

Week of November 26 – December 2

We Are God's Children (1 John 3:1-6)

John says, "Look at how much our heavenly Father loves us. He allows us to be called His children! But most people don't know God and don't understand that we are His children. We are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what it will be like later. We know this, that when He comes, we will be like Him due to seeing Him as He is. Everyone who believes this will try to stay pure because Christ is pure.

"Those who keep sinning are against God since every sin is done against the will of God. You know He became a man so He could take away our sins. So, if we stay close to Him and obedient to Him, we won't be sinning either. For those who keep on sinning, they should realize that they sin because they never really knew Him or become His."

We Are to Love One Another (1 John 3:7-24)

Next, John talks about loving one another. He adds, "If you're doing what's right, it's because you are good, even as He is good. But if you keep sinning, it shows you belong to Satan, who steadily sins. But He came to destroy the devil's works, and the born-again person does not have to make sinning a practice because God's life is in him. He can't keep on sinning since his new life is from above and controls him.

"We can tell who a child of God is and who belongs to Satan. Whoever is living a life of sin and doesn't love his brother shows he isn't in God's family. His message to us from the beginning has been we should love one another.

"We are not to be like Cain, who belonged to Satan and killed his brother. Cain had been doing wrong, and he knew very well that his brother's life was better than his. Don't be surprised if the world hates you.

"If we love others, it proves we've been delivered from hell and given eternal life. A person who doesn't have love for others is headed for eternal death. Anyone who hates his Christian brother is a murderer. We know what real love is from Christ's example in dying for us. So, we ought to lay down our lives for our Christian brothers.

"If someone has money enough to live well and sees a brother in need and won't help him, how can God's love be in him? Stop saying we love people – really love them, and show it by your actions. Then we will know by our actions we are on God's side, and our consciences will be clear when we stand before the Lord.

"If our consciences are clear, we can come to the Lord with perfect assurance and trust, and get whatever we ask because we are obeying Him and doing the things that please Him. This is what God says we must do: Believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another. Those who do what God says are living with God and God with them. We know this is true because the Holy Spirit tells us so."

We Are to Test the Spirits (1 John 4:1-6)

John says, "Don't believe everything you hear just because someone says it's from God. Test it first. There are many false teachers around, and the way to find out if their message is from the Holy Spirit is to ask yourself, 'Does it agree that Jesus Christ became a man with a human body?'"

If so, then the message is from God. If not, the message isn't from God but from the antichrist already in the world. You belong to God and have won your fight with those against Christ because the One in your hearts is stronger than any evil teacher in this wicked world. We are children of God, and that's why those who have walked and talked with God will listen to us. Others won't. If it's from God, the world won't listen to it.

We Are Practice Loving Others (1 John 4:7-21)

"Practice loving each other since love comes from God, and those who are loving are the children of God and getting to know Him better. But if a person isn't loving, it shows he doesn't know God since God is love. God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son to bring us eternal life through His death. It's not our love for God but His love for us when He sent His Son to satisfy God's anger against our sins.

"Since God loved us that much, we ought to love each other, too. Though we have never seen God, God lives in us when we love each other, and His love in us grows ever stronger. He put His Holy Spirit into our hearts as proof we live with Him and He with us. We have seen with our eyes and now tell the world that God sent His Son to be our Savior. Anyone who believes and says Jesus is the Son of God has God living in him, and he's living with God. God is love, and anyone who lives in love lives with God, and God is living in him. As we live with Christ, our love grows more perfect and complete, so we won't be ashamed and embarrassed at the day of judgment but can face Him with confidence and joy because He loves us, and we love Him.

"If anyone says, "I love God," but keeps on hating his brother, he's a liar. God said that we must love not only God but our brother, too.

We Are to Have Faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:1-12)

Lastly, John says, "If you believe Jesus is the Christ and that He's God's Son and your Savior, then you're a child of God. You can find out how much you love God's children by how much you love and obey God. Loving God means doing what He tells us to do. Every child of God can obey him, defeating sin and evil pleasure by trusting Christ to help him.

"We know Jesus is the Son of God because God said so with a voice from heaven when Jesus was baptized, and again as He was facing death. The Holy Spirit says it too. We have three witnesses – the voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the voice from Heaven at Christ's baptism, and the voice before He died. They all say the same thing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God declares that Jesus is His Son. All who believe this know in their hearts that it's true. If someone doesn't think he is, he is calling God a liar. God said He had given us eternal life and that this life is in His Son. So, whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have His Son does not have life.

John's Concluding Remarks (1 John 5:13-21)

John ends this letter by saying he wrote this letter to those who believe in the Son of God so they may know they have eternal life. We are sure that He will listen to us whenever we ask Him for anything in line with His will. If we know he's listening when we talk and make our requests, then we can be sure He will answer us.

"If you see a Christian sinning in a way that doesn't end in death, ask God to forgive him, and God will give him life unless he has sinned that one fatal sin. One sin ends in death, and if he has done

that, there is no use praying for him. Every wrong is a sin. I'm not talking about these ordinary sins but of that one that ends in death.

“No one who has become part of God's family makes a practice of sinning since Christ, God's Son, holds him securely, and the devil cannot get his hands on him. We know we are children of God and that the rest of the world is under Satan's power and control. We know that Christ has come to help us understand and find the true God. Now we're in God because we are in Jesus Christ, His Son, who is the only true God, and He is eternal Life.

He ends his letter with the most important words in it: Keep yourselves from idols.

Counsel and Warnings (2 John 1-13)

John calls himself the old Elder of the church and says he is writing to a woman named Cyria, a Christian, and to her children whom he loved, as did everyone else in the church. He was happy to see some of her children were living as they should, following the Truth, obeying God's command.

He said he wanted to urgently remind them of the rule God gave from the beginning, that Christians should love one another. “If we love God,” he said, “we will do whatever He tells us to.”

“Watch out for false leaders who don't believe Jesus came to earth as a human being with a body like ours. These people are against the Truth and Christ. Don't be like them, losing the prize you and I have been working so hard to get. See that you win your full reward from the Lord. If you wander beyond the teaching of Christ, you will leave God behind. If you are loyal to Christ's teachings, you'll have God, too.

“If anyone comes to teach you, and doesn't believe what Christ taught, don't even invite Him into your home. If you do, you'll be a partner with him in his wickedness.

“Greetings from the children of your sister – another child of God.

His Most Personal Letter (3 John 1-15)

Again, John calls himself an elder and says he is writing to Gaius, a dear friend. This is the only book in the New Testament that doesn't mention Jesus by name and is the most personal letter in the New Testament. His message is that we are not abiding in the Truth if we fail to show love to others physically and financially. Our activities reveal our true attitude. We can look at activities and see if we are loving or selfish.

He says that some of his friends traveling by told him that Gaius' life stays clean and true and that you live by the standards of the Gospel. He adds, “You are doing good work for God is taking care of the traveling teachers and missionaries who are passing through. They've told the church about your friendship and your loving deeds. They're traveling for the Lord and take neither food, clothing, shelter, nor money from those who are not Christians, even though they've preached to them. We should take care of them to become partners with them in the Lord's work.

“I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but proud Diotrephes, who loves to push himself forward as the leader of the Christians there, refuses to listen to me. When I come, I'll tell you some of the things he's doing, what wicked things he's saying about me, and the insulting

language he is using. He not only refuses to welcome the missionary travelers himself but tells others not to, and when they do, he tries to put them out of the church.

“Don't let this bad example influence you. Follow what is good. Remember that those who do what is right prove they are God's children, and those who continue in evil prove that they are far from God. But everyone speaks highly of Demetrius. I can say the same for him, and you know I speak the Truth.

“I have much to say, but don't want to write it since I hope to see you soon, and then we will have much to talk about. So, good-bye for now. Friends here send their love, and please give each of the folks a special greeting from me.

Sincerely,

John