



1 John 3

1 John 3
Tape #8234
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to First John chapter three.

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (3:1):

This seems to be something that John is emphasizing. It's a truth that he just felt was overwhelming. In his gospel, he tells us that, "As many as received Him [that is, Jesus], to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name. Who were born, not by the will of man, or by the will of the flesh, but born of God" (John 1:12,13). He tells us of the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus in which Jesus said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him will not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us." The love of God so great, so rich, that He sent His only begotten Son in order that by your believing in Him, you might become a son of God. Adopted into the family of God and made an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. I don't know if we fully apprehend this truth. To apprehend it is to, with the disciples and the apostles, just sort of stand in awe of it. To think that God loved me so much that He sent His Son. "Greater love, Jesus said, has no man than this, that man would lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

The effect or the result of that love is that we have become the sons of God. John said, *therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not (3:1).*

Jesus, when He was being crucified, said, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). John tells us how Jesus was talking with the Pharisees and He said, "If you had known the Father, you would have known Me" (John 14:7). But John declares, They don't know Him. They didn't know Him. And thus, they don't know us, the sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

They don't comprehend that. They don't understand that. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and he said, "The natural man doesn't understand the things of the Spirit: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). It's a wonderful work of God's Spirit in our heart when He gives to us that innate kind of knowledge that I'm a child of God. Where we sort of naturally just say, Oh Father. And so Paul spoke of "the Spirit of adoption, the work of the Holy Spirit within us, whereby we just cry, Father" (Romans 8:15). Oh what love God has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God! And as such, an enigma to the world. They don't know us because they didn't know Him.

John goes on to say,

Beloved, now are we the sons of God (3:2),

That's our present position.

it doesn't yet appear what we're going to be (3:2):

God hasn't revealed to us all of the glories of the future. "Throughout the endless ages to come," Paul said, "He will be revealing unto us the exceeding riches of His grace and His love towards us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). There are just an awful lot of things about heaven that we don't know. When Paul took a visit to heaven, and there he experienced the wonder, the glory of heaven, he said that it would be a crime if he tried to describe the experiences, the things that he heard. They defy description. There are no words in the English language or any other language. There's no vocabulary that could adequately describe experiences that are beyond our ability to really fathom. "It doesn't yet appear what we're going to be."

There are a lot of people that have some interesting questions about heaven. Will there be dogs in heaven? And cats? Will my dog, Rover, be there? A lot of things like that about heaven that people sort of question and oftentimes with the question, there is the inference, You know, I really wouldn't be happy if

Rover wasn't there. And questions about marriage in heaven and things of this nature as though heaven might be a disappointment. Because things aren't like I was wanting or hoping for them to be.

Let me tell you this. It's so far better than anything you ever dreamed or thought or imagined. "The eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the hearts of men, the things that God has prepared for those that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). It's going to be so much better than anything you ever dreamed. I'm not worried about any of these peddling little things about heaven. I had a great dog but he doesn't have to be there to make it heaven for me. The Lord is going to be there. And we're going to be with Him in the perfect environment, in the kingdom of God. And "the kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy" (Romans 14:17).

So "it doesn't yet appear what we're going to be." A lot of wonderful things that we can't even imagine.

but this is what we do know, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* (3:2).

David said, "And I will be satisfied, when I awake, in His likeness" (Psalm 17:15). I don't know what heaven's going to be. I don't know all of the many marvels but I know that "when He appears, I'm going to be like Him; because I will see Him as He is."

At the present time, I'm a son of God. And at the present time, the Holy Spirit is working in my life to conform me or to bring me into the image of Jesus Christ. There is a basic law of philosophy of life that a man becomes like his god. In Psalm 79, David said, "Why should the heathen now say, Where is your God" (Psalm 79:10)

"Our God is in the heavens: He does what He pleases. But their gods are silver and gold, stone, wood. They have eyes, but they can't see: They have ears, but they can't hear: feet they have, but they can't walk: Mouths, but they can't speak." But then David said, "They that made them have become like the gods that they have made" (Psalm 115:3-8). That's just a basic philosophy of life. A man becomes like his god. If your god is false, you are becoming false.

But if you are serving the true and the living God, you become like your God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God. It doesn't yet appear what we're going to be: but we know when He appears, we will be like Him." Why? Because a man becomes like his God.

Paul writing to the Corinthians said that, "We with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord, were being changed from glory to glory, into the same image by the power of His Spirit that's working in us" (2 Corinthians 3:18). And so, "Now are we the sons of God." As a child of God, God is conforming me into the image of Christ. There's that beautiful work of God's Spirit within my life that is conforming me into the image of Jesus.

They say that one day, they brought a huge chunk of granite to Michaelangelo. And as he looked at that huge chunk of granite, he walked around it, studied it and he just stood there in awe and he said, That's beautiful. And his assistant said, What do you mean? That's just a chunk of granite. He said, No, that's not just a chunk of granite. That's David! And he could see what he wanted to make out of that chunk of granite. He could see that finished image of David, that beautiful work of art that you can see when you get to Rome. He could see it in his mind. Though all that was before him was just a rough chunk of granite, he could see the finished product.

This is the way God looks at us. He says, Beautiful. What? But He sees what He is going to do in us. He sees the finished product. And as God looks at you, He sees the finished product. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God. It doesn't yet appear what we're going to be but I know what. That when He appears, I'm going to be satisfied because I will be like Him, conformed into His image fully and completely. For I will see Him as He is."

And John tells us,

And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure (3:3).

I think that where much of the church is no longer or is interested in prophecy and the Second Coming of Jesus and the imminent return of Christ, I believe that they're missing out on God's purpose. For I am convinced that God has purposed that every generation believe that the Lord is coming for them in that generation. I believe that this is deliberately designed by God. That we should always as His children live in

the expectancy of His return at any moment. Surely Jesus emphasized the importance of watching because we didn't know the day or the hour when He was coming. He emphasized the importance of being ready because in such an hour as we think not, He is coming. And He emphasized the fact that He was coming again and that we should be watching, ready and waiting for His return.

And I believe that the Lord left it with enough ambiguity that we would always, in every generation of the church, be living in anticipation of His return. And I believe the reason why the Lord left it that way is that we might always feel an urgency of getting the message of Jesus Christ to the world. I believe that He left it that way in order that we would always have a proper attitude towards worldly things. That we have a light touch with the things of the world. And I believe that He left it that way in order to give us an incentive for pure living.

The Lord could come at any moment. I want to, the Lord said, Blessed is that servant when the Lord comes He will find him so doing. So doing what? So doing the will of the Lord. I would hate to be watching some of the stuff that is available on the Internet. I would hate to be watching that when Jesus came. I would hate to be sitting in an X-rated movie or watching an X-rated video when Jesus came for His church. I'd hate to be involved in some sinful practice.

Now the Lord can come at any moment. At any moment the trumpet can sound and we're out of here. And I think that knowing that the Lord is coming at any moment is a tremendous incentive towards purity. He that has this hope, what hope? That the Lord is going to appear and we're going to be like Him. "He who has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure." I think it is a tremendous incentive for pure living, holy living.

John goes on to tell us that,

Whosoever commits sin transgresses the law: for sin is the transgression of the law (3:4).

"The law of the Lord is perfect," David said, "converting the soul. The statutes of the Lord are right" (Psalm 19:7,8). The prophet Micah said, "He has shown you, O man, what is good" (Micah 6:8). There are some people that sort of speak of the law in a disdainful way. And they are saying, We are not under the law, we're under grace and sort of putting down the law. The law is holy, righteous and good. And the law, if you used it for God's intended purpose, it is still good. The law was intended to show man his sin. The mistake that man made was thinking that if he could keep the law, he could have a righteous standing before God.

That isn't why God gave us the law. He gave us the law to show us our sin and to show us how desperately we need His help, His salvation. It was to be a schoolmaster to force us, to drive us to Jesus Christ. But in the law, He shows you His requirement. And to violate the law is to sin. Sin is a transgression of the law. It's missing the mark. The law is God's mark. This is how God would have us to live. This is the mark that God sets for us and to fail to keep the law is to miss the mark or is sin. It's a transgression of the law.

I would challenge you to read the law of God and tell me where you disagree with it. David said, "The law of the Lord is perfect." Show me an imperfection of the law. Show me a rule that God made that you think should not be there. God wants the best for you. And so He laid out the rules for the best life. And to keep the law of God would be to live the best kind of life. The problem is, We can't, we couldn't. Even though we agree to it, Yes, this is the way I desire to live, I want to live; yet because of my flesh, my spirit indeed is willing but my flesh is weak. And so "whosoever commits sin is transgressing the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin (3:5).

So the two things we know. First of all, the reason why He came was to take away our sins. That's so wonderful. Christ died for the sins of the world. He died for your sin. He came to take away your sin. He came to bring you forgiveness and cleansing and pardon for your sin.

Back in chapter one, John acknowledged that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, the truth isn't in us. But if we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8,9). For He came to take away our sins. And there is not a sin that you or I have ever committed that He cannot wash clean. For John tells us again in chapter one, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses a man from all sin" (1 John 1:7). He was manifested to take away our sin. We

know that. And we also know that in Him, there is no sin.

He was offered as a sacrifice for our sin, Peter says, "As a lamb without spot or without blemish" (1 Peter 1:19). Such was the requirement of the law. When you brought a sacrifice to God, you had to bring the best. You couldn't bring an animal that had been torn by a wolf. God didn't accept roadkill as a sacrifice. He wanted the best. It had to be without spot. It had to be without blemish. A spot was an inherited defect. A blemish was an acquired defect. Jesus was without spot or blemish. He was born apart from sin. He never committed a single sin. He was without spot and blemish and thus was the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice. We know that in Him is no sin, that way we know that His death can atone for us. Now John tells us,

Whosoever abides in him sinneth not (3:6):

Here the word sin is in the perfect tense in the Greek. And what it is saying and should be translated is not continuing in sin. Sin was once the practice of our lives. We lived in sin. As David said, "I was born in sin. I was shapen in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5). But when you are born of God, you no longer are living in sin or practicing sin. "Whosoever abides in Him doesn't practice sin:"

whosoever is practicing sin or living in sin has not seen him (3:6),

There are many people who are making professions of faith. But they are living a sinful life. They are deceiving themselves. The truth is not in them. They're living in the most horrible kind of deception because they have a false sense of security that they are alright. That somehow God has made a special dispensation for them and that they can sin as much as they please. But no, if you're truly born of God, you're not going to be living in sin. And "whosoever is living in sin has not seen Him,"

neither known him (3:6).

You really don't know Him.

Little children, let no man deceive you: for he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous (3:7).

Again, we become as He is. And John will tell us that in the next chapter. For as He is, so are we in this world. And so, don't be mistaken. If you are living in sin, you're not a child of God. You're not born of God. But if you are born of God, you're going to be living a righteous life, "even as He is righteous." For John continues,

He that is living in sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (3:8).

That work of Satan in your life leading you into sin, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. I think of the destructive aspects of sin. I look and I see the effects of sin in people's lives. I see how it is destroying them. I see how it is destroying families. I see how it's destroying nations. The destructive power and effect of sin. But Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of Satan.

Whosoever is born of God does not practice sin; for his seed remaineth in him (3:9):

We have been born of the incorruptible seed. His seed, I believe, is a reference to God's seed by which we are born again. And thus, I do not practice sin because I'm a new creature. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he's a new creature: the old things are passed away; and everything becomes new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). I am now born of the Spirit. The Spirit of God dwelling in me. And His new nature, the new nature I have in Christ keeps me from living in sin and practicing sin.

and he cannot practice sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (3:9,10).

Now he's coming down to the practical issues. Basically, what are the commandments of God? Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). Towards the end of this chapter, verse twenty-two, John tells us, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and we do those things that are pleasing in his sight." But then he tells us the commandment. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (3:22,23). That's what He is asking of you. To just love one another. That's where the proof of the Christian life really is. Jesus said, "By this sign shall men know that you're my disciples, when you love one another" (John 13:35).

When Jesus was questioned as to the greatest commandment of all, He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord God with all thy heart, soul, mind, strength; and thy neighbor as thyself. And in these two are all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). This is the summation of the law. Paul tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law. "He who has love has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

So we're talking about righteousness. We're talking about sinfulness. Righteousness is in the realm of love and sinfulness is in the realm of hate and all of the things that go along with hate. The strife, the jealousy, the envy, murders and all. And he goes right in to that here. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoso does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother."

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning (3:11),

This is the heart of it. This is the essence of the teaching of Jesus.

that we should love one another (3:11).

That's the whole emphasis of the teaching of Jesus. That's the summation, "that we should love one another." Now the word love here is from the *agapao*, that is, loving one another with that divine kind of love. Not the *eros*. *Eros* is a Greek word for love that spoke of physical love. Lust. They had the god Eros and Aphrodite, who were the god and goddess of love, physical love. That's the kind of love that Hollywood portrays which is not a true love. It's a very selfish thing.

But this word *agapao*, to get the definition you have to turn to First Corinthians chapter thirteen and that defines for you this word *agapao* or *agape*. The kind of love. We are to love one another. And so he says,

Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one (3:12),

We know the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. Here Cain was a child of the devil and it was manifested in that,

he killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous (3:12).

The antagonism and the conflict that comes between the person who is living a righteous life in Jesus and the non-Christian, the anger that living a righteous life generates in the unrighteous. I have met people, and I'm sure you have too, that are basically normal, good people. You can carry on a conversation with them on any number of subjects. But if you turn to the subject of Jesus Christ, they become irrational and rabid. There's a hatred of righteousness.

Here is Cain. Why is he angry with his brother? Why is he wanting to kill his brother? Why does he kill his brother? Because his brother was righteous and he is evil. And an evil person has great difficulty being around a righteous person because just your presence brings conviction and they don't like the feeling of conviction. Just your presence causes them to realize their guilt and they don't like the feelings of guilt. And it is interesting today how that we are trying through sociology to somehow eliminate the feelings of guilt.

We don't want little Johnny to feel guilty over anything. And it is not politically correct to make anybody feel guilty. But if you are living an honest, righteous life of holiness, it automatically makes people feel guilty and they resent and hate you for it. We're into that on Wednesday night in our study on the sermon of the mount right now. You get more of that next Wednesday night.

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you (3:13).

Jesus said, "If they didn't receive me, they're not going to receive you". Don't be surprised if when you go to give a witness of what Jesus has done in your life, people will get angry and upset and want to argue with you or want to walk away. "Don't marvel if the world hates you."

We know that we have passed from death unto life (3:14),

How do we know that? I once was abiding in death, I was alienated from God. Spiritually dead. Now am alive through Christ Jesus. How do I know that I am alive in Christ? How do I know that I'm a child of God? How do I know that I have passed from death unto life?

because we love the brethren (3:14).

It's interesting as we mentioned earlier, this is the proof to the world. "By this sign shall men know," Jesus said, "that you are my disciples, that you love one another." The world looking on says, They're disciples of Jesus, look how they love each other. But you yourself, the proof to you that you are really a

child of God is the fact that you love the brethren. God has put that love for the family of God in your heart. "By this we know that we've passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."

He that loveth not his brother abides in death. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him (3:14,15).

The big problem in the time of Jesus was the religious Pharisees who were endeavoring to keep the law in order to be righteous before God. But though they outwardly kept the law, inwardly they were vicious. Inwardly there was all kinds of problems but they felt justified and righteous because they were keeping the outward aspects of the law. And thus they were intolerant towards anyone who wasn't living by the same standards that they had set. The rules that they had set. And that's where Jesus came into conflict with them. Because Jesus was stressing the inner attitudes of a person's heart.

That's what God is interested in—what's happening in your heart! It's more important than your actions. They have been teaching, You shall not murder. But Jesus said, I say unto you, If you have hatred in your heart, if you say to your brother, You fool or Raca, vain fellow, and you look with disdain on another person, you're just as guilty as one who murdered someone! You've heard how that it hath been said, You shall not commit adultery, Jesus said. But I say unto you, if you're looking at a woman and lusting after her, you're guilty of adultery! If you're into pornography, if you're into the Internet or into X-rated videos and you are getting some kind of a lustful satisfaction from seeing those things, you have the desire when you see that nude woman, Jesus said you've committed adultery already in your heart. And though man looks on the outward appearance, God is looking on your heart.

So don't be deceived. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." And so John is following the concept of Jesus that it is a matter of the heart and if you hate your brother, you're just as guilty as one who murders someone else. And "you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." The importance of loving, the importance of our heart and the attitude of our heart.

Hereby perceive we the love of God (3:16),

Of God is actually an added, it's not there in the early text. "Hereby perceive we love,"

because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (3:16).

You see, this is the real proof of our Christianity. The love that we have for the brethren. We realize that He loves us because "He laid down His life for us." He said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He laid down His life for us. And John is saying, That's our example and we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Now coming to a very practical aspect of this, coming to a very practical aspect, the supreme would be to lay down your life for someone else. But practically, let's just start at the lower level.

Whoever has this world's good, and sees his brother in need, but he shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him (3:17)?

This business of laying down our life, we say, Oh yeah, I'll lay down my life for my brother. Come on, let's get serious here. You probably won't be asked to do that. But how about this? Giving a part of your livelihood for someone who has need. Therein is love demonstrated. In practical ways. And it's just not a theoretical thing. This is where the rubber meets the road.

Here I say, I love everybody, I love you so much. And yet here I have say, an abundance. And you're really in need. If I say, Well, God bless you, brother. Pat you on the back. Go your way, trust everything is going to work out for you. But I do nothing to reach out to help! How can I say that I really love you? How dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but love in deed and in truth (3:18).

Not just verbally. I love you, brother. I love you so much. In fact, I often get a little suspicious of a person who's constantly asserting how much they love. Sort of like Shakespeare said, Thou protesteth too much. And there's a suspicion when a person, Oh, brother, I love you so much. "Let's not love in word, or in tongue." That doesn't count. Love is demonstrated not by words. Somehow we think that to verbalize is so important. What's more important is to show it in your deeds. Because there is where the truth is. Love is manifested not by words but by deeds.

Jesus manifested His love. He just didn't come and say, I love you. Now go to hell. But He showed His

love by dying on the cross and taking our sins so that we wouldn't have to go to hell. And I just can't say I love you, brother. Be fed, be warm. What do I profit him if I don't give him a coat or a blanket? Or something whereby he might be warm or give him some food.

When we love in deeds, we love in truth.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth (3:19),

We know that this is true now when my love is manifested in the actions. It's by the actions that the true love is revealed.

and we shall assure our hearts before him (3:19).

It gives us that confidence and that assurance that this is a genuine experience. When I'm willing to show my love in a self-sacrificing way. Even as Jesus showed His love in a self-sacrificing way.

Now John gives us something interesting here. He said,

For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows all things (3:20).

He's talking about the assurance of our hearts. By this we can be assured.

But if our heart condemns us (3:21),

There are many Christians who have not really the assurance because there's condemnation in their hearts. Our hearts are condemning us. Satan is a master at taking every flaw and amplifying it and pointing it out to you. Satan is a master of accusing the brethren! He is a master of bringing you into condemnation. Because all of us sin and all of us come short of the glory of God. And Satan will begin to point out these flaws in our lives and bring us into condemnation.

The purpose of Satan's condemnation is to keep you from coming to God. You get down to pray and Satan will bring up to you in your mind, in your thought, some mean thing that you said to someone. You were hurt, you were short, you cut them off and he'll say, Ah, yeah, you say you're a Christian but look how you treated them. And now you're asking God for favors. And you're asking, you have no right to come to God. He ought to kick you out. And he starts bringing condemnation to us, telling us how rotten we are. And how unworthy and undeserving we are.

I used to listen to Satan. And if you listen to him, he'll keep you from coming to God. But you see, we don't come to God on the basis of our righteousness. We come to God on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He's the One that has given us access to the Father. He's the One that has opened the door. And there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. "And if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our hearts." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God".

As a child of God, I have favor, the favor of God upon my life. And though Satan might try to discourage me from coming by bringing me into condemnation, God's greater than even my heart and He knows all things.

In our Christian life there is a struggle because I was going to say, none of us, let me just make it personal. I don't know about you, I don't know what you feel. But I never feel that I have done as well as I should. I always feel that I could be better. And I should be better. I'm never satisfied with the level of the degree of commitment in my life. I'm always desiring to do more. To do better. To be more pleasing unto the Father. And I fail. In my own eyes, I fail so many times. And Satan begins to capitalize on that as he sort of amplifies my failures.

I love those scriptures in Romans 8. The questions that Paul asks. The first question is, "What shall we say to these things?" What things? First of all, the first question, "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God who has justified. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who has died, yea rather, is risen again, and is even at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:31,33-35)? Wonderful questions.

And in answer to the question, Who is he that condemns? It is Satan, not Jesus Christ. He said, I didn't come to condemn the world. I came to save the world. But the condemnation comes from my own failure and Satan sort of amplifying and pointing out my failure. But it doesn't come from Jesus Christ. God's greater than my heart.

When I can overcome this sense of condemnation, when I learn to come to God on the basis of His work for me, rather than on my work for Him, I come to God on the basis of His grace towards me and not my worthiness of coming,

then I have confidence in prayer (3:21).

That is why we need to recognize that God has accepted us in Christ Jesus and as we are in Him, there is no condemnation and that He has planted in my heart that spirit of adoption where I'm His child and as a child I have the right and the privilege to come to my Father. And I have then that confidence that,

Whatsoever I ask, I receive of him, because I keep his commandments, and I do those things which are pleasing in his sight (3:22).

But what is His commandment?

That we should believe on the name of the Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment (3:23).

One day they came to Jesus and they asked, What must we do to do the work of God? And Jesus said, This is the work of God. That you believe on Him who He has sent. You see, I can do that. I may fail in a lot of other areas but I can do that. I can believe on Jesus Christ. And it's wonderful to realize that that's all that God really requires of me! Just to believe on Jesus Christ and to turn my life over to Him, to His Lordship and as I do, He comes in, He gives me the power of His Holy Spirit who enable me to do the things that I struggled and could not do. With all of my efforts, I came short. But now He gives me power to do those things that are pleasing unto Him. So believing and then loving. Loving one another as He gave us commandment.

And he that keeps his commandments (3:24)

That is, believes in Him, loves one another,

he dwells in him, and he in him (3:24).

The Lord dwells in me, I dwell in Him.

And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us (3:24).

Paul talking to the Ephesians was praying for them. "That they might have the Spirit and the revelation and the knowledge of God: and that they might know the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe." And then Paul speaks of the glorious work of God, having sealed us with the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:14,17-19). How do I know I'm a child of God? He has stamped His stamp of ownership on me, which is the Holy Spirit. That's God's stamp of ownership. They're mine. Stamps you with the Holy Spirit.

In the ancient world, and Paul was writing to the Ephesians when he uses this analogy, Ephesus was the major port from which the goods to the east were brought to the west. The world trade center was in Ephesus and merchants from the west were always there, purchasing goods. The goods that came from the east and they would go from there by ship to Puteoli, that was the Roman port and to the western world, to Athens, to Corinth. When a merchant was in Ephesus and he would buy the goods at the world trade center, they would crate up the goods, and then he would put on that, they would put wax on it and he would put the imprint of his ring in the wax. It was the sign of ownership. So that when the ships would finally get to Puteoli, when the longshoreman would look at the cargo, they would know who it belonged to because the stamp of ownership was upon the goods.

And Paul is saying to the Ephesians, The Lord has put His stamp of ownership on you. He is the earnest, He's the down payment that God has given to us to show that He is earnest in His intention of redeeming us completely and fully. And so in the meantime, He puts His seal of ownership upon us, the stamp of the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. He's purchased us with the blood of Jesus Christ and one day, He's going to claim ownership to that which He purchased. And we shall be like Him when we shall see Him as He is.

What a glorious future all of us have in Christ Jesus!

Father, we thank You tonight for the wonders of Your work and the wonders of Your word. The wonders of Your love, Your love for us. Lord, You know our hearts and we thank You that You accept us, Lord, in our imperfect condition. But that You see us, Lord, as the finished product. You don't see just a

rough chunk of marble. But you see the image of Jesus Christ that You are going to bring in us as You work to conform us into that same image. Lord, You know our hearts, our heart's desire, to please You, to serve You. To be everything that You would have us to be. Help us, Lord, work in us, Lord. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.