

1 John 2:18-3:12

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[0 : 00] And please turn in your Bibles to 1 John, continuing in our series. 1 John, you'll find it on page 1022.

! When I told Paul that I'd like to preach a series on 1 John, he told me, ah, the preacher's graveyard. I'm beginning to see why. The words are very simple, but the truths get increasingly deep and increasingly complex.

But it's wonderfully rich, so we probably won't get into all of the depths of it, but there's still a lot to be learned from this passage. So we're going to be reading from verse 28 of chapter 2, and then to the end of verse 12 of chapter 3.

Let us hear God's holy word. 1 John 2, 28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence, and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are.

[1 : 35] The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now. And what we will be has not yet appeared.

But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you.

Whoever practices righteousness is righteous as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

[2 : 51] The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him.

And he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil.

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. Nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning.

That we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one, and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him?

Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous. Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that here we can read your words here, given by the Spirit.

[4 : 02] We thank you that you are with us by the presence of your Spirit. And we pray that by the power of your Spirit, you would preach to us tonight.

This we ask for your glory. Amen. Well, as I was saying to the children earlier, every now and again, some things happen that change everything.

Sometimes it is on a more personal level. Moving house. That can be a big change. Or getting a new sibling. Or getting married. Or anything like that. There can be events that just change everything.

Everything. And it can happen on a global scale as well. I think most people would agree that September the 11th, 2001, was a day that changed a lot for the world.

Goodbye Lenin is a German film set in East Germany in the 1980s. It follows a woman who, at the beginning of the film, is about to be awarded for her service to East Germany.

[5 : 13] But on her way, she gets a heart attack and falls into a coma. When she eventually wakes up, the doctor tells her son that she mustn't in any way receive any shocks or surprises.

At which the son simply points to a newspaper on his desk, talking about all the changes that are happening since the wall fell down. While she's in a coma, the Berlin Wall had fallen down.

The job then was to hide this fact from the mother. It's quite a challenge. So he and his sister and brother-in-law, they try desperately.

Fortunately, she's just in her bedroom. But they try desperately to recreate East Germany just in her little bedroom. They try and dig through the rubbish to find the old packaging, the old labels of all the products.

They get all kinds of chaos. While also themselves trying to adapt to this new world that they found themselves living in. They need to adapt.

[6 : 17] But there's this need to keep looking back. There's something dragging them back to their old life. Well, we need to look here at an event that has changed history.

We looked at it a little bit last week. The section that we started with in verse 18 of chapter 2.

Children, it is the last hour. They're in a new period of time.

And that is still on his mind in this section as well. You may not necessarily see it straight away.

Because of a little phrase that we are extremely used to hearing all the time.

And we forget how significant it is for John. The phrase is the first two words of verse 20. And now.

We hear that phrase all the time. Maybe on television. Introducing the next performer.

And now. What's going to happen now? For John and for the New Testament early believers. Now is a significant word. We often underestimate it in the New Testament.

[7 : 23] But more often than we think. Now is a very significant word. Because now is new. And they need to learn. Well, what do we do now?

Because now is new. Things need to change. Well, last week he was explaining to them. What they should expect in terms of the teaching that they hear.

Remember, there is this tension. That what they should hear is not brand new teaching. But in this new age. There's a tension. You need to hear something.

But what you need to hear is what you've already heard. And here it's talking. He's moving on to talking. Not about what you hear. But what you are.

And so in these first few verses. Verses 28 to 3 verse 1. He's saying you need to be ready for the end of now. Not by knowing something new.

[8 : 23] But by being something new. Which you already are. And now little children abide in him. Yet you ended the last section talking about abiding in him.

As a conclusion. Abiding in him. Why? So that when he appears. We may have confidence. And not shrink from him in shame at his coming. So now is temporary.

Now is going to end. At his appearance. At his coming. So in this passage we're going to find.

Talking about his coming. In terms of when he came before.

When he appeared. And we're going to read about when he will appear. That's going to be running throughout. This section. So here he's talking about. What has this instruction.

This conclusion he got to. About abiding in him. Got to do with. Now. And given that now will end. He's saying well will you be bold.

[9 : 17] And it comes from abiding in Jesus. It doesn't come as these false teachers. Who've been coming into the church. Were saying. It doesn't come from being in the know.

It doesn't come from having this special secret knowledge. It doesn't come. From forgetting about holiness. And those introductory sections. We looked at a while ago. Teach the basics of.

The importance of holiness. The importance of knowing Jesus. And so here we learn that. Boldness in the last hour. Is not about hearing something new.

But about being something new. So verse 28 to 3 verse 1. Not hearing something new. But being something new. What are we?

Verse 21. Well. We have been born of God. So that in 3 verse 1. We are called. Children of God. Children of God. And not only are we called.

[10 : 16] Children of God. We are. Children. Of God. That is the great thing. About now. People who have trusted in Jesus. Can know.

That they are children. Of God. You'll remember from the beginning. Of chapter 1. How did they come. Into this fellowship. Into this family. How do they know.

They have fellowship. With the church. The church. Which has fellowship. With God. It is through the proclamation. Of Jesus Christ. We proclaim him. That you may have fellowship. With us. That's right. In the very first few verses. Very simply. They came to hear. The message of Jesus. They believed it. And so now.

They are children of God. They have become. Children of God. So what should we do. About that. What should those. Who have come. To be born of God. Do about the fact.

[11:10] That they are born of God. Well. The very first instruction. You'll see at the top. Of verse 1. See. Look at it.

Behold it. Look at that. The very first thing. You should do. About being born of God. Is. Look at that. What kind of love.

Is this. This is a great. Love. Where does this love come from. What is this. The father has given to us.

The privilege. Of being called. Children. Of God. And not only to be called that. But to be his children. False teachers.

They think that. The best thing. You could be offered. Is a chance. To really be. In the know. To have that secret knowledge. To really be higher. Than everybody else. Jesus is. Offering this chance.

[12:08] To be a child. Of God. Not by hearing. Any secret message. But by. Hearing what you already. Have heard. The message of Jesus. And by trusting in that.

To become. A child of God. So then. If they are children of God. Then why. Why is. Things. Why are things. Still hard. Why does the world.

Not see that. End of verse one. The reason why the world. Does not know us. If I'm a child of God. Why doesn't the world. Acknowledge that. These false teachers. Who say. They've got it all sorted. They look like. They've got it all sorted. They think. They have the pinnacle. Of everything they need. They think. It's all about. Getting the secret knowledge. And they seem. Really happy with that. And the world.

Seems to like them as well. The world thinks. They're the best thing ever. Why isn't the world. Loving this church. If their children. Are God. Well it didn't love.

[13:03] Or didn't even know. Jesus. The world doesn't. Acknowledge us. Because the world. Didn't acknowledge. Him. In this last hour.

Between the first time. He appeared. And the second time. He will appear. This is what it will be like. We won't be acknowledged. By the world. And of course.

That's not surprising. Given what he told about the world. The world is in opposition. To God. So we shouldn't be surprised. That the world opposes us. We shouldn't expect it. Just expect their approval.

So boldness in the last hour. Is about. Being something new. Not hearing. Or knowing something new. So what should we do. Well we need to look at it. Just behold.

That wonderful. Privilege. And then in verses 2 to 6. It means that we need to be like Jesus. Beloved. We are God's children now.

[14:03] And what we will be. Has not yet appeared. So that we are not. Complete in that process. We are waiting for that final day. That final day. When he appears. Verse 2. Which is when we will be like him.

Perfectly. Perfectly. Perfectly. Because we shall see him. But given that we have that hope. Given that you will be like him.

Don't not bother being like him now. Everyone who has this hope in him. Purifies himself. As he is pure. The false teachers make no sense.

When they say. Well Jesus will come back. And we will be like him. Therefore. Don't bother being like him now. No he is saying precisely. Be like Jesus.

Don't do what he wouldn't do. Don't sin. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning. Also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. Think about what sin is.

[15:04] It is breaking God's law. It is not just having a good time. It is lawlessness. And what was the whole point of his appearing the first time.

Verse 5. To take away sin. And there was no sin in him. So we should be consistent with the one who we are like.

Being children of God. And the one who we will be like perfectly. We should live like that. We should be like Jesus. Because we are his. We are the children of God.

Because he appeared in the first place. To destroy the works of the devil. Which we see later. And he will appear. As someone who is pure. Therefore we purify ourselves.

Verse 3. That's the key verse in that section. Everyone who thus hopes in him. Or everyone who has this hope. In him. Purifies himself. As he is pure.

[16:05] It makes no sense. For a Christian. Not to be like Jesus. It simply makes no sense. Because we have become.

His children. And note. Throughout this whole passage. How often family language is used. He is building this idea. Of us as a family.

With Jesus as our brother. And us as brothers as well. We are all children of God. So we should resemble. This great brother. Through whom we have become. The brother. We have been adopted into the family.

And so. Verses 2 to 6. We should be like Jesus. And verses 7 to 12. We should be what we are. It's not. We should strive. To become something we're not.

It's not. If you work hard enough. Then I will think. Well. Okay. You can come in. But it's. You have already been made. Children of God. This is the way. God has always worked. This isn't a new way of working.

[17:04] God's grace. Always comes first. The Ten Commandments. Came after. I am the Lord your God. Who brought you. Out of the house. Out of the land of Egypt. Out of the house of slavery.

You are his children. So be like that. Be what you are. Verses 7 to 12. So just as.

This. Weird sort of tense time. Of the last hour. Between the two comings. The two appearances. Of Jesus. Is about hearing. What you've already heard.

It's also about being. What you already are. There's more of that tension. You need to hear. What you've already heard. Not something brand new. And so you need to be. What you already are.

And then we have this rather. These rather difficult words. Whoever makes a practice of sinning. Is of the devil. No one born of God.

[18:04] Makes a practice of sinning. He cannot keep on sinning. Whoever does not practice righteousness. Is not of God. It's very clear that.

Christians. Don't. Sin. And. On our English translation. They sort of. Make it easier. To understand. What. What. What John is saying. In terms of saying. Practicing sin.

Or continuing in sin. But. When you. The Greek. Readers would have just seen. Christians don't. Sin. And the tense there. Does carry the meaning of. Continuing in sin.

But it's just the word sin. Sin. It is quite stark. Language. Now he's already said. In chapter one. Hasn't he. That. It doesn't make sense. For a Christian to say.

I don't sin. No. If a Christian says. I don't sin. Then you're lying. Now he's saying. Well if you're a Christian. You don't sin. So what's going on. Well I think it is a matter.

[19:00] About continuing to sin. Not fighting sin. John Stott. I think quite helpfully says. This is talking about. The incongruity. Rather than the impossibility.

Of a Christian sinning. That is just to say. It is of course possible. For a Christian to sin. If you're a Christian. You will know that. But it makes no sense. For a Christian to sin.

I think I mentioned to you. One point. A while ago. About. My grandfather's. Wonderful nonsense rhymes. That he would always recite. And one of my favorites. Was. One fine day. In the middle of the night.

Two dead men. Got up to fight. Back to back. They faced each other. Drew their swords. And shot each other. Paralyzed donkey. Passing by.

Kicked a blind man. In the eye. Knocked him through. A nine inch wall. Into a dry ditch. And drowned them all. It makes. No sense.

[19:58] If it is the middle of the night. It cannot be a fine day. If two men are dead. They cannot get up to fight. They have swords.

They can't shoot. If the donkey is paralyzed. He can't pass by. If someone is born of God. He cannot sin. Now that feels like.

You are saying. Well it is impossible. And we should almost feel that weight. We should feel like. It should be impossible. I am sure you have said.

Plenty of times. To your children. That you can't do that. Knowing full well. That they are capable. Of doing it. But you can't do that. That's the weight. That John is trying to get at here. Of course it is entirely possible. For you to do it. But you can't. Do that. And I think this idea. Of continuing.

[20 : 58] Is what helps us. To understand what is going on. We will sin. We will continue. To do things that are wrong. But not always doing the wrong things. Not never fighting against it.

John Owen is very helpful. When he says. Be killing sin. Or sin will be killing you. There is no alternative to that. You are either killing sin. Or sin is killing you.

Are you daily making battle against sin. Not in order to impress God. But because you are. A child of God. And if this.

The specific example. That John uses here. There is love of brother. I'm sure we can all think. Of besetting sins. That we struggle with. And want to see dead.

But John wants to focus here. On loving one another. This is the message you've heard. From the beginning. That we should love. One another. So we can sort of co-opt.

[21 : 58] John's language. John Owen's language. Be killing your hatred. For your brothers. Or your hatred. For your brothers. Will be killing you. Be killing your disdain.

For your brothers. Or your disdain. For your brothers. Will be killing you. Be killing that way. You look down. On your brothers. Or that way. You look down. On your brothers.

Will be killing you. We should not be like Cain. who was of the evil one and murdered his brother why? because his own deeds were evil and his brothers righteous now I expect that these words would have echoed in their minds I imagine he uses this example of Cain because they had some brothers or people they thought were their brothers who they had loved dearly and all of a sudden are disdainning them why? because they bother with all that godliness stuff they care about being holy and so they left them and mocked them we should not be like that that is not how the Christian behaves we should care about holiness we should not be like Cain mocking those who seek holiness we should seek that holiness we should seek to be like Jesus we should seek to be what we are because it is the last hour and when he comes as the pure son we will want to be like that I heard somebody say quite helpfully that sanctification is about reducing culture shock when we get to heaven that is what we should be striving for reducing the culture shock when we get to heaven because this is the last hour and he will appear we don't know when but Jesus' promise is always I'm coming soon so we should prepare ourselves for that but never forgetting that we begin with look at this great love we should meditate on that great love don't start with thinking I need to work harder but start by remembering this great love with which God has loved us let us pray