

# 1<sup>st</sup> JOHN BIBLE STUDY

1 John 3:02-03

Lesson #12

## Introduction

Last week we began chapter three of 1<sup>st</sup> John. We studied the first verse that says we are children of God. We agreed that John was referring to the Christian believers as the children of God, and not all mankind in general. At that time I said that there were two common aspects of the term children. One is that of family affiliation, and the other is concerning the level of maturity. I said that John would use both of these aspects in his first two or three verses. The first verse dealt with the aspect of family affiliation, that of ownership and belonging to a specific group. We discussed this in detail, and supported our conclusions with many and diverse passages of scriptures that God has, by His own choosing, selected a family to be His own possession, out of all the inhabitants of the earth. That the scriptures teach this is beyond any reasonable debate, and we proved it conclusively in our previous lesson.

In this lesson, covering verses two and three, we'll see the other aspect of children, that aspect dealing with the level of our maturity. I'm blessed with three children, two grandchildren, and two more grandchildren on the way, as of the time of this lesson. I can still remember well my children when they were just babies. Their whole lives were still before them, and the possibilities and opportunities awaiting them were endless. Of course, I and their mother had no way of knowing what any of them would do with their lives, and what choices they would make as they grew older, and neither did they themselves. Even though they were free to choose, they had no idea what choices and what opportunities awaited them, and who they would eventually marry, and if they themselves would also someday have children of their own. And if you think about it, it's best that we don't know everything about our lives in advance. All of those things are precious gems awaiting the finding, and we take great joy as they unfold day by day. Also, we don't know when the last day of our lives will be either, and this is certainly good also, because it would probably affect our behaviors quite significantly.

When parents look at their little children they ask themselves silently, will he be a Moses, or will he be a Judas Iscariot? Will she be a Mary, or will she be a Jezebel? We always have the highest of hopes and expectations for them, but at the same time we also know that only time will tell. Not knowing all the final details in advance is essential to the ongoing progress of events that will eventually shape their outcome. And likewise, even though God knows every detail of our final disposition, it is nevertheless essential to the systematic process of events, that we ourselves are not aware of these things in advance.

In His great wisdom, God has providentially withheld from mankind the answers to those questions that would change the way people would live their lives, and the choices that they would make along the way. Life is both an **adventure**, and an **education**, and this is God's intention. That in the living, we would come to comprehend the immense value of this gift of life, and, that we would learn certain essential lessons about it, from our direct experience of it.

To do this, to progressively learn all those essential truths that make life valuable, we must start from the beginning. So God has created us as children. He made us to be born as babies, and we slowly grow and learn until we reach adulthood. But, in the broader aspect, we are still children as long as we reside in these earthly bodies, that both contain, and restrain, our present existence, and limit our scope of knowledge. As parents, there's many things that we don't try to tell our children immediately, because we know they don't yet have the comprehension to grasp them, nor the maturity to deal with them if they did. So we wait for life and growth to do its work, and eventually they learn all these things, and gain the maturity to deal with them.

To be clear, I'm speaking of those things like working and earning a living, and supporting a family, and getting along with our neighbors, and how to function in an adult society, and contributing to the overall good. Children don't even comprehend these things at first, and only time and first hand experiences can teach us these things. And furthermore, it's the successes **and** the failures that round out our maturity. We learn just as much, if not more, from our failures than we do from our successes, this is a well accepted fact of life. And God knew this about us long before we ourselves ever came to that understanding.

Our lives are the practical living out of this very reality. Before we can become functioning adults, we must be children. We must go through all those learning experiences that make us ready to take our place and uphold our portion. No baby is expected to immediately function among society, but must acquire this capability by many experiences of life, and likewise, no member of the eternal family of God will be left unequipped to comprehend the value of the honor that's been bestowed upon them, and the immeasurable value of that gift. And it is through the experiences of life, both the success and the failures, that we learn all these things that bring us to the position that makes us ready to become His companion. (Rev 19:7)

The verses we're about to examine are speaking of this principle that we've just explained. That we are spiritually only children at this particular stage of our lives. We have learned many things, and the experiences of life have revealed the immense value of this gift of life, and we've learned a great deal about those essential truths that define the quality of this life, and how it works, and why God has granted it to us. And, although the specifics aren't yet available, we are told that our future, as adults, is one where we are finally mature enough to become God's family and Christ's eternal companion, because we'll eventually, by many and diverse experiences of life, and the teaching of holy scriptures, and a final act of Christ whereby He exerts His power over all matter, be made to be just like Him. And this is the title I've chosen for this lesson:

### **We Will Be Like Him**

*1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.* 1Jn 3:1-3 (NASB)

Starting now at verse two:

#### **Verse 2:**

*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be.* [But] *We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.* (Rom 8:29; 1Co 15:51-53; Phi 3:21)

Clearly John is making a distinction between what we are "now" and what we eventually "will be." He's doing this so that he can then elaborate on that "will be" portion. In our introduction we mentioned that parents who have children in our human society don't have any way to know in advance what their children will be when they grow up. But God not only knows, but has predetermined it before He ever began creation, and the entire workings, and diverse situations, and circumstances, of that creation is specifically designed as the **means** by which He achieves that predetermined result.

We all too often get the cart before the horse, by which I mean that we think that everything that happens in our lives is what will determine the outcome, but that's not what the scriptures tell us. The scriptures tell us that everything that happens in life is the means by which God molds us into the vessel that He's already chosen us to be. Boy does this humble us, huh? Does that mean that we're more or less, just pawns in a much bigger game than we might think? Yes, that's exactly what it means. The scriptures tell us that God has a use for those who are humble and contrite of heart, and who tremble at His word, but as for the proud, God is openly opposed to them and has no use for them. (Isa 66:2; Jas 4:6; 1Pet 5:5)

In the broad evangelical sphere, there's this concept that the whole point of this life is to see how many people we can persuade to make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ so they'll avoid hell and gain heaven. That this is what it's really all about, and all else is just nonessential garnishments. Debates over theology and practice are often viewed as distractions from the essential mission. But this is yet another misapplication of information. While nobody would deny the necessity of evangelism, it's by no means portrayed in the scriptures as the end goal of God. Rather, it's just the first of many essential tools that have been granted to the church for the purpose of bringing every true believer to spiritual maturity in their knowledge of God, and to the stature of the fullness of Christ Jesus, which is the true end goal. For instance consider these verses:

*11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.* Eph 4:11-13 (NASB)

Can we see that there's a much higher purpose in God's plan for His children than just saving them from the Lake of Fire? After calling them out of the world of sin, and into His beloved body of believers, He then has a very specific plan for their further development. He's equipped the church with pastors and teachers for the expressed intention of equipping them for their own work of service in the building up of that body in its knowledge of Christ, and their own transformation into His likeness. This isn't simply a garnishment, it's the purpose of their calling in the first place. And this is plainly stated in this next reference verse:

*28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.* Romans 8:28-30 (NASB)

There can be no reasonable debate that the scriptures teach us that God has a definite purpose of His own in mind for calling certain individuals, and furthermore, this verse tells us exactly what that purpose is. The stated reason why God calls some to repentance through faith, and justifies their sins, is because He has predestined that they are going to be conformed to the image of His beloved Son, so that Jesus will be the first of many like minded brethren, who will all have been conformed into His image by the expressly stated, predetermined, will of God, who will then glorify them together with Christ, His Son, and thus establish His eternal kingdom. Our earthly lives are the first part of that process.

This is declared to be the motivating goal, and final intended purpose of God for the salvation of man, and nothing less than this will suffice. To think that our work is essentially done when we get a profession of faith, is to be entirely ignorant of the whole purpose for which we sought that profession of faith. A profession of faith is a commencement ceremony, not a graduation celebration. Upon commencement we are recognized as family, we've heard and understood enough of the gospel to begin the work, but we're essentially still ignorant little children, in need of growing up to maturity by the further study, and practical attempts at faithful application of holy scriptures, to fulfill our intended purpose in God's plan. In these attempts at practical applications, we'll have some successes and we'll have some failures, but we'll learn what we're supposed to learn from both. That's the plan.

The important lesson to learn, and the one that we're intended to come to by way of our repeated failures, is that there's no salvation from our sins residing within our own capabilities. No matter how much we desire to be sinless, and how dearly we cry out to God for relief, we're still trapped in a contaminated vessel (our flesh) until that specified time when He, himself will redeem us from it. Until then we are still children, still in the learning phase of our development, and we're not permitted to skip those experiences. Paul repeatedly asked God to remove a thorn (metaphorically speaking) from his flesh, but was told "no" by God, who said that His grace was sufficient. (2Co 12:7) God determined that Paul needed that unpleasant thorn for his own good. Just like children need occasional discipline for their own good, and they need to try various things and fail, and in the doing, to learn all those things that they'll need for adult life. A man or woman whose never tried and failed at anything isn't very useful, or humble, are they? Such are not ready to be joint heirs with Christ.

We won't ever perfect anything while we're here on this earth, especially ourselves, because God didn't intend for us to be able to, rather, He intends that we learn with absolute certainty that we're **not** able, so that we'll appreciate the value of what He offers. And what is that? Sinlessness, perfect righteousness, freedom from all temptations to sin against God for the gratification of our flesh. In a final act, whereby Christ completes this ongoing sanctification process, we'll be completely transformed and glorified. But that can only happen when the time has arrived, and all the necessary events have taken place, as God has predetermined. None of this is allowed to happen in this earthly realm of existence, nor can it happen to fallen flesh, as Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians:

*50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

1 Cor 15:50-53 (NASB)

As this verse says, our flesh and blood bodies aren't intended to experience this transformation into imperishable immortality, that's something that must happen in a new and uncontaminated body that we will receive by an act of Jesus Christ, whereby He can make this transformation by the exertion of the power that He already has resident within His glorified body, to subject all things existent to His own will. He will finally perfect that ongoing sanctification work in process in every believer, and bring it to perfect completion, because we could not do it ourselves. (Phi 1:6) And we've finally learned that life lesson for ourselves, by years of failed attempts, and heart wrenching confessions. So, when we finally understand the immeasurable value of righteousness, and its direct connection to the gift of eternal life, then the work that creation was intended to accomplish in the education of the chosen will have been done, and the conclusion of the age can commence and the final transforming work of Christ can finally become reality in the lives of God's children, who have been prepared to share in His glory with Him. Listen to Paul's explanation of this as he distinguishes between the believers and the unbelievers:

*17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20 For [but] our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

Phil 3:17-21 (NASB)

What Paul says in Philippians is precisely this same thing that John is saying in this verse that we're studying. *We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.* John says that while it's not yet evident exactly what we will eventually be (physically and spiritually) nevertheless we are told that we will have been transformed into His image, and placed inside a new sinless and glorified body that perfectly matches Christ's glorified body. This will happen because Jesus has both the power and the intention to make it so. He will do what we desperately wanted to do ourselves, but had learned that we could not do, and in that learning, came to recognize the immeasurable value of that gift of eternal life, and not just life, but perfect righteous life, impervious to sin and temptations. Yes, Impervious to sin and temptations! Name for me, if you can, a more valuable gift in all creation? If you're a genuine child of God, then you cannot. This is the gift of gifts, by which we are made suitable to reside in direct proximity with God. He will be our God, and we will be His people, forever.

God could have kept the knowledge of good and evil away from us, as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but the end goal of God required that mankind would know about these things, and learn the full consequences of them, so that we can recognize God's righteousness and holiness in all its glory and splendor. He wanted us to know Him in more than just a superficial way, like animals know their masters. It is the intention of God that we humans be constructed enough like Him to recognize the magnitude of His glory, else how would we rightly worship Him, and truly that education is both painful and costly, both for God and for man, but in the end, well worth the cost, both for God and for us.

If you'll allow me to relate a little story, I once heard a preacher say (with tongue in cheek) that the first thing he was going to do when he got to heaven was to find Adam and give him a swift kick in the seat of the pants. Of course he was jokingly referring to all the subsequent consequences to humanity because of Adam's disobedience. Now, even though he was only joking, it showed a fundamental misunderstanding of the sovereignty of God in the affairs of man. It suggested that God really only wanted to bless mankind, and keep them from ever coming to the knowledge of good and evil, because He knew it would harm us. This idea reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of what was going on, and how God operates and interacts with humanity. If God really didn't want Adam and Eve to learn about good and evil, would He have placed that tree right in their midst and spoken of it to them? Of course not, God's plan for Adam and Eve, and all their offspring was that they would do just what they did, and the means that God used to accomplish it rightly placed the blame on them, even though it was His own intention that they would disobey His commandment.

Adam and Eve were little children who knew virtually nothing of God except His power to create them. It was God's plan that men would fall into sin and require a Redeemer for their salvation. And that they would do this by their own uncoerced will and against God's warning. But they were fully intended to fail, because the redemption of Jesus Christ was at the

very foundation of God's plan for mankind, and their essential preparation for His eternal kingdom. To be His eternal worshipers, they had to know who He actually is, and precisely why they worship Him. Look, we can train animals to kneel down before their masters, that's nothing honorable. But we can't train animals to worship their masters. They may appreciate that their master feeds them, and some might even show some affection, but they can never begin to comprehend the character, the dignity, the righteousness of their masters, that's far beyond their capabilities. God created mankind in His own image, meaning a being that could comprehend the concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, sin and righteousness. He did this so that we would be capable of understanding Him at a deeper level, and thereby capable of offering Him worship that He considers suitable and acceptable.

To achieve this end result, God made us first as little children, who must learn everything He wants us to know in small progressive steps. The story of mankind is one of a progressive revelation of God to us humans, and a long list of trials and errors on our part to understand what He wants. Even though individuals grow up, and get old, and pass away, humanity as a whole is still a little child, still learning those things God intends us to learn. But He has decreed that we will eventually graduate from this childish classroom and become fully capable adults. Capable of appreciating all that He is in His holy nature and essence, and all that He's done for us by His great mercy and compassion. And the boundless extents of His love toward us, whom He's chosen to be His eternal family.

We're not here to protect or perfect the earth, we're here being progressively perfected (that is educated) by God through our diverse experiences while on this earth. That's what He designed it to do. It is God's classroom for His children until such time as He decides that they're ready to be brought to the final stage of adulthood, and take their functioning place in His eternal kingdom. We are only children right now says John, but we will eventually be something much, much more than that when we stand with Jesus in His presence. Now let's look at the next verse:

### **Verse 3:**

*3 And everyone who has **this hope** fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

I can't help but wonder just how many people who read this verse rightly understand what John is implying by the term "this hope" as it applies to this verse. The immediate context is that we are children now, but when He (Jesus) appears, we will be like Him. (v.2a) The hope that John refers to in this verse, and says we should be fixed upon, is that hope that we will some day be just like Him. (Jesus) This specific verse isn't speaking primarily of our hope of His return, but rather on what **happens to us** when He does. Of course we eagerly await His return, and for many good reasons, not the least of which is our complete spiritual and bodily transformation into His likeness, and our glorification with Him says John in this verse. And that's something on which we should have of hope firmly fixed.

And if we do have our hopes fixed on this, (transformation to His likeness) then we'll be demonstrating it by the fact that we're making every attempt to purify ourselves right now. It's because we earnestly seek righteousness and purity that our spirit wars against our flesh nature, and we strive to walk worthily of our calling, and to be pleasing to our Lord and Savior. Make no mistake, it's only those who are keenly aware of their sins, and who are in daily warfare against them, who have their hope firmly fixed on this transformation at the return of Jesus Christ. And it might be argued that it's those who are the most aware of their failures who are the ones most fixed on the hope of relief. Now don't go assuming that I'm saying we should deliberately sin so we'll be more appreciative at Christ's return. Because we already know that's not how it works. Those freely practicing sin right now, aren't really anxiously awaiting His return and sin's termination. These are they who declare that they want to go to heaven, just not today. Remember what John already said in chapter 2:

*3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

1 John 2:3-6 (NASB)

This verse can be a very revealing one. If we ask ourselves, do I really have my immediate hope fixed on that day when I will be made to conform, in every way, with Jesus Christ? Do I really earnestly desire to see an end to my persistent temptations to yield to various sins? Will it be an enormous relief, and great joy, to have them forever removed?

I can't answer these questions for you, only you can answer them. But how you feel about this, and what are the main attractions that you feel in regard to the coming of Christ Jesus, are unmistakable indicators of your genuine spiritual condition. John says that the proper condition of a believer is that we have our hope fixed upon, and are eagerly looking forward to, the Lord's completion of that sanctification process, and our being made to be just like Him.

But how is it that we are to be made like Him? Are we going to also be little Christs? Well, we know there's some who teach this concept, but we also know that it's completely unorthodox, and steps clearly into the realm of heresy, if not downright blasphemy. We can be like Christ in much the same manner as Genesis says we were created in the image of God. We are to be made like Him in our nature and our behavior, in our desires and our affections, but being *like* Jesus is not by any means *being* Jesus. He is the preeminent figure in the heart, and mind, and whole creation of God the Father. All things were created *by Him* and *for Him*, and He is before all things said Paul in Colossians 1:16-17.

What John is tell us is that at His appearing, and our being given our new imperishable bodies that are like His glorious body, is that we are going to be properly designed to live where He lives, and to survive in His immediate presence and full manifest glory, that would otherwise consume us like a raging fire. But not just our physical transformation to His likeness, but our whole being must be brought into conformity. Our thinking, our hopes, our desires, all must be consistent with that of Jesus Christ. When He was here, He repeated said that He only did those things that pleased His Father, and we will finally be able to say that we only do those things that please our Father. Any desire to sin will be completely and forever removed from our being. Saints can you imagine this? And more importantly, does it cause you to leap for joy, or to maybe cringe a little bit? I sincerely hope that it causes only immense joy and eager anticipation, because that's the response of a genuine believer. A residual desire to fondly hold on to some of our pet sins is a very dangerous sign beloved. It was symbolized by Lot's wife, and her subsequent fate, when they left Sodom to escape God's judgement. She didn't escape the judgement because she didn't really want to.

Now please don't confuse my meaning. I'm not saying we aren't still under the temptation to yield to certain sins, I'm saying that we don't *want* to be so inclined. That we would quickly shed those fleshly desires, and drop them like a hot potato if we were only able to do so. We all still sin, but the children of God hate it, and confess it, and earnestly seek the day when we're no longer victims of its sinister ability to lure us into disobedience to God, even when we don't want to do so. For these, this day can't come soon enough. We don't want an extension of time, we have our hope securely fixed on this day, and long with eager expectation for His imminent return. We're already living according to this earnest desire to the very best of our ability, and seeking to purify ourselves, because we know that He is pure, and our desire is to be like Him in every way, even here and now.

Come quickly Lord Jesus. Amen

### **Conclusion:**

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami  
Robert Andrews, Pastor  
06/20/11