



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The First Catholic Epistle of St. John

## Chapter 3

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# Introduction

- Chapter 3 starts by explaining the extraordinary love of God towards mankind and its effects (1-3)
- Sin is the transgression of the law and Christ was manifested to take away our sins (4-6)
- The children of God are known by the holiness of their lives and the children of the devil are known by the sinfulness of their lives (7-10)
- Loving the brethren following Christ's example by laying down our lives for the brethren (11-16)



# Introduction

- Charity is a fruit of brotherly love, our love should be active not just by tongue and words (17-18)
- Then St. John is explaining how we know that we are of the truth (19-21)
- They whose ways please God have an answer to all their prayers (22)
- The necessity of keeping the commandment of Christ that He may dwell in us and we in Him by His Spirit (23-24)



# Children of God (3:1-3)

- St. John concluded chapter 2 by saying that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him since He is righteous
- Now he is calling us to reflect on the love of God in allowing us to become His children
- What greater glory than to be acknowledged as sons of the King of kings
- If the world does not know the Father, it will not know His children



# Children of God (3:1-3)

- Now we already have the great privilege of being His children
- Our future glory is not yet manifest to the world, even we ourselves cannot understand it
- One glorious revelation has been made which we know: that at His coming, we shall be like Him
- All sons have a substantial resemblance to their father, and Christ, whom we shall be like, is the express image of the Father



# Children of God (3: 1-3)

- Continual beholding generates likeness as the face of the moon being always turned towards the sun reflects its light and glory
- See Him not in his innermost Godhead but as manifested in Christ
- To have a hope of being like Christ leads us to try to be like Christ, hence to be pure as He is pure
- You purify yourself, not of yourself but of Him who comes that He may dwell in you" (Augustine)

# Sin and the Children of God (3:4-9)



- Birth from God involves self-purification
- The very act of sinning is breaking of law of purity, and so he shows he has no hope of sonship
- The object of Christ's manifestation is to take away all our sins
- In Him is no sin, therefore we are to be so
- Those in Him must also be separate from sin
- One ceases to abide in Him when he engages in sinning

# Sin and the Children of God (3:4-9)



- Who sins habitually shows that he has not experimental insight and knowledge of Christ
- There is no fellowship with the Sinless One
- To see spiritually is a further step than to know Him
- Do not be deluded into the belief that any one can be righteous unless he practices righteousness
- A sinful life is a proof of the devil's power. The devil transgressed from the very beginning

# Sin and the Children of God (3:4-9)



- Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and it is His work to destroy sin in all His children
- The children of God do not live a life of sin
- Those who are born of God, the new creation, do not sin, and cannot sin because they have the Holy Spirit in them, but sometimes the old nature revives and for a moment exerts its power
- The full adoption of the sons of God will happen in the Second Coming of Christ

# The Imperative of Love (3:10-15)



- Thus is the distinction clear between God's children and those of the devil
- God's children are full of love and live holy lives. Those of the devil are the opposite
- God's charge has always been that we should love each other
- Cain, who hated and slew his brother (Gen 4:8), is an extreme type of children of the devil
- Cain killed him just for his goodness

# The Imperative of Love (3:10-15)



- The marvel would be if the world loved you
- The world feels its bad works tacitly reprov'd by your good works
- We ourselves could not love our brethren, unless we were passed from spiritual death to life, that is, born of God
- He who does not love his brother abides in death - That is, is not born of God. And he that is not born of God, cannot love his brother

# The Imperative of Love (3:10-15)



- He who hates his brother has the seeds from which murder springs in his heart
- Hatred led Cain to murder; so it does many other who sin likewise
- It is impossible for a man to have the spirit of murder in him and yet have eternal life
- The punishment of a murderer on earth is to be killed (Gen 9)
- If he does not repent, he will not have eternal life

# The Outworking of Love (3:16-23)



- His love is shown on the cross. Christ is love
- If we love as he loved, we must be willing even to die for each other
- If this be true, what shall be said of one who refuses to help his brother with all his goods?
- Our love must not show itself in empty words
- If our love is practical, then we have true faith
- Only then we have a good conscience before Him

# The Outworking of Love (3:16-23)



- If we have a troubled conscience because we have not kept the law of love, we cannot hide it from God because He is greater than our heart
- God also knows all things - so that there is no hope of hiding it from Him
- If our conscience does not condemn us, then we have a conscience void of offense before God
- Then we are assured that he will hear our prayers because we are keeping His commandments

# The Outworking of Love (3:16-24)



- The commandments may be summed up in one, with two parts:  
Faith in Jesus Christ, and love of the brethren
- By keeping them we dwell in Him and He in us
- The Spirit who dwells in us is manifest by its fruits
- If we bear the fruits of the Spirit in our lives it is proof that Christ dwells in us. If we are led by the Spirit we are the sons of God (Rom 8:14)



# Conclusion

- What kind of love has the father given to us?
- How shall we appear in heaven?
- What is Sin?
- Name two purposes for which the Lord Jesus was manifested.
- What we must do to be righteous as He is righteous?



# Conclusion

- Who is of the Devil?
- Does being born of God mean that one will never sin?
- How far should we go in loving our brethren?
- What are some practical ways in which we can love our brethren?
- When do we receive what we ask of God?