

**1 John 3:1-10(ESV)** <sup>1</sup>See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. <sup>4</sup>Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup>No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup>Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup>Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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.

God is holy love. God is holy. Everything God does is right. God cannot do wrong. Everything God does is perfect, and he can do no other. God is completely righteous. God has never sinned nor can God sin. There is no evil in God, no dark side. He is perfect light. Every word God has ever spoken is absolute truth. God cannot tell a lie. His word lasts forever.

I think it can be good and healthy to question God. Yes, every believer in God faces doubts from time to time about God. On this earth we struggle, we hurt, we get wiped out by difficult circumstances, broken relationships, broken friendships, loss of a job, a report from the doctor that your days are numbered. Anxiety and depression seem to be at an all-time high for all ages. To say the least, we live in difficult time. The politics of the day is to destroy those who disagree with you. Disharmony is the atmosphere we breathe day in and day out.

If God is holy, and always right, and all powerful, how can there be so many things going wrong all around us? One answer to that question is found in our passage this morning. Our nation has entered a season of lawlessness. When God is no longer feared, when God is no longer revered and respected as holy, another spirit takes over, the spirit of lawlessness. You can even call it the spirit of anti-Christ. Lawlessness simply means "And they did that which is

right in their own eyes.” Lawlessness means a person sets their own standards of right and wrong, ignore and mock God, and serve what the Bible calls the prince and power of the air, Satan. It is thought that people have a right to burn down buildings across the United States, destroy whatever is in front of them because they feel mistreated, victimized, and not heard. So, the only way to be heard is to destroy property in order to be heard. The Bible calls it lawlessness, behavior without restraint, giving the old sinful nature free reign. The massive shootings across the land are lawlessness. Wanting to destroy the lives and reputation of those you disagree with politically is lawlessness. Lawlessness is direct rebellion against God and behavior without restraint. God’s ways are to love God and to love one another. Lawlessness is the complete absence of loving God and loving one’s neighbor. Hatred takes the place of love. To walk in lawlessness is to walk away from God and to repel the love of God.

The Holy Spirit of God has the power to restrain sin. When God’s ways are shunned, mocked, and ignored over a period of time, this is what happens. “And God gave them over to their sin.” The restraining power of God is pulled back and the nation reaps the consequences of forsaking God and God’s ways. Stealing, killing, and destroying, the works of the devil, becomes the norm. Most of the news of the day could be entitled, National Lawlessness - What Rebellion Against God Looks Like By The Hour.

For Christians to thrive in times like this, it is what we know about God, it is how much are we feeding our souls with the word of God, it is all about putting God first in our lives that will make all the difference in the world. The early church had it much worse than we do, and they thrived. We know what every human soul is crying for. Every human soul is in desperate need of the love of God. Every human heart craves for what only our holy God can give. God is the answer to the hurting heart for God is love. Only the love of God can bring great peace and satisfaction into a person’s soul.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we ask for an outpouring of your holy love upon on the nation. Please forgive us for our national sin of unbelief, of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. May every soul in our nation be humbled before you, repent of our sinful ways, and receive your eternal love. Please warm every heart in this nation by the power of the Holy Spirit. May the spirit of lawlessness be replaced by the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. Please forgive us where we have let sin reign in our lies. May righteousness increase and sinfulness decrease. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

*“<sup>1</sup>See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and that we are.”* The term “see” that John uses could also be translated “behold.” John intends for us to pay direct attention to and reflect on the greatness, the lavishness, and the grandeur of the Father’s love for us. Spurgeon says, “Pry into this secret!” (David L Allen, 1-3 John, pg. 135). God’s love is broad, deep, marvelous, unimaginable, incomprehensible, boundless, endless, and measureless (ibid pg. 136).

Pondering the wonder of the Father’s love to John meant increased joy (Robert Yarbrough, 1-3 John, pgs 174-175). The greatness of the Father’s love is ours to take in, soak in, be bathed in, live and abide in. The greatness of the Father’s love is what makes life worth living even in the most difficult of times. The greatness, the lavishness of the Father’s love is why He adopted us into His family, making us his beloved children. God loves you because he loves you. It takes God’s love for you to save you for all eternity. God can do no other than love you. Love is at the very center of God as is his holiness. Out of perfect love, God adopted you into his family. You are sons and daughters of God. You have been born of God (ibid pg. 175). Dr Yarbrough writes, “In broad terms all humans are children of God in that God is their maker (Isaiah 45:11-12). More particularly, Israel has God as its father (Deut. 32:6-12; Isa.43:6-7; Mal. 2:10). But Christians are children of God in a still fuller sense. “By God’s creative act of love, we belong to God as surely and permanently as children belong to their parents.... We do not

simply *look at a love* that is external to us and marvel at its greatness; we *know* a love that resides *within us*" (Ibid pg. 175 quoting Schlatter).

I think there is an art to receiving love. I think some people are more adept at receiving love than other people. One person will only take in teaspoon of God's love when there is an ocean of his love to swim in. All parents make mistakes with their children, no question. Sometimes a memory comes back of the days when our children were at home and I cringe when I remember ways that I blew it. There is mystery here to me. Children in the same family often have a differing view of the parent's love toward them. I know the parents and the children. I know the great love the parents have for each child. When speaking to one of the children they will say, "My parents do not love me." Another child in the same family will say, "I never question Mom and Dad's love for me." I say it is easier to give love than to receive it. As I now look back on my own childhood, I do not question at all my parents love for me even when they made their mistakes with me. At their worst, they still loved me and at 63 I now see that. Young people your parents love you. No one on this earth loves you more than your parents. Please accept that even when you feel mistreated or let down by them. Receive their love and know that any way you may feel their love is inadequate toward you, God's love makes up for all the difference. The love of God the Father meets all of your love needs.

John knew the love of Jesus more and deeper than all of the disciples. Jesus loved them all equally, but John experienced His love on deeper levels than the others. John looked into the eyes of Jesus and saw the love of the Father. The Father's love was given to John through Jesus and it overpowered John. John never lost his wonderment for the love of God. The love of God meant everything to John and gave him great joy. His heart fellowshiped with God in love.

God loves us all equally and personally adopted us into His family and delights in calling us his children. He never even gets our names wrong. He is intimately acquainted with you in every way. He knows the worst about you and loves you just the same.

<sup>2</sup>*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.* Presently we are God's children. One day Jesus will come again. We will see Jesus, "just as He is." And when we see him, all of God's children will receive brand new glorified bodies that will never be sick or grow old or die, and completely without sin (Study notes of Robert Yarbrough, ESV Study Bible, pg. 2433). The Bible says, "we shall be like him." "Christians will be morally without sin, intellectually without falsehood or error, physically without weakness or imperfections, and filled continually with the Holy Spirit." But "like" does not mean "identical to," and believers will never be (e.g.) omniscient, or omnipotent as Christ is since he is both man and God" (ibid. 2433).

<sup>3</sup>*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.* Knowing now what we shall be like then has a way of purifying us in the present. Since God's love for us is so great, we chose to live a life that pleases God. Jesus' death on the cross means for us the power of sin no longer has to dominate our lives. When we walk consistently in the love of God, our behavior and attitudes begin to show a family resemblance to God Himself. We live to love God and avoid sin. We no longer have to cave into our sinful nature. We can have victory over sin through the power of God, especially God's love.

A teenager was invited to go to a place, and she knew her father would not agree. She asked to be taken home instead. "What's the matter with you." "Do you think you are better than us?" "Are you afraid your father will hurt you?" I appreciate her response. "No I love my Dad and I do not want to hurt him" (Warren W Wiersbe, the Bible Exposition Commentary Volume 2, pg. 505).

*<sup>6</sup>No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup>Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup>Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>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.*

These are not easy verses to interpret. I am short on time so I will give this my best effort. The love of the Father inside of us constrains us, restrains us from walking in absolute rebellion against God habitually. Non-believers live in a spiritual state of lawlessness, a constant rebellion against God and God's ways. As believers in Christ filled with the love of God, our lives are lived to please God, to obey God, and avoid sin. Jesus has given to us the ability to avoid sin and obey. The problem is we still have within us the old nature that wants to sin, and we will struggle with that old sinful nature until Jesus comes again or we pass on to heaven before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. The good news is Jesus calls us to confess our sins unto God and God will forgive us completely (1 John 1:9). I know any Christian is capable of any sin. I know I am capable of any sin. On the other hand, we have God's power within to help us not to sin.

I have seen Christians backslide. One day they are loving Jesus and the next day they choose to live in continual willful sin, like the prodigal son. Any of us are capable of this. God's love and power is greater than the power of sin. God perseveres with us and God has His ways of bringing us back into close fellowship with God. Once you have a taste of that close fellowship with God, nothing else on this earth can fill it no matter how hard you try.

God is in the restoration business, bringing back into the fold those who have strayed from Him. God's grace is greater than our sin. Amen and Amen.