

God's Amazing Love

By Jeff Noblit



Bible Text:

1 John 3:1-8

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Amen. Well, let's take our Bibles and let's go back to 1 John. We'll be in chapter 3, verses 1 through 8 tonight. 1 John 3:1-8, some verses that are difficult, I guess, and, and, um, some matter of difference of opinion not really on the final doctrinal truth that's being taught but how to interpret them, but I trust that in the balance of biblical truth these kind of texts can come out very clear and, uh, let's look at it together. 1 John 3 beginning in verse 1. I call this exposition "God's Amazing Love." 1 John 3:1,

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. 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

God's amazing love. Let's begin looking at verse 1 and talk about his crowning love. In a series awhile back and numerous times since then, I've spoken to you about the fact that we're, there's a proneness in Christian teaching that, um, God is ultra-simplistic. It's like God can only feel one way, he only loves one way. As you and I can love in many different ways, can we not? We love a suit of clothes. We love our pets. We love our children. We love our spouses. We love our fellow man. And we all know there's differences in that. It's not wrong to use the word that way. We all understand that means different things. Well, the same thing is true about God and while I'm not gonna be exhaustive in any way about the differing, uh, types of love God displays, I do want to talk about, number 1, his crowning love. What is the highest expression of love that God has ever shown? Well, it's unfolded there in verse 1 when he says, uh, in the verse, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us." Actually you could word it instead of

"See how," you could use the word, "Behold." It's, it's the word "behold, to call attention." John is saying, "I want to call your attention to something that is stupendous, something that is wondrous, something that is amazing, and I hope that grabs you tonight that John wants you to be grabbed, John wants you to be in a good way startled and taken aback at the wonder of this crowning love of God for his children.

Now he's connecting this back to verse 29 of the preceding chapter. He says, "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." The flow is that the very fact that you appreciate righteousness, the very fact that you embrace, love, and strive after righteous living shows that God has poured his love on you; shows that he loves you. Apart from God's initiative in love towards you, you would still love yourself and love sin and love the world. It's an amazing love that God would go to the effort. Have you ever thought about it? Why didn't he just get rid of all of us and just create a new world? But he chose to take wretches? I thought about going to Ephesians 2 and unpacking that a little bit again to show the great depth of human depravity and defilement that we all have before this infinitely holy and righteous God, and yet he not because of anything in us that drew his attention or drew his affections, but out of his own being, his own unlimited capacity to do good to those who are most unworthy, that's us, he loved us.

So Paul, Paul, John says, "Behold, this is amazing. This is wondrous to, to contemplate." And I submit to you that's his crowning love. Actually when he says, "Behold what, uh, great love," in the New American Standard, some scholars would argue it's better to say what manner of love. Dissect this thing. Look at the dimensions of it. Look at the wonders and the greatness and the glories of this thing, this love God has for his children. It has surpassing excellence. John 15:13, the Lord said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

So John wants to grab our attention, "Behold! Look at the amazing aspect of this love of God," and then he goes unto that second phrase there, that we might be called the children of God. Golly, you just read that and you just go on and drink your coffee. How do you do that? You, you are now called the child of God out of fully, wholly, completely out of God's acted initiative toward you through his Son Jesus Christ. That's his crowning love. Nothing that we know of that God has demonstrates comes to that level of love. Now you might say, "Well, what about the great love between God the Father and God the Son? The Scriptures bear that out." Well, I'm not gonna get into a debate to you about which one's greater and which one's more glorious except to say this, God loving God is one thing, God loving us, the wretches, the enemies, the violators of his holiness that we were, the deep unending offensiveness of our very being before his holiness, and yet for him to pour that love toward us to make us become a child of God, I submit to you that is his crowning love, a love that took us from the dominion of Satan and the corruption of sin to the kingdom of Jesus and the kingdom of light.

One way you might categorize the loves God has shown in the Bible, I might even though it doesn't specifically say it in Genesis but when God made all that he made in creation, the Bible says God looked at it and said, "This is very good." God looked at all

he made and said, "This is very good." That would include the animal kingdom and the, the plant kingdom and all that there is. So in one sense, the way we use the word today anyway, we could say God loves all that he made. God loves all of creation. There is certainly teaching in the Scripture, not a lot, but teaching in Scripture about how to treat your animals and take care of your livestock but that's not even to be compared to the love God has for humankind, for men made in the image of God. It's a great love for all mankind that the Bible teaches God has but that's not the crowning love of God. The crowning love of God is that love that is extended to his children. You want to look at it from the man perspective, those who've repented and believed on Christ. If you want to look at it from the divine eternal perspective, those who are his predestined and elect children. Nevertheless, what it took to bring you from the place of corruption and woe and wrath to the standing of a child of God, John says, "This is amazing. This is behold it, be amazed over it and marvel over it."

One of the great, great, great errors in pulpits today, in theological schools today is a light treatment of the doctrine of sin. Men must know the weightiness of their true standing to have a heart of gratitude and love for God for bringing them out of that place and into this exalted glorious position as John says here, being called the children of God. You see, there's a giant chasm between God's, what you might call his general love for all mankind, as great as that is, and his redeeming love for his children.

I said this to you some time ago. It wasn't original with me but I, I, you know, you know how you, a truth gets ahold of you and it, it never lets go, it's just kind of a little phrase and it, it speaks of a truth and it's just always there? Well, this is one of those truths that just tears me up in a good way and I don't understand why it doesn't tear you up. Maybe it does tear you up, you just don't tell me. But here's the truth: perhaps the greatest assurance we have that God will never quit loving us is that he never started loving us. As far as his elect children, he's always loved you. "I have loved you," he says, "with an everlasting love." Oh, my goodness, I'm just, you just need to go somewhere and lay down in a field and think about that. There's never been a time in all of eternity past when God's glorious love, love that had the power of God behind it was not pointed at me and fully for me. Never been a time. Never been a time. No wonder John says behold this amazing love, marvel over this.

We're talking about here his crowning love. The Bible says in love he became man, he bridged the gap between man and God. The Bible says he became sin, he bridged, bridged the gap between the sinful and the holy. The Bible says he died in my place. He bridge, bridged the doubt, gap for us in love between death and life. He has transferred us from that kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son. You know, there's nothing dearer than being a son and no wonder he uses that terminology. I mean, it's just layer upon layer upon layer of wonder in the love of God for his children. I really would hope, I really would hope that you sitting under my preaching would have to say, would be forced to say, would be compelled to say one day, "His preaching caused me to love God more. I just love Christ more because of his preaching." That's the real thing I want to hear. If, if it's not true, tell me anyway when I get real old, okay?

Now he says in verse 1, we should be called the children of God, last part, "and such we are." And notice he throws this in there, notice the flow of the context though as these antichrists, these liars he calls them, these people who are trying to undermine the Christian faith, who are trying to lead the children of God in the churches astray, and John says, "For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." In other words he said, "They don't get you. They don't understand what you're about. They can't grasp the doctrines you treasure. Brothers and sisters, and all of you pastors out there somewhere that may hear my preaching, get over the fleshly notion that somehow you're gonna take the truth of God and make it a, appealing to the lost world. It's just not gonna work. John says they didn't know God and they don't know you which leads to they didn't like God and they don't like you. They didn't appreciate the goodness and glories and wonders of God and they're not gonna appreciate any of God that they see in you.

You see, the whole course of the world is one great non-recognition of God and all of God's people and all of God's doings through his people. The world looks at us and thinks we live in fantasy land with this, this hope we have in Christ, this love for this Christ we cannot see, this repenting and denying sinful and lustful desires when the whole world has gone crazy, crazy, the whole world is teaching today whatever vile, wicked, depraved lust might float across your mind and heart, indulge in it. The world is saying we ourselves are our own god and we reject that and say, "No, there's an objective reality, there's a personal God who gave us His law and His truths and we don't obey His law to try to appease Him, we obey His law because we're His children. He's made us His children."

They think we're crazy. I mean, right now in just a moment, Shark Week is starting on the Discovery Channel. Have you noticed there hasn't been much good to watch on tv in a while? No sports, whatever, maybe some badminton game from China or something, I don't know. Shark Week and you're here. Why are you here when Shark Week started? Because your hope's in something bigger than that. Nothing wrong with Shark Week. I hope Pam recorded it. I would have but I'm not sure how to do it. Nothing wrong with Shark Week as far as I know other than that goofy narrative about sharks being almost like humans and all that stuff, and they feel pain and they think, "Yeah, isn't it crazy when she's going up here because she thinks this." How do they know that? They give you and they talked about these animals like they're people. Now that is wrong. That bothers me. If your children are sitting there, you can look at your children and say, "That's stupid. And that stuff right there, that's, it's magnificent the way God made all these creatures but all this narrative about all these things they feel and think and all this stuff, that's dumb."

Why do we want to be together and why do we want to hear the preaching of the word? Why do we want to walk the way we walk? Because God's made us his children. It's the crowning love of God that's been displayed in the universe, loving wretches like us. Are you listening to me, child of God? You cannot make God not love you. You can't make him not love you. He never started loving you, he's always loved you and he will never stop loving you.

Well, his crowning love, then John talks something about his completing love. This love he showers on us is about a process and he's gonna bring it to a completion. Look at verse 2, "Beloved, now we are children of God." That's settled. You are, you just don't look a lot like it yet. Then he says, "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." So really we are now the children of God though actually in a real, manifest, visible way it's not very obvious. Now don't misunderstand me, in the balance of biblical truth there are fruits in our lives and there is a righteous attitude and, and, and disposition, and certainly righteous behavior that should show people we're the children of God, but there's a magnanimous statement about who we are that's coming yet in the future. The unveiling is coming of Christ, the unveiled Christ but there will also be the unveiled children of God when he comes again. That's why he says when he comes again we'll see him, we'll be like him and we will see him just as he is. Listen, he saved you to make you like Jesus and in this process in time and space history, that means sometimes correction, that means sometimes discipline, that means sometimes pain. But you trust, believe me – listen to me – there is not one the Shepherd came after that he does not apprehend and bring all the way home. We will be with him and glorified with him one day.

You see, to the world today we don't look much different than them. To the world today we reflect mostly our natural birth, but there's a day that's coming when we will come to maturity out of our new spiritual birth and we'll be like Christ, glorified with him. It's, it's almost like we need to live in this world under this love of Christ that will, will bring this process to completion, and we need to live in this world with this attitude, the world rejects us, when the world thinks we're strange, and by the way, we don't fit this place. There was a day when you could say there was a general Christian consensus to the morals of our country. That's gone. We don't fit at all today and when we don't fit and when it's difficult, difficult and when we are persecuted and when we're heartbroken, we need to remind ourselves it ain't over yet. One day they're gonna see me glorified with my Savior and it'll be worth it all.

And we live with that hope. You see, originally man fell in sin. Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden fell in sin and as a result of falling into sin, man was no longer able not to sin nor able not to die. But in this new birth, we've become the children of God and when we come to the final glorification, the maturation of the new birth, we will then not be able to sin and then we will not be able to die. He's reversed it all for us. That's part of what it means to be like Jesus. Jesus is not able to sin and Jesus is not able to die and one day we'll be just like him. It's all coming. What, what's my point? It's completing love. He who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus.

A couple of cross references. Philippians 3:21, "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." In 2 Corinthians 3:8, "how will the ministry of the Spirit fail even," or rather, "fail to be even more with glory?" How, what's he mean? How, how would the ministry of the Spirit fail be even more glory? His point is when Moses came off the mountain, he received the letter of the law, literally Paul calls it

the ministry of death. Not that the law was wrong, we're wrong, but for the children it could bring nothing but death. The law couldn't bring the children home to forgiveness and glorification but nevertheless with that cold law, the letter of the law, when Moses came down the Bible says his face shone with a glory and the people couldn't look on his face and here's what Paul, Paul is saying, he's saying so now the ministry of the Holy Spirit which uses the preaching of the Gospel to change your heart, make you alive in Christ Jesus, bring the Holy Spirit to bear, residing in your hearts, he will continue to sanctify you and bring you all the way home to glory. He said that glory is gonna be far far greater than any glory Moses had after seeing God on Mount Sinai.

It's going to happen. Our Lord promised this to us. John 14:3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Brothers and sisters, we may be coming to a day in this country where we have to hold onto, "When I see Him, it's gonna get better." That could be. And by the way, if that's the way it is, that's enough. It's his completing love.

John 6:39, "All that the Father gives Me, I lose nothing but raise it up on the last day." Romans 8:29, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Christ is the first and one day we'll be like him. He's the firstborn but we're all gonna be born into this new eternal existence of glorification with him. Christ prayed this. John 17:24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory. I want them with Me forever."

John says the world doesn't know us, the world doesn't get us, we don't fit, and part of that's because they can't really physically see much difference between us and them but one day, one day we will bear the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ, and by the way, stand in his righteousness. They'll see it then. They'll see it then.

Well, number 3. His crowning love is the love he's shown to us wretches to save us and make us the children of God. His completing love, he's gonna bring this all the way through to glorification. It's all because of love. Then, thirdly, his consecrating love. His consecrating love beginning there, if you will, in verse 4. Well, actually verse 3. Let's start there, "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure." It goes on, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." And when he talks about having this hope fixed on him, it means resting or grounded on him. It means his promises are what we're banking on, and, and we're banking on it because we've begun to apprehend the great love he has for us. God does not deal with us as this threatening overlord who says, "Do what I tell you or else." He deals with us as a loving Father who gave his Son to make us his own. It consecrates us. Contemplating this love is a consecrating or has a consecrating effect, a purifying effect on our lives. If we set the compass of our hearts on Christ and one day being with him, this purifies us. Christ is our North Star. He's the one that we focus upon and he gets us home. It is his love that sets us apart from a life of habitual sins, sin that kills and destroys.

And, uh, A. T. Robertson brings out that this is a linear, uh, verbiage participle sometimes in these verses where he's talking about not a one who commits sin but one who embraces and practices sin as his way of life. That's what the Antinomians of this day would believe that you can just indulge in sin and embrace sin and just say, "Well, Jesus' grace covers me. I'm okay." He says, "No, no, no, that kind of, uh, what I call having as your purpose and pattern of life to sin cannot be one who knows God because when you know God's love, it changes you and it consecrates you. It has a purifying effect on you." Am I saying that you stop sinning? No, I'm saying that it has, it causes you to begin to be a hater of the sin your flesh loves. A hater of the sin your flesh loves. That's why I keep talking about you being a repenter. You didn't just repent, you became a repenter.

Verse 4 again, "Everyone who practices sin," again a linear action there, continues on in the embrace of sin as if nothing's happened to him, is, is, "practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." And then verse 5, "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin." He appeared to go to the cross that he might remove us from the curse of sin and the penalty of sin. When he comes again, he will remove from us the presence and all the consequence that sin had on us and in the world and the point is if you love him and then you're his, you cannot at the same time embrace as a purposeful pattern of life embracing that which the Bible calls lawlessness and sin. You do sin but it shames you and it hurts you, and ultimately it can't bring you pleasure. There may have been pleasure in the moment but it breaks your heart as you contemplate that you're a child of God.

He promised this consecrating effect in our lives. In John 16:13 Jesus said, "But when the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." In other words, the Spirit of God that he's placed in us, is a part of the way God guides us into righteous living. Whatever else the Holy Spirit does, he does two things: he convicts of sin, and he illuminates the Scriptures. Those are two very purifying or consecrating means, ministries in our lives.

Jesus prayed for our consecration. In John 17:15 he says, "I do not ask thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from," literally out of the power of, "the evil one." Don't let him hold sway in their lives. They're no longer his. Now, now you can't get into this foolish, man-centered, fleshly concept that I've got to somehow get a measurement on the sin, the number of sins or the type of sins, and if I can check the right boxes off, then I'm gonna be okay and I'm probably a, a Christian. That is foolish nonsense. You'll never win at that game. That's a dog chasing his tail. It's the attitude toward sin, the unwillingness to embrace and make it the pattern of your life.

Now look at verse 6 in our text, "No one who abides in Him," hey, that's the word we talked about this morning, no one who rests in him, no one who has placed their confidence in him as their Savior. "No one who abides in Him sins," again, the pattern or practice of sin, and "no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." No one who embraces sinful living. No one who embraces teaching that is clearly a violation of

Scripture can possibly know the God – listen to me – can possibly know the Christ or belong to the Christ who came to abolish sin. Are you with me? He came to point out what it was and do away with it. You can't claim to be his and knowingly embrace and promote it. Contemplating the great love of God for us has a consecrating effect. Look, it, it, grasping more and more of the love of Christ is far far far more powerful to clean you up than emphasizing the law of God, though that must be taught, but we teach the law of God in order to show ourselves how much we need the grace of God and to show ourselves afresh how much we rest on the provision of God in Christ Jesus as our Savior.

Ah, look at verse 7, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you," context again, the antichrist spirit, the false teachers and the liars, they were plenty in this day and there was a lot in, in the Gentile culture in particular. I'm sure it got over in the Jewish culture too of wanton, public embracing of sin and wickedness and some of them were teaching that Christianity is somehow compatible with all this giving of yourself over to sin and wickedness. So he says, "Let no one deceive you about this, the one who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous; the one who makes it his purpose and pattern to honor Christ and live according to His righteous standards, he is a righteous one. He's like Christ."

Verse 8, but "the one who practices sin is of the devil," this is verse 8, "he has sinned from the beginning and the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." So strong condemnation here against the Antinomian spirit that's been around forever that basically says grace, uh, covers everything else and there's not even to be any mention or teaching of law or morals, we'll just all do what we want because we're all under grace. Antinomianism, I think, is what was king in evangelical circles for decades when people emphasized mainly that, um, uh, I've asked the Lord to save me and so I'm done. You know, you, how many times have I witnessed to an older person and they said, "Preacher, I did that." What do you mean you did that? I want to know have you become something? Have you become a new man in Christ Jesus? Is there new thriving passion of your heart to honor him and please him and live for him? Is there new repenting in your soul against all that the Scripture would say is lawless and sinful? Not that you just jumped through a hoop one time. That's the Antinomian concept, just kind of check off the box, grace covers me, law, no, no need to teach law at all. We'll just do what we want.

Well, this is a strong condemnation of that kind of false teaching. One who comes at us with that kind of permissiveness in Christianity is of the devil. He is up to those things. Christians cannot join up in a cause that Christ came to destroy. Isn't that what the text says? Look at it again in verse 8, he "who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this," person, "purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." These things do not fit us. God is our Father.

Righteousness is our aim. We do not live in purposeful practicing or habitual sin for the same reason a son or daughter who loves and respects their parents will not habitually rebel against them. And what's the cause there? Isn't it the goal of every parent? I mean, there's a day when, when our children are young and we have to teach them right and wrong because there's a consequence. I still believe in spanking, by the way, but there's a

time when they get older that they're bigger than you are and they're older, and it's your hope that by that time they love you and have learned it's wise to obey mom and dad.

That's what I mean by the love for God consecrates us. He's gonna destroy the works of the devil, the text says in the last phrase. This reminds us that Satan is defeated, the sentence has been pronounced, but we wait for the final punishment to be meted out. This desire as we contemplate God's love, this desire to be a repenter, to please the Lord and never embrace sin nor justify sin, comes from a heart of love for God because he loved us first. He loved us with a love so glorious it captivates our minds and it directs our hearts, that is, it purifies, it consecrates us.

Teenage girls out with a gang of kids one night and they're going down to the car and she said, "Hey, where are we going?" And the person driving said, "We're going to So-and-so's house. He's having a party." Well, she knew what that meant. She'd heard about the parties at So-and-so's house and shes said, "Well, could you please take me home? I, I can't go to a place like that." One of her friends said, "Are, oh, what's wrong with you? You afraid your father's gonna hurt you?" She said, "No, I'm, I'm afraid that I would hurt him." That's what the Bible teaches. That's the child of God.

You may keep a bunch of external rules and look righteous but God don't care about that. He wants to know, "Do you honor My word because you love Me from your heart? Because you've grasped the crowning love I've had for you? You've grasped the completing love I'm gonna give you? I'm gonna make you just like My Son Jesus, you'll inherit everything with Him one day. Will you let this now have the consecrating effect on your life to please Him and Honor Him and glorify Him?" And when you walk in this flow, oh, we're never perfect but you know what nauseates you more than anything is when you see a proud legalist who's flaunting their rule-keeping as if that makes them righteous and you realize it's coming from a motive of self-promotion, not a motive of, "I'm a wretched sinner and I've been so overcome by the love of my God for me I just want to live for Him."