

Prayer

We trust You, Lord God, for our future. Through Jesus, You have opened up a way for us to find eternal life, and You appeal to us to live each day by faith and obedience. How can we turn away from Your gracious offer, unless sin has obscured the way? Forgive us all our troubles and trials as we confess them, Lord God, and show us how to live according to Your will. We praise You Lord God: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: 'New beginnings'

If there is some area of your own life that needs a new beginning and a fresh start, then pray about this, and ask the Lord to bless you with the vision and strength to do His new will.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for wisdom for Christians who work in environmental sciences*
- *Give thanks to God for His Word and the revelation of His will*
- *Pray for news editors who decide what we hear about on the news*

Meditation

Jesus, You are the brightness which fills my life,
When all around seems dull and cloudy.

Jesus, You are the colour which expands my vision,
Bringing meaning and life to all I see.

Jesus, You are the brilliance which designed the world,
Revealing Yourself through all You've made.

Jesus, You are the complexity which intrigues us,
Leading us to search for more and more.

Jesus, You are the happiness which floods our souls,
Leaving us to want more of God's good gifts.

Jesus, You are the kindness which surpasses generosity,
For all Your good gifts are undeserved.

Bible Study 1 John 3:1-3

¹ *Look at the wonderful love the Father has shown towards us that we should be called children of God, for indeed we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.*

² *Dear friends, we are God's children now, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. But we do know that when He is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see Him as He is.* ³

Everyone who has this hope in Him will purify himself, just as He is pure.

Review

It is a great blessing to be members of God's family, for we are His children, and we are loved! This thought holds together this entire text, and at last, John's letter homes in on the theme of love that has lain just beneath its surface (3:1). We are saved from our sins only because of God's love, and so we are at peace with God our Maker. This is a never-changing truth, but it can sound repetitive to some. However, it can never be boring to those who know that this love is the difference between life and death in this life and the next. God's love is precious beyond words, and just like the love between a parent and a child, it never ceases to engage with our deepest emotions; such is the 'wonderful love of the Father ...' (3:1).

Within verse 1, John expresses this deep sense of emotional bond between God and those He has saved. Nevertheless, emotions do not rule the heart! In John's day, the emotional bond between parent and child

was no less strong than today; but added to this was an understanding that the child owed everything to the parent. In his day, a youth under the discipline of a father would have been expected to be utterly obedient, and this was not an imposition but an honour, indeed, those who had no father were regarded as disadvantaged. Now, John knew that being a child of God was therefore an immense privilege, but it also brought consequences, some negative and some positive, and he sought to identify these to the people of his churches.

John had described earlier some of the privileges of God's love. He had spoken about the personal testimony of God's work (1:2-4), the fellowship of the church community (1:5-10), the abiding presence of Christ and the means of dealing with sin (2:1-6), and access to God's Covenant grace (2:7f.). John therefore continued by indicating some of the more difficult consequences of being one of God's children. Firstly, he warned that the world would not recognise the church community 'the world does not know us because it does not know Him ...' (3:1). John's comment is so clear, simple and logical, it surprises me when people expect the world to sit up and take notice when the church speaks!

It also surprises me when Christians try to build their churches around the secular authorities of the state. Yet John has made all this clear, it is foolish to imagine that the world will understand the church or its reasons for believing and doing what it does. It has no concept of God and does not accept Him. If people imagine that others in the world ought to understand us, then we will become angry or deeply upset about the rejection we receive. If we do not expect understanding in the first place, then we can accept this with grace, and let our testimony to the truth of God in Christ stand, so that God may be proved right in the history of His world.

The next concern John has is that God's people, as children of the Lord, obviously want to grow up in Him. However, we can only ever go so far whilst the world still exists. We are only fully matured when we have stood before our God as saved 'at the last' by our Saviour. However, we do not know when this will happen (3:2). Like a teenager, we must wait for the day when we reach maturity before our Father (3:2). The one remarkable truth is that when the time comes, we will be 'like' Him (3:2), as it says in Genesis, 'God created humanity in His likeness, in the likeness of God He created them ...' (Gen 1:27). It is astonishing that we are like God and God is like us, but we will never see exactly what this means until we are with our Maker and can see this with our own eyes!

There is more in the coming passages, but John's parting shot today warns God's children that they must be vigilant to 'purify' themselves, to demonstrate their likeness to God whilst still living. The privilege of being a member of God's family brings with it significant consequences both for the present and the future. The test of our commitment is not whether we like the lifestyle of a church or its worship (for example), but whether we accept the eternal truths of our salvation.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What are the privileges of being a member of God's people today, and is this different from the privilege of being a member of a church?
2. In your society, does the 'world' listen to the church at all? How and why does this happen, and does this mean that this text is irrelevant?
3. Discuss within your group how Christians can keep themselves pure within this world.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

From time to time, we can be blown away by the love of God and what it means. Little more needs to be said or done, because the power of what God has done for us seems so all-complete and awesome, the very fact of our salvation and its consequences consumes us. The remarkable thing is this. People can sometimes live for the whole of their lives and even go to church every Sunday, and never be 'blown away' by the love of God in this way! It seems strange, but Satan works in our midst to do everything to stop people from experiencing their true inheritance as a child of God. He must be evicted wherever he is found.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *In what ways do you need to mature in grace so that you can present yourself before your Lord as one fit for the saving work of Jesus Christ your Lord? Think and pray about this carefully, and ask the Lord to show you by His Holy Spirit how to respond to this challenge.*
- *Pray for the leaders of our churches and ask God to help them accept and apply these scriptures here that indicate that the world will not understand the church because it does not know God.*

Final Prayer

Lord, grant me peace this night, I pray. Strengthen my heart so that I may trust in your everlasting promises, and confidently rest in the knowledge that You can defeat all the powers of the Evil One. Glory be to God the Father who is faithful; glory be to God the Son who is compassionate; glory be to God the Spirit who is ever mindful of my soul. AMEN
