



Perfect Love

LOVE IN ACTION

1 John 3

Teaching Notes

INTRO

This lesson comes from the General Letters, which are letters of the Bible not written by Paul. In 1 John 2, the language from John is about walking like Christ. This is also referred to as walking in the light. In 1 John 2:28, the reference to the believers is as little children. The inference was that they were in righteousness with Christ.

Walking in sanctification means that believers are born of Christ. Justification is defined as being right in God's eyes. Sanctification is righteousness or walking out our right standing in Christ. Glorification is a state of perfection that believers will not be able to attain until Christ comes again. Believers are encouraged to walk in Christ so that when He appears, they will not be ashamed of how they had been walking.

TEACHING

1 John 3:1-10: John identifies the believers as God's children. John explained that the reason the world did not know believers as God's children was because they did not know God. God has given believers His love so that all could be called His children or the family of God. Not all believe and know God. Not all have chosen to receive His love; therefore, they do not know Him.

In verse 2 John states that believers are God's children, but they have not achieved the glorification state yet. Philippians 3:21 states that when Christ comes, the bodies of believers would be transformed to look like God and therefore be glorified. Wiersbe wrote, "First John 3:1 tells us what we are and 1 John 3:2 tell us what we shall be."¹ The hope—through the death, burial, and resurrection—implies that believers have eternal life. Also, the hope believers have in Christ is that eventually they will be with Christ forever. Our hope in Christ purifies us, cleanses us. Believers will look like Him. Ultimately, purification comes in the glorification state. Eventually believers will gain immortality and become free of a sin nature.

In verse 4 John states that everyone commits sin. Everyone who committed sin also broke the law. Lawlessness is rebellion against law. In verse 5 John said there is no sin in Christ. If believers abide in Christ, they do not sin.

Christ comes to take away sin, and those that remain in Him do not sin. If anyone does sin, they have an advocate.

Nelson's Commentary explains, "In the act of sin there is no vision of God. Sin is the result of blindness and ignorance toward God (2 Peter 1:9). Every sin that a believer commits is the result of wrongly thinking about God. In fact, if a believer never thought wrong about God, he or she would never sin. Little wonder that the apostle Paul urges us to bring 'every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:5). Any thought that we entertain that cannot pass that test may well be Satan's opportunity to take charge (Acts 5:2, 3)."²

The Holy Spirit is always in the life of the believer. The Spirit of God never leaves believers, even though there is a constant tension between the old nature and the new nature as outlined in the New Testament.³ There were occasions that the believers, for whatever reason, would for a brief time practice lawlessness, which was sin.

In verse 7 John states Christ knew that once the believer had been justified through Him, he would not sin. Satan will constantly pressure the believer to sin. Therefore, Christ came for two purposes: (1) to take away sin; and (2) to destroy the works of the devil. The reality is that Satan is still at work on earth and has limited time. Satan does whatever he can to get the believers to take their eyes off Christ. The battle believers are constantly in is ignoring the direction of Satan and keeping their eyes on Christ to avoid sin. Christ taught His followers to walk in righteousness.

There are several ways Satan is described in verse 8. He is described as the adversary or the enemy. Also, he is described as the devil or the accuser. Satan is also called the destroyer and the prince of this world. Satan, a created being, is here to get others to follow his path and not follow Christ. Christ stated that if believers kept their eye on Him, they would not sin.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, vol. II (Colorado Springs, David C. Cook, 1989), p. 504.

² Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p. 1711.

³ Wiersbe, p. 507.



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If the *Seed*, Christ, is in the believer, then the believer would walk as Christ walked. That is how God's children are identified—by how they walk in Christ. If individuals do not love their brothers, then they are not children of God. *Nelson's Commentary* explains, "Christians manifest their nature by practicing righteousness (3:7). Children of the devil display their basic nature by sinning."⁴

1 John 3:11–24: In verse 11 John tells believers to love one another. According to *Nelson's Commentary*, "Cain is identified as a spiritual child of the devil. His brother Abel is identified as a child of God."⁵ In verse 13 believers were warned that the world would turn against them.

Believers could not function in a spirit of bitterness toward others. Because of what Christ has done in the life of believers, they love their brothers. Because of Christ, believers have moved from death to life. Hate in anyone's life is likened to murder. No murderer has eternal life residing in them.

In verse 16 John gives the ultimate example of love—Christ's sacrifice of His life for the world. Sacrificial love requires some tangible results and walking in the way of Christ. Truth and action are required in true love for one another.

CLOSING

The way to know believers are walking in right standing is in their truth and action. The commands from God are to first believe in the Lord and then to love our neighbors. The question would be, do we really love those around us?

⁴ Nelson's Commentary, p. 1712.

⁵ Nelson's Commentary, p. 1712.