

SONS OF GOD

1 John 3:1-3

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

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I’m going to be speaking to you today, from the **Book of First John**. I would like very, very much for you to find a Bible and follow me as I read about three verses of scripture. I’m going to speak on this subject: **SON’S OF GOD**.

First **John Chapter 3**, and it says this, *“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the Sons of God. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know this, when He shall appear, we shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him and he that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as God is pure.”*

Now, let’s look at these three verses, almost word for word, just for a little while together. The first word in our text is the word *“behold.”* *“Behold what manner of love,”* *“behold,”* (look, and be aware). Here is an announcement of the greatest importance, *“behold!”*

Many, many, years ago the prophet Isaiah wrote this prophesy. He said, *“The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”* (God with us). What an announcement! Be aware, look, behold with amazement at what is going to happen. The Son of God is going to become the Son of man. One day, out on a Judean hillside a group of shepherds were tending to their sheep, and suddenly there were with them the angels of the Lord, a multitude of heavenly hosts. They said, *“Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, (Bethlehem), a Saviour who is none other than Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”*

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John the Baptist came preaching; he was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He came as the forerunner, the ambassador of the Messiah and the Elijah that God had promised would come before that great day of the Lord. He preached to multitudes; even kings went out to hear him. Herod admired John; he went out to hear him. He was a powerful preacher of the grace of God. Standing one day with two of his disciples, he looked up and said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.*" He saw the Lord Jesus Christ and he said to these two men with him, "Look, be aware!" Here's an amazing announcement. Right there is Abel's lamb; it's the Passover lamb of Egypt. It was the rock that Moses smote; it's the serpent lifted up, "*Behold the Lamb of God.*"

Well, my friend, one-day time will be no more. The covenant of grace will be no more. The sheep will be gathered into one fold, with one Shepherd. The church will be called out and the clouds are going to roll back and the trump of God is going to sound, and the voice from heaven will say, "Behold, be aware, look at the announcement of the greatest importance." "*Behold He cometh and every eye shall see.*" What a day! Some great announcements preceded with this word "*behold.*"

Here's another one in my text. The reason I'm saying all of that is to say this, "Behold, look, be aware, what an amazing discovery, what an amazing announcement!" "*What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called Sons of God.*" I tell you, when the Son of God became the Son of man, it merits a behold, a double behold, an amazing behold, a startling discovery, an amazing announcement, when the Son of God becomes the Son of man. I'll tell you this, when the Son of Adam, like you and me, becomes a Son of God, it merits a "*behold.*" "*Behold the Lord Himself will give you a sign and a virgin shall be with child by the Holy Ghost and thou shalt call His name Immanuel,*" (God with us, God in human flesh). That same word is used here, "*Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon this flesh that we should be called the Sons of God.*" The Son of man is the Son of God.

It takes just as great a miracle for you to become a Son of God as it did for the Son of God to become the Son of man. The hymn writer said:

It took a miracle to put the stars in space,
It took a miracle to put the moon in place.
But, when God saved my soul,
And made me whole,
It took a miracle of His love and His grace.

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I don't know how many of you are familiar with Old John Newton. He preached a couple of hundred of years ago over in England. John Newton wrote some great hymns and preached some great messages. One of the hymns that he wrote was:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now I'm found
I was blind, but now I see

Most everyone is familiar with this hymn. It was John Newton who wrote it, and it was John Newton who once said, "By God's grace, when I stand in heaven, three things will amaze me. The first thing is that I'll be amazed to see some people there that I didn't expect to see, and secondly, I'll be amazed to miss some people that I thought would be there. Thirdly, the most amazing, marvelous thing of all will be to find John Newton; the old slave trader, the old rebel in the presence of God." What a miracle! "*Behold what manner of love.*"

Not many people know much about this kind of love. "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*" Do you know what manner of love it is? People talk so flippantly and carelessly about the love of God. The songwriter said:

Oh love of God, how rich, how pure, how measureless,
It shall forevermore endure,
The saints and angel's songs.
Could I with ink, the ocean fill,
And where the skies of parchment made,
And every stalk on earth a quill.
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain that ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

What manner of love! Do you know what manner of love it is? I'll tell you first of all, it's divine love, and it's not human love. It's not this flippant, careless, soon-gone human love; it's divine love. "*Herein is love, not that we love God, He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation of our sins.*" This is the divine love.

It's not only divine love; it's everlasting love. "*What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us (these wiggling maggots), that we should be called the Sons of God.*" It's everlasting love. He said, "*I've loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.*" If God loves you today, He's always loved you. "*I'm the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.*" "*The gifts and callings of God are without change.*" It's an everlasting love. "*Having loved His own, He loved them to the end.*" We're the ones who have changed, not God, because it is an unchanging love. It's a divine love; it's an everlasting love and it's an unchanging love.

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“What manner of love!” It’s a love, which is freely bestowed. He didn’t sell it to us; He didn’t trade it to us; it’s unmerited love; *it’s* unearned love; *it’s* undeserved love. Do you see what I am saying? *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath (literally) bestowed upon us that we should be called Sons of God.”*

Some people say, “Well, everybody is a Son of God.” That’s not true! All men and women are not sons and daughters of God. No, Christ said they weren’t in John Chapter 8. Have you ever read that exchange between Christ and the religious Pharisees in this chapter? He talked about *“My Father and I are one; My Father sent me.”* They said, *“God is our Father, we have one Father even God.”* Our Lord Jesus replied, *“If God were your Father, you would love me, I came from God.”* The fact that you don’t love me indicates that you are not God’s children. He said, *“You are of your father the devil and his works you do. He was a liar from the beginning and he’s the father of liars.”* God’s not your Father. All men are not Sons of God. *“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”* John is writing to believers, the general epistle of John to the believers. He says, *“God has bestowed this love upon us that we should be called the Sons of God.”* How are we Sons of God?

You men and women listening to me, do you have a son? How is he your son? Well, he was born to us. Exactly! That son sitting with you by the television is your son. I’m not your son. That son was born to you and that is what the scripture says about us, *“To as many as received Him, (Christ), gave He the power to become Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name which were born, (not of natural genealogy, not of blood, not of human genealogy), not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but they were born of God.”* That’s the reason that Christ said to Nicodemus, *“You must be born again,”* born of God, born of the Spirit, born of the Word, born of God. How are we sons of God? We’re born Sons of God. The new birth, the second birth; we’re born again.

We’re Sons of God by adoption. God hath adopted us. He says, *“He has predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself.”* Do any of you out there have adopted children? You say, “Yes sir preacher, I’ve got one right here with me.” You chose that child, you adopted that child, and you gave that child your name. That is your child and that child is just as much yours as that son sitting beside you. He’s part of the family and he’s an heir of yours. We’re Sons of God by birth, we’re Sons of God by adoption, we’re Sons of God by His life, and His Spirit that is in us. *“As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the Sons of God. If any man hath not the Spirit of God, He’s none of His.”* He’s not a Son of God. If he doesn’t have the Spirit of God, he’s not a Son of God. *“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, (only they) are the Sons of God.”* That is **Romans 8:14**. How are we Sons of God? By birth, by adoption, by His Spirit that lives within. *“As many as are led by the Spirit of God are Sons of God, and if any man hath not the Spirit of God, he’s not His.”*

We’re Sons of God by faith. *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”* That’s how he believes, that’s why he believes. That’s how he has the ability to

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believe; he's born of God. God gave him eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to understand and faith to believe. Now, read carefully, "*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, (of all people) that we should be called the Sons of God.*"

The world doesn't know us because the world didn't know Him. "*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*" The world knew Him not. When our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, the scripture says, "*He was in the world, He made the world, and the world didn't know Him. He came unto His own and His own received Him not.*" They knew Him as Mary's son; "*We know him, He's Mary's son.*" They didn't know Him as God's Son. "*We know him, is not this the carpenter?*" They didn't know Him as the Messiah. "*We know him, He's the Nazarene.*" Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Wait a minute! He came from heaven. He said, "*I am from above, and you are from beneath.*" He didn't come from Nazareth; He came from the bosom of the Father. They called Him, "*the wine bibber and a gluttonous man.*" They didn't know Him. Oh, they acknowledged the miracles that He did and the good words that He said. It was fine for Him to heal their sick and to do all these things, but He couldn't be their God. They didn't know Him.

Also, the world doesn't know you. If you are a Son of God or a daughter of God or born of God, the world knows you, your family, friends, co-worker and neighbors, they know you as Bill or Bob or John. They know you as Sally, or Sadie or whomever. They know you as sister or brother, daughter or mother or somebody, but they don't know you as a child of God. They don't see the grace of God in you or the glory of God in you because it takes a Son of God to know a Son of God. It takes a Son of God, a daughter of God to know another child of God. The world can look right at you and not know you. They didn't know Him. The scripture says, "*If they had known who He was, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory.*" But it is written, "*Eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered the heart of men, the things God's prepared for them that love Him.*"

"*Behold, what love that we should be called Sons of God,*" therefore the world doesn't know us, don't expect them to, because they didn't know Him.

Now, it says in **verse 2**, "*Beloved, (see, this is written to believers; here's your comfort) now are you a Son of God.*" Not going to be, you are right now. "*There is therefore now, no condemnation (right now) to them who are in Christ. Therefore, being justified by faith, (right now) we have peace with God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*" Do you see that? "*Beloved, now are we Sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.*"

Everybody likes to speculate about heaven, what heaven is going to be like, and what sort of body we are going to have, what language we will speak, how we'll live and so forth. We'll have to leave that to God's revelation. Paul the apostle, went to the third heaven and this was his reply when he came back; this was his observation, He said, "*I heard things that are impossible to utter.*" I have no way of expressing to you what I heard in that Kingdom, in the presence of God. So, we'll just have to wait. I will tell you one thing, we

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can look at our Lord's appearance, to His disciples after He arose from the grave, in **Luke 24**, and we can tell a great deal about what we shall be because it said, "*When He shall appear, we're going to be like Him.*" We're going to be like Him in body, "*For He shall raise our vile bodies and make them like unto His glorified body.*" That's **Philippians 3:21**. We'll be like Him. He says, we'll be like Him in soul, "*He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son,*" (the very image). Christ is the image of the Father, the exact likeness. We're going to be conformed to the image of Christ, (in soul, in body and mind). "*Now we see through a glass dimly, but then face to face, we'll know as we have been known.*"

I struggle so much wanting to know, don't you? I want to be able to read the Word and to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. I mean know His gospel. Someday, I'm going to know like I have been known, what a revelation that will be. "*For, He said, it doth not appear what we shall be but we know this, than when He shall appear, we're going to be like Him, because we are going to see Him as He is.*" Now listen to me, listen to me carefully. Our minds keep trying to see Christ as He was. This says that we are going to see Him as He is.

They keep putting up these nativity scenes—with these babies, Madonna's, shepherds and all. That's not like He is, that is like He was. He's a babe no more, that's gone. They keep drawing pictures of Christ out there, sitting there and holding a little sheep, or walking around with a halo or talking with the disciples. That's not how He is; He was in the flesh, a man on this earth. That is no more. They keep picturing Him on a cross. You can't go into a Catholic hospital without seeing a crucifix. That's not my Lord; He's not on a cross.

The Hymn writer said:

The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with Glory now.
There's no more of the bloody spear,
The cross, the nails, no more.
For hell itself, shakes at His name,
And all the Heaven's adore.

Why don't you do away with all of those things? We're going to see Him as He is; do you hear me? It's not as He was. He's enthroned; He's not on a cross. He's exalted; He's not in a tomb. He's at the right hand of the Majesty on High; He's the Lord! Quit feeling sorry for the Son of God, and feel sorry for yourselves.

When He was carrying that cross going to Calvary, the women followed Him weeping and lamenting. He stopped, and He turned and said, "*Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves and for your children.*" You don't weep over the remedy, you weep over the disease. You don't weep over the dying Saviour, you weep over the cause of His coming down here and suffering for us and our sins. We're just so warped in this day; we are so twisted, we're so

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ceremonial, so idolatrous. Every church has a bunch of crosses around, and pictures and He is not that way! We're going to see Him as He is! The more you try to remind people of what He was, by pictures and crosses and crucifixes and all this sort of thing, the more you are going to hinder their true worship of the living God, and their true understanding of the exalted Saviour; He's the Lord. You've got to see Him as He is, not as He was!

Verse three says, "*Every man that hath this hope in him, (what hope)?*" Somebody said, "His blessed hope, His return." I'm telling you the blessed hope is what is going to happen to us when He does return. We're going to be like Him! That's my hope that I will be like Him, and "*He that has this hope, that He is going to be like Christ, he purifies himself, even as God is pure.*" There's a change.

I read a poem one time; it goes like this:

It was battered and scared and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on this old violin.
But he held it up with a smile and he said, "Good folk, who will start the bidding for me, who will bid for this old violin?
One dollar, two dollars, somebody make it three dollars,
Going once, going twice."

But no, from the room far back a gray haired man came forth and picked up the bow, and tightening the loosened string.
He played a melody as pure and sweet as an angel sings.
Then the auctioneer and a voice that was quiet and low said, "Now, what is the bid for the old violin? And he held it up with a bow, a thousand, two thousand?
Somebody make it three thousand, we're going for three thousand.
Going once, going twice, going and gone," cried he.
And the people cheered and some of them cried,
"We don't understand, what changed the worth of that old violin?"
He said, "The touch of the master's hand."

Many a man with life out of tune and tattered and scared by sin, is auctioned off by a foolish crowd, just like that old violin.
And the Master comes and the foolish crowd never can quite understand,
The change that's wrought in a sinner's heart, (life, attitude and spirit),
The touch of the Master's hand.

He that hath this hope, I'm going to see Him, He's going to come back I'm going to see Him as He is and I am going to be like Him! "*He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as God is pure,*" Sons of God!