

## A Study of 1 John 3

### I. Outline.

1. Sons of God (1 John 3:1-3).
2. What is sin? (4).
3. Jesus and sin (5).
4. Christians and sin (6-9).
5. Children of God versus children of the devil (10).
6. Love one another (11-18).
7. Assurance available in Christ (19-24).

### II. Summary.

What a blessing it is to have God as our Father and to be called “sons of God.” John reminds us of this relationship in the beginning of this good chapter. Knowledge of such a relationship OUGHT to motivate us toward purity as our Father is pure! John provides one of the Bible’s definitions of SIN in this chapter (v. 4). If we do not notice the continuous action of the verbs in verses 6-9, we could twist the Scriptures to make them teach the impossibility of apostasy, which many do teach. However, the idea is that we do not continue in sin. We are urged to love our brethren in the clearest of terms. Our love for brethren must be something that we demonstrate and not just speak. John helps us to see that we can do that which is PLEASING in the sight of God (v. 22), which ought to be our constant aim. Figuratively speaking, we can have Christ dwelling in us and we dwelling in Him by keeping His commandments.

### III. Chronology.

**BIBLE PERIOD:** The Period of the Christ.

*If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:*

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

### IV. Words/Phrases to Study

- 3:1... **THE WORLD KNOWTH US NOT, BECAUSE IT KNEW HIM NOT**—“His contemporary countrymen rejected Him because they could not accept a Galilean carpenter as the Son of God. The gnostic could not accept His humanity without rejecting His deity. And today’s pseudo-intellectual denies His unique Sonship to go in quest of ‘the Jesus of history.’” [Clinton Gill, *Hereby We Know: A Study of the Epistles of John*, 1986, Bible Study Textbook Series, College Press, Joplin, MO, an e-Sword Module].
- 3.2... **IT DOTH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE ... WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM**—“The glorious anticipation of being ‘like him’ should prompt us to utilize every faculty we possess in his service, and thrill us with the prospect of awakening in his likeness. ... The wondrous blessing which this promise includes—of being like him—should not be lightly regarded or passed over hurriedly. It is a summary of all the good things which the Father has in reserve for his own. There is a story often told of a group of heathen converts who, when they came to this verse in translating into their language, unable to believe that such could possibly be in store for sinful man, stopped and said, ‘No! It is too much. Let us write that we shall be permitted to kiss his feet’” [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude*, Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1973, p. 258].
- 3.3... **EVERY MAN THAT HATH THIS HOPE IN HIM PURIFIETH HIMSELF**—“By striving for the purity which the Lord possesses we reach for the goal which will be finally realized when he appears” [Woods, p. 258].
- 3.4... **TRANSGRESSETH ALSO THE LAW**—ASV = **DOETH ALSO LAWLESSNESS**—“John says, ‘Sin is lawlessness!’ This is John’s definition of its nature and its character. Sin is the stubborn refusal to be governed by moral norms. ‘Lawlessness’ comes from the compound Greek word *anomia* (*a* =

anti + *nomos* = law + *ia* = practice). The practicing sinner is either wanton in his disdain for ethical standards, or else he defiantly holds a theology that rejects the existence of moral rules. Without a doubt John is posed to refute antinomian gnostic thinking in their claim that sin is irrelevant both to God and man” [Paden, Gerald (2011-01-01). *Epistles of John* (Kindle Locations 1524-1530). Sunset Institute Press. Kindle Edition].

- 3.4... **SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW**—“This verse teaches that sin is a personal refusal to be governed and circumscribed by divine law; instead, there is a setting of the human will against the divine will. Hence, sin involves a wrong attitude toward God’s will and way. ‘The set of the will’ is involved. In sin, it is not a ‘have thine own way, Lord,’ nor ‘my Father as thou wilt,’ nor ‘speak Lord thy servant heareth, command and I will obey,’ nor ‘not my will, but thine be done,’ matter. Rather, it is ‘what do I want...’ Though overt acts are involved in sinning, sin is basically a matter of attitude toward constituted authority and law !” [Wendell Winkler, *Studying Sin Seriously*, pp. 14-15].
- 3.6... **WHOSOEVER SINNETH HATH NOT SEEN HIM, NEITHER KNOWN HIM**—“The meaning of the verse is, he who has taken up his abode in Christ, and settled down to a permanent existence in him, has terminated his former manner of life and has ceased the practices then characteristic of him. He no longer engages in habitual and persistent sin. That he has broken the hold of sin in his life, and no longer regularly yields to evil impulses as a manner of life, is far from asserting that there are never occasional lapses into sin through weakness or ignorance (cf., 1 Corinthians 9:27; Philippians 3:12). For these inadvertent lapses, a plan has been provided (1 John 2:1). ... Thus, in the study of this verse if we keep in mind that the verbs SEEN and KNOWETH, as here used, express RESULT, the meaning becomes clear. ‘Whosoever continues to abide in him does not keep on living a life of sin; whosoever does keep on living such a life, does not see him or know him.’ Obviously, one who has lapsed into a life of habitual sin, such as characterized him before his conversion, no longer sees (enjoys) God, nor knows (recognizes) God in his life” [Woods, pp. 265-66].
- 3.8... **THE SON OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED, THAT HE MIGHT DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL**—“For this very purpose God’s Son came that He might destroy the Devil’s works. These wicked works and sinister schemes are inclusive of his well-laid and skillfully-engineered plans, purposes and intentions to destroy man. The Devil knows only too well what his eternal destiny is to be from final judgment onward: eternal Gehenna. Jesus made crystal clear in a great judgment scene given the Tuesday of the Final Week that hell or that realm of everlasting fire has been **‘prepared for the Devil and his angels’** (Matt. 25:41). The Devilish Deluder would like nothing better than to corrupt the whole race and have all share his eternal torments in the pits of never-ending Gehenna. The Merciful Three -- Father, Word and Holy Spirit -- determined to do something to thwart this Satanic mission and desire. Jesus, Second Member of The Timeless Trinity, came in might and with a mission that had man’s redemption at its very core or center. Included in the works of Satan which Christ came to destroy are not only sin and its guilt but all things connected therewith. Physical death will be destroyed at the second coming as reflected in 1 Cor. 15:26, 51-56 wherein we read: **‘The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death .... Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law’** [Robert R. Taylor, Jr., in *Studies in 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John*, Edited by Dub McClish, Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1987, pp., 92-93].
- 3.9... **FOR HIS SEED REMAINETH IN HIM**—“But why does the one begotten of God refrain from habitual and persistent indulgence in sin? Because his seed remains in him and he cannot sin.

Whose seed? God's. What is God's seed? The word of God: 'The seed is the word of God' (Lk 8:11). In whom does this seed abide or remain? In the child of God. What does the word 'abide' signify? That the word of God has made its home, as it were, in the heart of the one begotten. Is this a scriptural concept? 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom' (Col 3:16), which we translate more vividly, 'May the word which Christ speaks to you have in your hearts in all its fullness its home.' What is the result of such? The child of God cannot sin" [Guy N. Woods, p. 271]. Cf., Psalm 119:11; Mt 4:1-11.

- 3.14... **HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER ABIDETH IN DEATH**—"... affirms that a present failure to love produces a present residence in spiritual death. To love not is to live not!" [Gerald Paden, *Kindle Locations 1767-1768*].
- 3.15... **WHOSOEVER HATETH HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER**—"...means that the one who habitually hates his fellow-man to the exclusion, of course, of any good attitude towards him, is a potential murderer. Should occasion arise, his hate would issue in action like that of Cain. A person like that, John says, does not have eternal life abiding in him. In short, he is unsaved" [Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, 1942-1955*, e-Sword Module].
- 3.16... **WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN**—"The reason of this consequence is that we are to be like Christ in everything; as our being is orb'd in His, so whatever was His spirit will be ours: even His unparalleled act of self-sacrifice must be reproduced in us, at however great a distance. For the good of our fellows we must be even ready to die. (Compare John 13:34; 15:12-13; Romans 9:3; 16:3-4.)" [W.M. Sinclair, *The Epistles of John, A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, Editor: Charles Ellicott, e-Sword Module].
- 3.17... **BOWELS OF COMPASSION**—"The bowels, or 'upper viscera,' embracing the heart, and the region of the chest generally, are in the Scriptures represented as the seat of mercy, piety, and compassion, because when the mind feels compassion it is that part which is affected" [Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, an e-Sword Module].
- 3.20... **IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US, GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART, AND KNOWETH ALL THINGS**—"If, in spite of the assurances provided, we yet suffer the uneasiness which springs from the realization of our own weaknesses and the consciousness of our own imperfections, let us remember that God is greater than our heart; he knows all things; and he will deal with us, not according to our conscience, but in harmony with the eternal and unchangeable principles of right. Knowing all things, he knows us better than we know ourselves, and he will deal with us accordingly. Let us then not be disturbed by the promptings of conscience, but conform, as far as possible, to the standard of right, with the assurance that he will approve our course at the last day" [Guy N. Woods, p. 284]. Another view: "If we have a troubled conscience because we have not kept the law of love, God, who is greater and whose condemnation is a far more serious affair, **knoweth all things** and seeth our failure in duty" [B.W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament*].
- 3.22... **WHATSOEVER WE ASK, WE RECEIVE OF HIM**—"The promise of the passage is, of course, to be understood within the limitations of his promises regarding prayer elsewhere set forth: vis., that the prayer must be in faith, in confidence, according to his will, and in keeping with his instructions regarding prayer. The truly faithful child of God seeks ever to learn what the will of the Father is, even in matters pertaining to prayer, and does not ask for those things which he discovers to be contrary to the Father's will" [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on 1 John*, p. 285].
- 3.24... **AND HEREBY WE KNOW THAT HE ABIDETH IN US, BY THE SPIRIT WHICH HE HATH GIVEN US**—"Humanity yearns for God's abiding presence. Man cannot walk with God in the fairest of all relationships through mere feelings, emotions, or human reassurance. This verse states the fact of God's abiding in us, and the means whereby we know that fact is the truth revealed by His Spirit. As one continues in obedience, the stress and anguish of life are resolved in the apostle's beautiful statement, 'We know.' Through the Word the Lord's Spirit bears witness with our spirit, and because His Word is true, we know that He abides in us. In a world of darkness and doubt, God's Word pierces the dark gloom of despair with the message of hope and joy. 'We know'"

[Owen Cosgrove, *Studies in 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John*, 1987 Annual Denton Lectures, Editor: Dub McClish, p. 107].

## V. Lessons & Applications.

- **THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD** (1 John 3:1). The idea that ALL men are children of God is not found in Scripture. The Old Testament shows God as Father of His own people (Exodus 4:22). The New Testament shows God as Father not of all men, but of those who become SPIRITUAL ISRAEL (Galatians 3:26-27, 29). This is not a natural, but an ADOPTIVE sonship (Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:5). Sonship is the supreme gift of God's love (1 John 3:1). Sonship is demonstrated by righteous living and brotherly love (1 John 3:10). Seeing Jesus and being like Him is the hope of this sonship (1 John 3:2-3). God's fatherly relationship to Jesus Christ implied four things: (1) Authority, John 6:38; 17:4; 4:34; (2) Affection, John 5:20; 15:9-10; (3) Fellowship, John 16:32; 8:29; (4) Honor, John 17:1; 5:22-23. All of these implications of the Father/Son relationship of God & Christ extend to God's adopted children—IN, THROUGH, and UNDER Jesus Christ our Lord. We are RULED, LOVED, COMPANIED WITH, and HONORED by our Heavenly Father. As Jesus obeyed God, so must we (1 John 5:3). As God loved His only begotten Son, so He loves His adopted sons (John 16:27). As God had fellowship with Jesus, so He does with us (1 John 1:3). As God exalted Jesus, so He exalts Jesus' followers as brothers in the one family (John 12:26). In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs.
- **SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW** (1 John 3:4). One of the Bible's definitions of sin. Whenever the Bible tells us \_\_\_\_\_ IS sin, we must perk up and listen and be interested in the definition. Three other definitions are given:
- **FOR WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN** (Romans 14:23). SIN IS A VIOLATION OF THE CONSCIENCE. In the context of this passage the word FAITH is contrasted with DOUBT. Thus it is not referring to the body of doctrine as in Jude 3. This is faith in the subjective sense. The text is teaching that to believe something to be wrong and then to go ahead and do that thing that you believe to be wrong is to violate one's conscience and is thus sinful.
- **ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IS SIN** (1 John 5:17). FAILING TO KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS IS SIN. Cf., Psalm 119:172.
- **THEREFORE TO HIM THAT KNOWETH TO DO GOOD, AND DOETH IT NOT, TO HIM IT IS SIN** (James 4:17). KNOWING TO DO GOOD AND NOT DOING IT IS SIN.
- **WHOSOEVER ABIDETH IN HIM SINNETH NOT** (1 John 3:6). The idea here is of continuing to abide in Christ and such position is the position of not continuing to commit sin. It ties in well with the second epistle of John, verses 9-11. When we transgress or go beyond the doctrine of Christ, we no longer have God or Christ—it CANNOT be said that we abide in them. We must abide in Him, in the sense of living a faithful Christian life, continuing to follow the doctrine of Christ—living and remaining in it.
- **NOT AS CAIN...** (1 John 3:12). The example of Cain is held before us as one NOT TO FOLLOW. What was it that Cain asked: **Am I my brother's keeper?** (Genesis 4:9). Yes, I am to have interest in my brethren—that is what love of brethren entails. We cannot say that we love our brethren if we love only in word or tongue (v. 18).
- **WHATSOEVER WE ASK, WE RECEIVE OF HIM...** "... Consider further that as a Christian we pray as our Lord did, '**not my will, but thine, be done**' (Luke 22:42). If we truly want the Lord's will to be done before and above our own will, then why should it surprise us that God does not always answer our prayers the way we think He should. Surely we realize that God knows all and that by knowing all, He knows what is best. ... Yes, the promise is true. God does answer our prayers. However, we must keep in mind that the promise is not unconditional. We must keep His commandments, and we must do that which is pleasing in His sight. If we fail to meet the conditions, then God does not listen; but if we meet those conditions, then we can have great

confidence and assurance that God’s ears are open unto our cries” [Chuck Northrop, *We Can Rest Assured!*, Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1994, pp., 72, 77].

- **DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT** (1 John 3:22). To me it is a pretty exciting prospect to think about the possibility of PLEASING the God of Heaven! We have been so greatly blessed to be presented a book, the Holy Bible, the following of which will cause us actually to be able to PLEASE our Creator!
- **AND HEREBY WE KNOW THAT HE ABIDETH IN US, BY THE SPIRIT WHICH HE HATH GIVEN US** (1 John 3:24). The Spirit tells us through the word that Jesus abides with his disciples (Matthew 28:20).

**VI. Questions.**

**True or False**

01. \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of compassion demonstrates lack of love.
02. \_\_\_\_\_ Because the world did not know Jesus, they will not know Christians.
03. \_\_\_\_\_ It is not possible to please God.
04. \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 119:172 helps to explain verse 7.
05. \_\_\_\_\_ We do not know WHY Cain slew his brother.

**Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)**

06. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was manifested for the purpose of: (a) our good; (b) taking away our sins; (c) we are not told.
07. \_\_\_\_\_ If we come to recognize that the world hates us, we should not: (a) fret; (b) worry; (c) marvel.
08. \_\_\_\_\_ HE in “**when he shall appear**” refers to: (a) Jesus; (b) God, the Father; (c) the Holy Spirit.
09. \_\_\_\_\_ The way to dwell in Christ and have Christ dwelling in us is to: (a) keep His commandments; (b) pray; (c) it is not possible.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ John teaches us that this person is righteous: (a) the one who seeks righteousness; (b) the one who does righteousness; (c) the one who prays for righteousness.

**Fill in the Blanks**

11. **Beloved, if our \_\_\_\_\_ us not, then have we confidence toward God.**
12. **My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in \_\_\_\_\_ and in \_\_\_\_\_.**
13. **...for sin is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.**
14. The person who doesn’t love his brother abides in \_\_\_\_\_.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ said: Am I my brother’s keeper?

*Each Question is worth 7 Points*

**My Score is:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Answers will be found on next week’s handout*

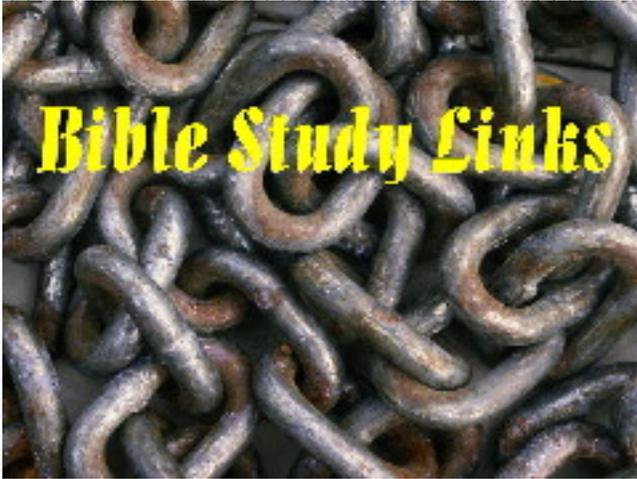
**ANSWERS to 1 John 2 Questions...** **01**—False (3); **02**—True (14); **03**—True (25); **04**—True (10); **05**—False (5); **06**—28; **07**—16; **08**—1; **09**—10; **10**—21; **11**—denieth (22); **12**—seduce (26); **13**—liar (4); **14**—darkness (9); **15**—antichrists (18).

**VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.** The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. –DRL

M S Y O G N E I T H E R T  
 K U L B B D L N T V L R U  
 N B Y R E O E E E G T T N  
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 T E F I L H A P P E A R A

<b>ABIDETH</b>	<b>ANOTHER</b>	<b>APPEAR</b>	<b>BECAUSE</b>	<b>BEGINNING</b>
<b>BELOVED</b>	<b>BORN</b>	<b>BRETHREN</b>	<b>BROTHER</b>	<b>CHILDREN</b>
<b>COMMANDMENT</b>	<b>COMMITTETH</b>	<b>DEVIL</b>	<b>DOETH</b>	<b>EVEN</b>
<b>HEART</b>	<b>HEREBY</b>	<b>KNOW</b>	<b>KNOWETH</b>	<b>LIFE</b>
<b>LITTLE</b>	<b>LOVE</b>	<b>MANIFEST</b>	<b>NEITHER</b>	<b>RIGHTEOUS</b>
<b>SINNETH</b>	<b>WORLD</b>			





## IX. Links.

**for 1 John Chapter THREE**

*These links are to the writings of men and not to inspired Scripture, thus care and caution in weighing the conclusions is always wise. Some are not really links, but listing of material commonly available in books and publications.*

- **J.W. McGarvey's *Fourfold Gospel* on 1 John 3...**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/tfg/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- **Burton Coffman's *Commentary* on 1 John 3...**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- **Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible*, on 1 John 3...**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/bnb/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- **Joseph Benson's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, on 1 John 3...**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/rbc/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- **Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, on 1 John 3...**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/rwp/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- **Vincent's *Word Studies* on 1 John 3...**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/vnt/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- **Schaff's *Popular Commentary on the New Testament*, on 1 John 3**  
<http://www.studylight.org/com/scn/view.cgi?bk=42&ch=3>
- Collection of notes published by Bradley S. Cobb (from notes in his classes at the Bible Institute of Missouri) available, as an e-Sword module, for \$5.00 online at: <http://bit.ly/116wncN>