

III. We can have true sonship because **“God is Love”** (I John 3:1 – 5:21)

**Obedience (I John 3:1-24)**

As stated earlier, God’s love separates us from the world. As the world does not love God, so they will not love those that remind them of God / those that represent God to them. Instead of resenting this, God’s children see it as part of the loving process of our heavenly Father to make us, more and more like His Son, Jesus Christ. God’s promises give us hope. God’s hope gives us the catalyst to walk obediently, keeping eternity in view. God’s Spirit not only reveals God’s love to us, but we become a channel of His love, blessing each other within the family of God. Chapter three blends the themes of obedience and love, for love is the basis of truly obeying the Lord (Romans 13:8-10).

**I John 3:1-3 – God’s love gives us a purifying hope.** As we behold God’s love to us, we must brace ourselves for the world’s opposition. Loving obedience to God often brings criticism, if not persecution. It reflects a bigger battle the world is having with God. Compare the relationship between Israel and Samuel (I Samuel 8:4-8).

As a child of God, project your bright future and develop your present way of living to go in the direction of your future. Consider the book “Living Life Backwards” by David Gibson (Crossway). It is based on the book of Ecclesiastes.

**I John 3:4-7 – A Christian is not a lawless / unprincipled person.** Though sin will happen in the Christian life (I John 1:8-10; 2:1), it is not something that we will allow / tolerate as a regular practice. Through the indwelling of Christ’s Spirit, we strive to keep the spirit of the moral law of God. See Romans 8:1-4,11-13; I Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 5:22-23. A righteous life is the outcome of a relationship with Christ. See John 15:1-8; Philippians 1:11; 4:13; Romans 13:12-14 (cp. Ephesians 6:10-18); Galatians 2:20; II Timothy 2:1.

**I John 3:8 – A life that tolerates sin / is dominated by sin is the outcome of a relationship with the devil.** Here is a description of that kind of life:

- It operates according to worldly / fleshly lust and pride (I John 2:15-16).
- It is lawless and unprincipled – not a biblically-based code of conduct. It is random and chaotic (I John 2:4; Jude 1:3-4).
- It is a life of bondage and slavery (Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:8; John 8:30-36).

**I John 3:9-10 – A true relationship with Christ is the result of a new birth, not mere training.** The new birth:

- Is instantaneous life that is produced by God’s Spirit (John 3:6-8).
- Produces faith and begins a life-long process of growth (Ephesians 2:1,4-5,8-10).
- Means “His seed” / “His life” becomes a part of us (Romans 5:10 cp. 5:5-11).
- Is Christ coming to live within us and live His life through us (Galatians 2:20)
- Produces visible evidence – **loving obedience** (I John 2:6; Ephesians 5:1-2).

**I John 3:11-13 – God’s primary commandment to the believer is that we live in an environment of Love (I John 4:16; Jude 1:20-21; John 13:34-35).** Cain was the first example of how sin produces hatred and murder. He was influenced by the devil (John 8:42-45). Cain loved sin and hated Abel, along with Abel’s good works. Therefore, he killed his brother (Genesis 4:1-16). This narrative serves as a pattern of what happens between the children of God and the children of the devil (**I John 3:10**) / the children of the world (**I John 3:13**).

**I John 3:14-19 – Obedient love is not mere talk or feelings.** Let’s examine the nature of hatred and the nature of love.

- Hatred is an environment of death (**I John 3:14**).
- Love is an environment of true living (**I John 3:14**).
- Hatred is the root-essence of murder (**I John 3:15**).
- Love is perceived by its sacrificial giving (**I John 3:16-18**).
- Love is evidence of a true relationship with God (**I John 3:18**).
- Love gives our hearts assurance with God [i.e. peace and rest] (**I John 3:19**).

A life of love leads to confidence. When we know we are loved, we know who we are and have a sense of direction. When we live a life of love, we are in control of ourselves. See Proverbs 16:32; 14:29; 19:11. Hatred and selfishness lead to striving, grasping, competing and blaming. A life of anxious striving and discontentment shows that we are not in control of ourselves (James 3:13-18).

**I John 3:18-22 – Confidence and Assurance before God.** Obedient loving action is a way to gain inner peace. It shows that we are truly born again (**I John 3:18-19**). God graciously will correct us if our thoughts and actions are not in harmony with His will. He patiently reveals sin to us incrementally, in a process of gradual growth (**I John 3:20-21**). See Hebrews 12:1-11; Philippians 3:14-15; Proverbs 4:18 cp. John 16:12-15.

Obedient loving action is a way to see a productive prayer life. The evidence that we are born again is not that we merely say prayers, but that our prayers are answered. Do not think that we can earn the answer to our prayers. Rather, we must see that God will not bless hypocrisy. How can we expect God to listen to us if we are not willing to listen to Him? (**I John 3:22**). See I John 5:13-15; Psalm 66:18-20; Proverbs 15:8,29; 28:9; Isaiah 59:1-2; I Peter 3:12 cp. James 4:1-4; 5:16.

**I John 3:23-24 – Respect for God’s commandments and an honest effort to obey them.** This is the evidence of an intimate and fruitful relationship with God’s Spirit. We will recognize the difference, if we are grieving or quenching the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:17-32; I Thessalonians 5:14-24).