning and grammatical usage. I'm not going to bore you with a ton of detail, but it is important to know how the Greek is expressed so that we don't get nervous about some of John's statements. For example, John says,

(1 John 3:9 NKJV) Whoever has been born of God **does not sin... ; and he cannot sin ...**

I don't know about you, but I do sin therefore I can sin, but I know that I have been born-again.

The first verse of Chapter 3 is "mind blowing", "totally groovy" and I think we could "rap" about it for hours...what I really mean is "can you dig it?".

Father, today we desire a revelation of what it means to be one of Your children. I believe that something so incredible must come from Your Holy Spirit speaking directly into our hearts. And Father, will you show us that this is a done-deal for all who have put their trust in the work and person of Your Son.

And Father, I would also ask that you help us today to understand and accept that while this gift is free, it comes with responsibilities. And these responsibilities are not burdensome but rather they can be done with joy. Teach us today about being a child of God.

(1 John 3:1 NKJV) Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

The first line in this could be an entire sermon...and probably has been.

- *Manner: implies astonishment: what astonishing love!*

This verse was penned by the disciple "whom Jesus Loved"; he had laid against His chest during the Passover Seder. He experienced Messiah's Love; He sat at His feet to learn about the true nature of the Messiah – that He was God who dwelt among them. He knew Jesus loved him by his actions. He knew Jesus as the Word made flesh! He lived with Him and ate with Him. He saw Him transfigured and saw "His face that shown like the sun, and His clothes that became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2).

And he heard Him say, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”** (John 8:58); And **“I and My Father are one.”** (John 10:30).

And, this man, John, was there after the resurrection and saw Him. And after 8 days, John was there when He appeared to Thomas; Jesus knew Thomas’s doubting heart and invited him to touch His scars – without a word of condemnation or even disappointment! John heard Thomas cry out **“My Lord and My God”**.

So, John knew Jesus, he knew He was God. He knew of the depth of His love because of the horrific manner of His scourging and death – all done for him, the others, the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and the world!

But as deep and precious and unfathomable as this Love is, John still says **“what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us”**. John is nearly incredulous! He can scarcely take it in! One translator uses the word **“exotic love”**!

And that is only the half of it! Just as unfathomable, the Father calls those who believe, His children.

Both John and Paul recorded this wonderful picture of the believer’s life experience.

**John 1:12-13 MKJV** But as many as received Him, He gave to them authority to become the children of God, to those who believe on His name, **(13)** who were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but were born of God.

**But as many as received him,....** by believing in his name; our faith (itself a gift) is believing Him as the Word made Flesh, and as the Son of God and that in Him dwells all of the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:6)

**He gave to to them gave the power (or right or authority) to become the sons of God even to them that believe in his name;**

He gave and by grace we received. We can not even boast in our belief, even our faith!

**who were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but were born of God.**

And to make it crystal clear, John says that this is NOT a flesh and blood thing; this is not a willful act on the part of man. This is ALL about God!

THIS IS SONSHIP...WE ARE SONS AND DAUGHTERS BECAUSE HE IS THE SON OF GOD! AND SINCE WE ARE **IN CHRIST** WE TOO ARE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE FATHER.

**Paul also declares in:**

**Romans 8:14-17 MKJV** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father! (16) **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.** (17) And if we are children, then we are heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; so that **if we suffer** with Him, we may also be glorified together.

Verse 14 does not mean we are sons of God because we are led by the Spirit! No, we are led by the Spirit because we are sons of God.

Verse 15 the spirit of bondage and fear is to the Law that contained curses for disobedience. But Paul states that we have been received the Spirit of Adoption by which we cry "Abba, Father".

Verse 16 Guzik says that "those who are God's children, born again by the Spirit of God, *know* their status because the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that this is so."

Verse 17: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ;

**And again, Paul states:**

**Ephesians 1:3-6 MKJV** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; (4) according as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, (5) **having predestined us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,** (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He has made us accepted in the One having been loved.

Spurgeon writes: "Our thanks are due to God for all temporal blessings; they are more than we deserve. **But our thanks ought to go to God in thunders of hallelujahs for spiritual blessings.** A new heart is better than

a new coat. To feed on Christ is better than to have the best earthly food. To be an heir of God is better than being the heir of the greatest nobleman. To have God for our portion is blessed, infinitely more blessed than to own broad acres of land. God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings. These are the rarest, the richest, the most enduring of all blessings; they are priceless in value.”

Oh gee, that was just verse 1!

(1 John 3:2 NKJV) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Just as unbelievers don't truly understand us, we cannot yet know what we will be like when we get to see Him face to face. **But the promise is that we shall be like Him**

But while we are on this earth, Paul writes of God's desire for us:

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be **conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.***

*Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)*

God's ultimate goal in our lives is to make us like Jesus, and here in Verse 2 John speaks of the future fulfillment of that purpose.

(1 John 3:3 NKJV) And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

No man can purify or cleanse himself from sin, this is only by the grace of God and blood of Christ; It's an internal state formed in us.

And note that no one can be so pure and holy as Christ is, who is free from all sin. And yet, like sanctification, we submit to the leadings of the Holy Spirit to become purer, more holy as we walk in the Spirit. Btw: even in heaven, in our glorified bodies, being like Him is not being equal to Him. I know we probably just said to ourselves “well duh” but I felt compelled to state the obvious. 😊

NOW WE GET TO THE GRAMMER PART OF THE TEACHING. WITHOUT IT THERE ARE SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTIONS. I WANT TO READ 3 VERSES THAT DEMONSTRATE THIS:

*1Jn 3:6 Whoever abides in Him **does not sin.** Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.*

*1Jn 3:8 **He who sins is of the devil,** for the devil has sinned from the beginning.*

*1Jn 3:9 Whoever has been born of God **does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and **he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.***

These verses seem to imply that only true Christians do not, and can not sin. That would leave the count of true Christians at zero.

So how can John say that we cannot sin? The contradiction is cleared up by the accurate translation of the verb tenses in the Greek that John used.

I just want to clear up any confusion that might be roaming around our heads...

(1 John 3:4 NKJV) Whoever (*habitually*) commits sin also (*habitually*) commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

This is just a statement of fact, comparing sinning with lawlessness.

But John is trying to make a point: you can call your sin by a lot of different words, but's it still sin:

1. Oh, that was just a mistake
2. I'm just human
3. It's not such a big deal
4. I didn't mean to do that
5. Oh, all that I did was because of what my parents did to me growing up.

And other lame excuses. To paraphrase a well known writer, **A sin by any other name still stinks.**

(1 John 3:5 NKJV) And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

We know Jesus took away our sins. How? David Guzik has 3 ways that sum this up nicely:

1. By Removing the penalty of our sin – done!
2. By Removing the power of sin – this is progressive as we follow after Him
3. By Removing the presence of sin – this will be completed when we get to our eternal home

(1 John 3:6 NKJV) Whoever (constantly) abides in Him does not (habitually) sin. Whoever (habitually) sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

The issue then is the habitual nature of our sin. If we truly **know** that the penalty, power and eventual presence of SIN has been adequately and completely dealt with by Messiah, then John says you wouldn't have an issue with habitual sin. This goes back to an honest appraisal of our eternal state.

John Gill states it clearly and plainly when he explains that habitual sin reveals that:

“he has never seen Christ with an eye of faith; he has never truly and spiritually seen the glory, beauty, fulness, and suitableness of Christ, his need, and the worth of Him; he has never seen Him so as to enjoy Him, and have communion with Him; ... nor has he ever savingly known Him, or been experimentally acquainted with Him; for though he may profess to know Him in words, he denies him in works.”

People who habitually sin but still struggles in it have HOPE. They have not had their conscience seared so that they feel no remorse. If this is you, BE HONEST and confess it to Him. Jesus is the only One who can do anything about it! If you are struggling, give up! Surrender! Your flesh will scream NO! But the Spirit will whisper, it's your victory to do so!

(1 John 3:7 NKJV) Little children, let no one deceive you. He who (habitually) practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

John is **not** saying that we are made righteous before God by our own righteous acts - the Bible clearly teaches that we are made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. Yet the righteousness of Jesus imputed to us will be evident in our lives. **Pastor Ebb always says that the evidence of a changed life is a changed life!**

Spurgeon said it well: “The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.” This is an in-your-face and a step-on-your-toes observation!

(1 John 3:8 NKJV) He who (*habitually commits*) sins is of the devil, for the devil has (*been sinning*) from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Can anyone say “lake of fire”?

(1 John 3:9 NKJV) Whoever has been born of God does not

(habitually commit) sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot (is not able to habitually) sin, because he has been born of God.

This is Truth. Born-Again believers have given up their relationship with sin and joined themselves in relationship to the Son of God! Last week we talked about this in detail.

(1 John 3:10 NKJV) In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice (habitually doing) righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does (not habitually loving his brother with a divine and self-sacrificial love. ) not love his brother.

In the last two verses, John is contrasting the children of God and those who adhere to the lies of the world and therefore, of the devil. **We know we are born of God; we know that the Holy Spirit is in us.** Therefore, He will cause us to stay the course. We are empowered to resist the temptations and we know from 1 Cor 10:13, that God is faithful, and will provide a way of escape.

AND EUREKA!!!! JOHN STATES OUT THE MESSAGE HEARD FROM THE BEGINNING

(1 John 3:11 NKJV) For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should (should habitually be loving one another with a divine and self-sacrificial love; ) love one another,

AND, HOW DO WE DO THAT? First, he tells us how not to:

(1 John 3:12 NKJV) not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

God accepted Abel's sacrifice, not Cain's. I don't think it was the type of sacrifice that was offered, meat vs produce. I think it was an attitude issue. Abel, it was said, brought the first born of his flock; Cain just brought whatever he grew (no mention of 'firstfruits').

Cain got angry and first murdered his brother in his heart and then in deed.

~~BUT, allow the Love of God to work in you; As the Holy Spirit leads you into a deeper, more loving relationship with Jesus, you will want to express the love given to you to others. This divinely empowered love is sacrificial, it is compassionate, it is forgiving and it glorifies the Father.~~

(1 John 3:13 NKJV) Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

I'm a nice person why would the world hate me?

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NKJV (14) Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. (15) For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (16) To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

Who, Paul asks, can truly understand this? It is spiritual; It is of God;

(1 John 3:14 NKJV) We know that we have passed (over permanently out of the ) from death to life, because we (are habitually loving ) **love the brethren**. He (who is not habitually loving) who does not **love his brother** abides in death.

(1 John 3:15 NKJV) Whoever (habitually is hating) hates his **brother** is a murderer, and you know (absolutely) that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

(1 John 3:16 NKJV) By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. **And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

**Not for the same reason as His, that is, salvation. But something more practical!**

(1 John 3:17 NKJV) But whoever has this world's goods, and sees **his brother** in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

(1 John 3:18 NKJV) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

And in this John certainly agrees with James.

James 2:14-18 NKJV What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? (17) Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (18) But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Since the context of the epistle is fellowship, I think that the object of the love we demonstrate is our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. 9 times in this chapter John uses the word Brother or Brethren.

(1 John 3:19 NKJV) And by this **we know that we** are of the truth, **and shall assure our hearts before Him.**

(1 John 3:20 NKJV) For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

(1 John 3:21 NKJV) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have **confidence** toward God.

Loving others demonstrates our saving faith. Loving others is loving God. Remember Matthew 25 where Jesus is talking about the sheep and goats? To the sheep He said:

Matthew 25:34-40 NKJV Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (35) for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; (36) I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' (37) "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? (38) When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? (39) Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' (40) And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these **My brethren**, you did *it* to Me.'

Even here, the context is "my brethren". Many say that He is speaking of the Jews only; But the King is in covenant with many.

To the goats He said:

Matthew 25:45-46 NKJV Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did **not** do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.' (46) And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

**Be a sheep...not a goat!**

Verses 20-21

John addresses the fickleness of our feelings. We don't live by feelings, we live by Truth.

Our heart can condemn us either by entertaining the whispers of the enemy of our souls. Or by an overactive conscience where we don't "feel" that we can do anything good or acceptable.

These feelings are to be dealt with by a good dose of reality! Trust God when He has written:

**Hebrews 7:25 NKJV** Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Guzik writes: How precious is the **confidence** we can have in Jesus Christ! There is such a thing as a false confidence, a confidence in self or in illusions; but there is also a glorious **confidence** we can have in Jesus.

The word confidence is "boldness, particularly in speaking", such as in prayer and witnessing.

**(1 John 3:22 NKJV)** And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

This is NOT ever "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine". Because we abide in him, having fellowship with him (remember it's the same word used for "communion"), our relationship grows fuller and deeper. We then will ask for those things that He wants for us.

This is in contrast to what James describes:

**James 4:3 NKJV** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

**(1 John 3:23 NKJV)** And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

**(1 John 3:24 NKJV)** Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

John sums up this chapter with these last 2 verses. I think we need to rearrange what he has said to understand it better:

It starts with saving Grace by which we believe on the Name of the Son of God.

This belief isn't just in knowing what He has done for us (saving, forgiving, interceding and returning for His bride). It is knowing the Person, the Son of God!

The Spirit that His sent to be with us and in us assures us our position as children of God. We are brothers and sisters in Him!

In our knowing, our believing, our faith, and especially in our relationship with Him, the Spirit encourages us, assures us and empowers us to live out His desires for us.

John uses the word commandment. But this is not to be thought of as the same as the Law. Why? Because it is not an external action which leads to an internal change. And while the Law is just, good and holy, Paul writes:

**Romans 8:3-4 NKJV** For what the law could not do in that it was **weak through the flesh**, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh **but according to the Spirit**.

So, these commandments of which John speaks are internal, given by the Holy Spirit for our ultimate good as He enables us to Abide in the Son. And in this abiding, by the faith given to us, comes the fruit of the Spirit: Love. Sacrificial and selfless. Whose ultimate object is Jesus Himself and therefore our brothers and sisters in Christ.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter was full and somewhat demanding in that there was a lot of self-evaluation, and a lot of Truth but ultimately a lot of encouragement and assurance.

In our Christian walks, it is never about formula's, never about do this for that, never about striving to keep commandments, feeling defeated by the sin we have not conquered, or worse, feeling prideful in our successes and triumphs.

The basis for all that we do is all that we are. It begins with Sonship. We ARE children of God. This is an overwhelming thought. But one that can truly settle our hearts giving us the peace we need to deal with life's circumstances.

Being a child of God does not dismiss us from responsibilities. John clearly teaches about loving the church body, and that in a sacrificial way. John clearly teaches about not loving the world systems or philosophies that are not of God and in nearly all cases, are against God.

And what exactly are our responsibilities? Know first that we don't strive after these things. These are all of God. But where does God "leave" off and "I begin"? Sounds silly but it's a good question. God does it all, we act on what He asks us to do, and then having done it, we give Him the Glory for it.

Secondly, John tells us specifically what we need to be about:

1. Abiding in Him
2. Loving Others

Not from feeling driven from the external demands of the Law but from an internal response to the Holy Spirit's promptings and the assurance that we are His children, adopted into His family. John says that we are co-heirs with Jesus.

Don't worry about how that will all be worked out! Just know that it will be beyond what we can imagine:

**1Co 2:9** But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

And because it IS all about relationship with Jesus, Paul can declare with all confidence:

**Romans 8:38-39 NKJV** For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, (39) nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**BELIEVE IT BECAUSE IT'S TRUE NOT BECAUSE OUR BELIEF MAKES IT TRUE;**

Father, what a privilege it is to be called a son or daughter of God. Just being called that speaks volumes about You. Your grace cannot be totally understood and Your Love cannot be experienced in its fullness for these will overwhelm us – not to the point of unbelief because Your precious gift of Your Son whose saving grace assures us that You are True to Your Word.

For today Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ what Paul prayed for those in Ephesus,

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (20) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, (21) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. [Ephesians 1:17-21 NKJV](#).

I pray Your Words back to You, in humility and in faith because Your Word is perfect and good.

And, I pray Your Words back to You, in the Name which is above all names, in the Name of the Lord of Lords, in the Name of the King of all Kings – Yeshua, Jesus, our Lord and our God.

AMEN