

Light Brings Salt

Volume 4, Issue 38

October 8, 2006



Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



The Gift of God's Love

Pastor John Griffith Sr.

In First John 3:1 John details the dynamic reality of the new life of the believer in Christ. The chapter break is unfortunate since John's statements here flow from 2:29. Having become members of God's family through the new birth, believers find that their new life has deep present as well as future significance.

John calls upon his readers here to contemplate the amazing reality of their present membership in God's family (v. 1a). He also reminds them that this relationship they have with Him explains the reaction of the world toward them (v. 1b). And he stresses that this new life as God's children also has future implications.

First we need to examine the amazing gift of God's love in the first phrase of 3:1. John's excitement at the implications of what he says about the awesomeness of being born again, being a part of God's family; being born one's. This wonder and excitement is evident as he says to his readers, *See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.*

The plural of the aorist imperative, "See," or "Behold" [εἶδον] calls upon the readers to take a more thorough look at the amazing love which gave them membership in God's family.

The strong force of See/Behold is that we need to take time to contemplate this love and allow its reality to sink down into the depths of our thinking. The very core of our new self, the new creation in Christ. The exhortation to them is to carefully note "how great a love" the Father has bestowed on them. Need to focus on the unique nature of God's love.

The adjective rendered "how great" occurs only seven times in the New Testament "how great" (ποταπός) has 2 threads of meaning. First it is used of anything foreign, the idea of that meaning in context is that the love of God/F is foreign to

this world and its thinking. If your looking for a unique illustration of God's love, you won't find it in the world, its unique its foreign to any experience in this world. Paul says in Eph. 3:19 the love of Christ surpasses human knowledge.

This word ποταπός also carries the idea of anything that astonishes or amazes or causes admiration. The more that we understand the love of God that flows to us from His Grace as a result of faith in Christ we should be amazed and it should cause us to be occupied with Him and His great provision for us.

So John is saying take a careful look, focus on the kind of love that God has which is foreign to this world, that you can't find an illustration for in this world and secondly look at the amazing love of God and notice the admiration that it provokes. The expression conveys both a qualitative and quantitative force, the idea being "what glorious, measureless love!" This love, originating with God, ever seeks the true welfare of those loved.

It is amazing indeed when we remember our personal status before Him before we believed in Christ, before salvation. [We were ungodly, sinners, enemies, dead] God's love is a love that works visible, transforming results in the lives of its recipients, those who become children of God, as we are responsive to His grace provision for our life. The perfect-tense verb "has bestowed" (δίδωμι) declares that this love is a permanent gift.

Not talking about the believers future at this point, he is talking about the present reality of the believer, experiencing the love of God, that flows from a past act, the point of salvation.

Being the recipient of God's great love cannot be earned or purchased but is a gift one that will not be withdrawn. Can never be lost. John's adds "bestowed on us" indicates that he explicitly includes himself among the recipients of this amazing love.

that we should be called children of God; This clause explains how this love is revealed. Its through us, our lives. The force of the clause is

factual, an unfolding of the nature of God's gift of love - that we are "called children of God."

The aorist passive verb "be called" speaks of our status as born ones, passive says that God Himself acted to make this a reality, we are now members of His family.

Since it is used without the article, "children of God" calls attention to our character, our nature, as members of the family, "God-children-a divine progeny." [spiritually] The KJV rendering "sons" does not adequately render the force of the Greek term. The word for children is τέκνον and speaks of the natural relationship of children as members of the family. [born ones]

It becomes a technical term John uses referring to this special relationship. John uses υἱός, 'son,' in 1 John only for Jesus in relationship to God." The added comment "and (such) we are" says its a true statement but doesn't appear in some texts, KJV. The phrase certainly adds to the force to the statement. John emphatically declares that we are not merely God's children in name, children is not just a title, but is a reality. Therefore this should give us assurance, encouraging and strengthening us. Its an expression of *a fact, we're children of God, the objects of His love*, facts which should impact all of our thoughts and actions. ??How is this great love manifested to the world? Through the lives of believers, the ones who practice righteousness, that is know what is right and do it.

John next focuses on the world's failure to understand believers. This amazing fact that we are now members of God's family, His children, explains the world's attitude toward believers:

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Question to answer here is this, Does "For this reason" (literally "because of this") look forward to the concluding clause "because it knew him not," or does it look backward to the fact John has just stated that we are now "children of God."

If we look forward the meaning is that the world does not recognize or understand believers because it never recognized Him. If we take the backward view, then John explains that the world does not recognize us because we are children of God. The backward view I believe seems more natural in the flow of the context.

Basis then of the worlds attitude towards believers is that we're God's children, and our life manifests that reality! Because believers are members of God's family, and when they are reflecting that family relationship, i.e. walking in the light, they are radically different from the world, therefore "the world," [κοσμος] the organized mass of lost

humanity in its estrangement from God, "keeps on not knowing us".

For the world there is no true understanding or appreciation of those who are born-again believers, they haven't a clue.

The fact of regeneration is foolishness in its eyes, those who are children of God, having believed in Christ, the world considers deluded. By its very nature the world, which "lies in the power of the evil one" (5:19), cannot truly understand or establish friendly relations with God's children. No basis for deep abiding relationship. 2 Cor 6:14-17

God's children understand why the world does not understand them: because it did not know Him. The aorist tense, "did not know" records the historical fact of the world's failure to know and understand reality of God.

The precise failure in view is determined by the accepted identity of "Him." If "Him" is understood as a reference to God the Father, John summarily notes that "the world's whole course is one great act of non-recognition of God." Repeatedly history has demonstrated that "the world through its wisdom did not come to know God" (1 Cor. 1:21).

More probable is the view that the aorist tense points to a particular point in past time when the world did not know Him. It would be most natural to see here a reference to Christ's reception at His first coming.

The world failed to understand or receive God's supreme revelation of Himself in His Son (John 1:10-11; 12:45; 14:9-11); it hated and rejected Him. (Jn 15:18-21)

John reminds his readers of this fact, that Christ was rejected, not known, which should help them/us to understand the world's reaction to His spiritual children, that is us. So the fact of their rejection by "the world," which includes all unregenerate individuals, attests that they are indeed members of God's family as it does for each of us.

Therefore, one commentator, Glenn W. Barker notes, "The author wants his readers to know that approval by the world is to be feared, not desired. To be hated by the world may be unpleasant, but ultimately it should reassure the members of the community of faith that they are loved by God, which is far more important than the world's hatred."