

# See What Kind Of Love...

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, tonight I want us just to turn back for a wee while to the passage that Alistair read for us and we're especially going to focus on verse one of chapter three.

So that's one John chapter three verse one. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God and so we are.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Their focus especially tonight is going to be on the first half of that verse.

First John is a letter written by the Apostle John to Christians that he knows and that he dearly loves but who are facing many challenges and so as you read through the book, through the letter you see various issues that they're facing and that having to deal with.

We read a wee section at the middle of chapter two that reveals some of them to us. Sometimes there's children, it's the last hour and as you've heard that Antichrist has come in so many Antichrists have come.

[ 1 : 03 ] Therefore we know that it's the last hour. They went out from us but they were not of us but if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that it might be complained that they're not, that they are all not of us.

But you've been anointed by the Holy One and you all have knowledge. I write to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know it and because no liar is of the truth who's the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

Even that small passage tells you that there's loads of stuff going on, loads of challenges being faced by these Christians. We can summarize it in two or three headings. They're clearly having to deal with false teaching so that's part of what's been referred to here in Antichrist and Antichrist, those who are teaching things that contradict the truth of the Gospel.

You can see it being explained a little bit further at the bottom that they're denying the Father and the Son. So there's this kind of attack on some of the key Gospel emphases that John and others have passed on.

That's why later in the letter John talks about testing the spirits to make sure that they're not false prophets because many have come and are spreading false truths.

[ 2 : 25 ] Digging a little bit further on into the letter you can see later, I'll just highlight this briefly so that you know it's there, but you've got people who are in many ways trying to spread false teaching about Jesus.

So there's some who are saying that you know he didn't really come in the flesh and there are others who are saying like what you've got there that you don't really need to keep the commandments, you can just do whatever you like and that's why there's lots of emphasis in John's Gospel about making sure you don't practice sinning, that we have to turn away from sin and follow God's ways as those who are trusting in Jesus.

So that's just a couple of examples so you can see the idea. There's tons and tons and tons of emphasis in this letter about false teaching, about people who are coming and leading them astray. The result is that there's division. We touched on that when Alistair read 219 that these people they went out from us because they were not of us and that in many ways is the consequence of false teaching.

It leads to a separation because you've got a departure from the Gospel. You know they might be claiming to be apostles, they might be claiming to be a church but actually they're not because they've moved away from the truth of the Gospel.

[ 3 : 50 ] So you've got these two massive issues that so often cause each other. False teaching leading to division and all the confusion and hurt and pain that that brings.

Alongside that it seems to also be the case that there was this issue about a lack of love for one another and again you can maybe see why that's tied in with what we've just described but John talks about that.

He says you know if anybody says that he's a believer that he's in the light but hates his brother he's still in darkness and that again is another emphasis that comes up again and again in the letter and in many ways these things all feed each other.

False teaching leads to division, division leads to kind of hostilities and a lack of love and the whole thing just becomes messy, very, very messy and full of pain and hurt.

And so we get a glimpse into that in John's day but we see it in our own day as well. We see it's often the case that Christians can move away from the Gospel.

[ 4 : 56 ] Sometimes there can be legitimate disagreements over things, sometimes there can be situations where people have very clearly opposed the truth of the Gospel because they think that that's the right thing to do or that that's a wise thing to do or that they just want things on their own terms.

That leads to division, that leads to a lack of love, the whole thing is so messy and broken it's something that we see again and again and again. So John's writing to address those kind of concerns and in many ways all John tries to do is get us back to the fundamental basics of the Gospel.

And so he's telling these Christians that Jesus has come. He is God the Son but he was also one of us, a human, a person. Jesus saves us from our sins that if we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

He's teaching them that Jesus brings us into fellowship with God the Father and into fellowship with one another as the church. Jesus brings new life so that instead of following all the nonsense that we see in the world around us we've got a better way to live as we follow Jesus and obey his commandments.

And he's telling them that Jesus has come to show us the incredible love of God. And you go into chapter four, you've got this just amazing chapter that speaks so powerfully about how God's love has been shown to us through the cross and because God's love for us is so great we are to show that love towards one another.

[ 6 : 34 ] They're all just fundamental Gospel truths. They're like the basic touchstones of the Gospel and so it never does us any harm to come back to these again and again and again.

As part of those key fundamentals of the Gospel that John is speaking about here, he gives us one of the most magnificent statements that has ever been written.

It's the words of verse one in chapter three. See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

Tonight all I want us to do is just go through that sentence bit by bit and that can be a really helpful thing to do when you're reading the Bible. Sometimes when you're reading the Bible there can be a wee bit of pressure to think that it's all about quantity.

And quantity is good, I think it's really good to read a lot of the Bible and if you read a chapter a day, if you read three or four chapters a day that's amazing and fantastic. But don't always think it's only about quantity, sometimes it is good to just read a sentence and to meditate on every word and to see what God is saying.

[ 7 : 55 ] And that's what we're going to do tonight, we're going to just go through this little bit by little bit and we're going to start with this word, the word see.

Older versions maybe have the word behold, it's conveying the same idea. It's a call to attention and such an easy word to whiz by. You know it's the start of the chapter, you're just about to get into what John's saying next and you can fly past that word see and yet it's such a good place to stop.

It's such a good word for us to think about. John wants you to see something. He wants it to get your attention.

And as we know from the rest of the sentence, the thing he's going to show us, the thing he's going to talk about is the love of God. But the key thing I want to highlight just now is that he wants you to see it.

And if you want to see something, it's going to take time and effort and care.

[ 9 : 01 ] I remember once, not that long ago, driving along the Pentland road, now people might not agree with me with this because some people think that a bit of a hazard, but I absolutely love it when you see deer because I think deer are just magnificent animals.

And I remember going through the Pentland road and I was near town and just in the corner of my eye I saw this huge stag at the side of the road, but I was short of time and I just had to just carry on, I couldn't stop.

And so I didn't really see it at all. I just kind of, I got a glimpse of it, I knew it was there, but I didn't really see it because to see something you need to stop, you need to look, you need to think.

And that's through a sunset. When the sun, you know, is just, when the sky is just burning red over the Loch there, you stop and you just gaze at it.

When you see a beautiful bird in the garden or a bird of prey, maybe a Dalmore or somewhere like that, or even if you're looking at a work of art, to see it just is something that we need to take time to do.

[ 10 : 08 ] And that's so crucial when it comes to God's love because I think it's the case. Certainly if I look at myself, it's definitely the case that although I believe in it, I can so often stop short of seeing it because I tend to do other things apart from see it, I tend to just glance at it.

So you think, you know, going into this week, you think of God's love and you think, oh yeah, I think of God's love and then something else has got my attention. Are we glanced maybe? Are we thought?

But then off I go and my vision, my attention is consumed with my email inbox and everything else that's got to happen in this week. It's so easy just to glance at God's love, maybe from time to time. Or we, you know, we might look at it but we doubt it. So you know, we think, well, yeah, maybe, but we question it.

I'm not really sure I can believe what I'm seeing. Not really sure that I'm not sure I can be confident that God would love me. In fact, I can look at myself and I can see a thousand reasons why he wouldn't.

[ 11 : 17 ] We can ignore it. So sometimes, you know, that's something that we can very often do that, you know, especially if maybe God and his love is trying to steer us away from something that will harm us.

And, you know, we can actually ignore God's loving warnings and loving guidance to say, look, that's not a good idea. When your conscience pricks you to say, this isn't a great idea and yet just like, I'm going to ignore it because I just want to do it.

And so, you know, instead of seeing God's love, we just ignore it and like, no, no, I don't know because I want to do this and I've done that far too many times in my life. So with God's love, we can glance at it, we can doubt it, we can ignore it.

Sometimes we can look elsewhere for love that we think will replace God. Now, that, I don't just mean love in terms of finding a man or a woman.

I mean, just love in terms of being appreciated by others, whether that's in friendship or whether that's in success in your career or even wanting your neighbors to admire your house or your car or whatever it may be.

[ 12 : 23 ] We can look elsewhere to think, you know, that'll give us the kind of love that we want. And so I do all this stuff and I'm pretty certain that you all do this stuff and all of it is a failure to do what that tiny little word is telling us to do.

To just see God's love. That word see is getting you to stop and look at something utterly amazing. So what's he getting us to look at? He's getting us to think about what kind of love the Father has. That phrase, what kind of love, what kind of that phrase right there.

It's a really interesting word because it can also mean from what country. And so it's getting us to think about like, you know, where it comes from, what it's like, what the background is, what kind of love this love is that God has for us.

And you know, again, it's so simple but yet it's such a good thing for us to think about. We want to see, really see what kind of love God has.

[ 13 : 41 ] And that's really important because it's so easy to get this wrong. Your understanding of God's love might be the wrong kind of love.

So when you think of God, do you think that his love is a love that's earned?

So do you think that, you know, that there are times when God's love for you goes up and times when his love for you goes down?

Do you think of God's love as like a kind of graph or like the weather, sometimes sun, sometimes most of the time not sun? Do you think of God's love as responding to what you do so that stuff you do that's good, up it goes, make a stupid mistake, down it goes?

Do you think that his love for you is a love that's earned in that way? Do you think that God's love is a love that's kind of fickle? So yeah, maybe one day he loves you, next day not so much.

[14:50] Or maybe you might not say that but it feels like that. So one day things go well, you think, oh, God is on my side. Another day things go badly, you think, oh, God is not really on my side.

God's not really caring for me. It's pretty changeable. Do you think it's a love that works in that way? Do you think it's a love that's temporary? So it's a love that will last while things are going well, but you can never be sure if it's going to continue.

This next one's maybe the one that is most common. I don't know, do you think it's a love that's reluctant?

So God loves you kind of because he has to. You know, are we a bit like, you know, loving your relatives or your embarrassing father or whatever it may be that you have to, your reluctant love? Do you think it's a love that depends on you? So basically you've got to be lovable.

[15:55] All of these are wrong, totally, totally wrong.

Because the kind of love that God has is a father's love.

That's the kind of love that God has. Now, as we think about that, the key thing that we've got to recognize is that this is a father in whom there is no darkness at all.

See that in 1 John 5? This is the message we've heard from him proclaim to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

And that's so crucial because sometimes we experience love that's not all light. Sometimes we see experience love that has maybe more than a little of a shade of darkness in it.

[16:58] And that might even be, that might even have been your experience of a father. We all have imperfect fathers.

Some of you may have had very imperfect fathers. And for some people, associating God's love with a father's love is hard because that's not what they experience, which is incredibly difficult. It doesn't necessarily have to be with fathers. So it could be with a mother, it could be with siblings, it could even be with children, where there's like a dark side to the love that makes it very painful and very hard.

Maybe with a husband or a wife or a partner, so many people have had awful experiences of that, where maybe at times they felt very loved, other times they've not felt loved at all.

Maybe it's not, maybe it's something you've only experienced with a colleague or with someone in school or something like that. We're all going to experience at some point in our life and in many ways it's harder when the person we experience that from is closer to us.

[18:05] We can often experience love that has a dark side to it. Never with God.

Never, ever, ever with God. His love is the love of a perfect father.

A love that has no darkness. It's nothing but pure light. Total goodness.

It's a perfect love. But, you know, I was saying here that, you know, we're seeing what kind of love the father has. That's true, but it's not quite what John is saying.

He's not saying see what kind of love the father has in terms of talking about the love that God the Father possesses, even though he's pointing us towards that. It's not actually the key point of the sentence because the key point of the sentence is see what kind of love the father has given to us.

[19:13] John wants you to see the kind of love that the father has given. The love of God, that word given is just magnificent.

The love of God is a gift. It is just a gift. Never earned, never bought, never bargained for, never deserved.

It's just given. And that's what true love really is. Something that's utterly altruistic, that's just completely given for the benefit of the other.

It's never, ever, ever bargained for. And I think that's where, you know, the emphasis on God's fatherhood is so important because it's something that's seen so clearly in millions and millions of times over when this helpless baby is born and love from a mother and father is just poured into

them because of nothing that they've done, but just because they love them. And that's why when, you know, we ask what country does this love come from? What kind of love? The answer is, it's God's. It comes from his country. It's from him. It's origin. [ 20 : 35 ] It's source is in God. He's the explanation of it. He's the source of it. He's the one who prompts it. We are just the recipients.

He's given it to us. Now, that word has given right there is this is this is I love this word because let me clean up my slide a little bit.

So this word in in Greek, it's one word and it's in what's called the perfect tense. Now, we tend, I'm pretty useless at English grammar, but we tend to think in terms of tenses like past tense, stuff that happened then present tense, stuff happening now, future tense, stuff that's happening in the future.

But there's actually more to it than that. There's more tenses, which again, I'm no expert in. I actually know more about Greek tenses than I do about English tenses.

Greek tenses are so fascinating because they reveal some amazing truths about about what God has done for us and is doing for us.

[ 21 : 41 ] When we talk about the perfect tense, it's not so much past, present and future. It's kind of a combination of all three because it's referring to something that's happened in the past.

So like a dot, it can be symbolized like a dot, but the reality and implications of which extends into the future. So when you say like past tense, you just think of something in the past.

I ate my lunch today. That was just in the past. When we talk about perfect tense, we're talking about something. Yes, you can see a moment in the past when it happened, but the implications of that continue on and on and on and on into the future.

That means that this verse is not talking about something that's happened in the past that you can look back on. It's talking about something that originates in the past, but that continues on and on and on and on.

So when he says, see what kind of love the Father has given. He's not saying just look back in the past and remember that time when you were a good Christian and God loved you.

[ 22 : 48 ] He's saying God has given you that love and he still loves you and still loves you and still loves you and still loves you and still loves you. And he's never, ever, ever going to stop because for every second that you exist.

This is you here for every second that you exist, this line just gets longer and longer and longer. That's the kind of love that the Father has. That's the kind of love that the Father has given and he's given it to us.

I've often said I love the small words in the Bible just as much as I love the big words. There's two wonderful things about those two little words.

First, it's so personal. That love that the Father has given that originates in the past that extends on forever. It's not just this love that's kind of detached for the world to admire and display.

[ 23 : 54 ] It's for you, it's given to you. You are the object and the recipient of that love.

It's for you, for you actually as you are. As you are right now with all the whatever complicated, broken, struggling, doubting, exhausted, whatever it is you're feeling, he's given that love to you, to you.

But alongside being so personal, it's also so magnificently collective because it's us together. That love's not just a private thing between you and God and it's just this sort of totally isolated thing that kind of separates you from the rest of the world like some kind of spiritual quest that people go on or something weird like that.

It's not at all, it's just a brilliant family that we're all being brought into. And so God's pouring his love out on us. So we are together collectively sharing in the incredible privilege of being God's family.

It's uniting us. It binds us together. It's something that we share. It's ours. And so you can sit here tonight and you can feel the breeze, the warm breeze and sunshine of God's love pouring out upon you and you can look to the left and to the right and you can see God's love being poured out on them as well.

[ 25 : 37 ] Because we share in this together. Then we're told what the result of it all is that we should be called children of God.

That's the result. What he says at the start of the verse between here and here is in order to accomplish this thing.

That love of the Father has been given to us so that we should be called children of God. What an incredible privilege.

Because if you think about, we said a wee bit about this this morning. You know, Jesus spoke about God as his Father, as himself, as the Son in so many ways.

Like this is something reserved for Jesus. He's the child of God. He is God the Son and yet something that's reserved for Jesus is actually extended to us.

[ 26 : 42 ] Because we're united to him. That we get a place beside Jesus on God's lap.

We're with him together. There's something else I think to notice that again I think is so amazing in terms of the Greek grammar in here.

This little word, two words here, be called. That we should be called children of God. That's what you call a passive verb. So active verb, you do something, I kick.

Passive verb, something gets done to me. I get kicked. So passive is when something gets done to you. So that means that this is not just saying that we can call ourselves children of God.

So you think, you know, oh, yes, you kind of love the Father has given to us. We can call ourselves children of God. We can come here and say we are God's children. And that alone is amazing. But it's not what John's saying.

[ 27 : 45 ] He's saying we get called children of God by someone else. And who is it who does it?

It's God himself. Ultimately, God is the one who does the calling. You are the ones who get called. He looks at you and he says, my children, my child. That's that's how great God's love is.

He looks at you and he says, mine. Imagine kind of getting to that level of spirituality. Imagine, you know, imagine a Christian at that level.

You know, you think, you know, I bet you you can think of people, you know, who you admire so much as Christians. And you think, yes, you really could call them children of God.

[ 28 : 48 ] I just heard yesterday that Eric Alexander passed away. You may have heard of him. I've mentioned him, I think, about a thousand times because he's one of my favorite preachers. He was a minister in the Church of Scotland and an amazing preacher and an amazingly humble, gracious man.

You look at someone like that and you think, yeah, that's a child of God in so many ways. And, you know, we look at ourselves and we think, maybe we might be that one day. You know, maybe we could be part of that group where you just admire so much.

And you think, yes, they should be, they are clearly right to be called children of God. Maybe you think, you know, well, we could get to that level. Maybe if we push hard, maybe if we try harder, maybe with a bit more effort, we could get to that effort, that level.

You know, as we think of people who are so clearly precious children of God, we think, maybe one day we might be that as well. Do you think like that?

Because that's completely wrong. And that's not how the Gospel works. That's not what this verse is saying.

[ 29 : 50 ] We are called children of God and so we are. You actually are.

Literally, that phrase just says, and we are. And I love the simplicity of that. We are called children of God and we are.

We actually are. You actually are a child of God. Now, as Christians and when I say as Christians, I mean, I mean both people who are professing members and those of you who are not yet members who I know are believers.

So often we think to ourselves, you know, we think I want to be this because, you know, you think, I wish I was different. I wish I improved. I wish I knew more. I want to be something that I'm not.

I wish I was this. I wish I was that. I wish I was the next thing. We see all the ways in which we fail and we struggle and we think, oh, if I could just wish I was like that, you think, I need to be this.

[ 30 : 52 ] I need to be better at reading. I need to be better at praying. I need to stop that stupid sin. I'm trying to be better. I'm trying to do this. And so we're always looking kind of to the next thing that we think I want to be that.

I wish I was that. I need to be that. I'm trying to be that. And at one level, that's okay because there are always areas where we need to grow. It's right to have things to long for in that regard.

But at the same time, God forbid that you forget what you are. And you have got to start thinking about what you actually are.

You are a child of God. And that shapes and affects every part of our lives. You get up tomorrow morning, another gray, wet, dreary winter Monday morning. You get out of bed feeling tired, probably wishing that your alarm hadn't gone off. You're a child of God. He's looking at you saying, my child, I'm with you as you go into another Monday. [ 32 : 04 ] You face a huge pile of work. Just loads to do. You're a child of God. You're maybe going to sit up pre-limb. You're doing that as a child of God.

Maybe you're having to interact with your friends. Maybe you get on really well. Maybe not so well. Maybe you feel outside of a friend group. You're still a child of God. Maybe you have a really successful day. Maybe you have a really rubbish day. You're still a child of God. Maybe this week you've got a doctor's appointment. Maybe you've got a scan. Maybe you're worried about one that you've already had that you're waiting for results. Maybe you feel exhausted.

Maybe you've got another day of chronic pain. Maybe you celebrate good news. Maybe you hear bad news. Tomorrow night if we're spared, you're all going to go to bed at every moment. You're a child of God. You are a child of God. And so when you think about the Gospel, and when I talk about the Gospel, just for anyone who is trusting in Jesus, even if you feel like your faith is the weakest thing ever, you're still trusting in Jesus, that is still more than enough for him.

[ 33 : 13 ] When you think about the Gospel, what is the fundamental you are in terms of the fundamental thing that you are? And I'd love to know what springs into your mind.

When I say to you, as a Christian, as somebody who maybe is a member, or maybe who would love to become a member, somebody who knows that this is so important, but you're not sure what to, you're not sure of everything, I wish I could kind of ask you, what's the first thing that instinctively comes into your mind when I say, what are you?

What pops into your mind? And I would bet my life savings. I don't gamble and I don't have much life savings, but if I gamble and I've had a lot, I bet them all to say that it's probably something negative.

That you think, I'm not good enough, or my faith's not strong enough, I don't know enough, or I'm not sure, or I'm still nowhere near where I should be in my Christian life, or I'm letting God down, or I'm afraid, or I'm anxious, or I'm struggling, and none of these are right.

None of these are the fundamental you are of the Gospel, because the fundamental you are of the Gospel is right there. You are God's child.

[ 34 : 28 ] You are God's child. And that's where we see that this verse is just bringing us back to some of the key fundamentals of the Gospel, and this verse is just showing us how incredible the Gospel is.

And for everyone here who is a Christian, there's two key lessons that I want you to take away from this verse. I want you to think and think and think about what God is really like.

I want you to think about what God is really like, that He is the perfect Father in whom there is no darkness at all.

Think about what God is really like, just that fountain, unchanging, eternal, absolute of goodness, grace, compassion, patience, total loyalty to you and His people.

Think about that, think about what God is really like, and at the same time, think about what you really are, because you really are His child.

[ 35 : 46 ] Think about what God is really like, think about what you really are. And you may have heard me say this before, Martin Lloyd-Jones said something which I thought was immensely helpful.

When we're faced with all these doubts about our sense of identity, feeling not good enough, feeling like God's annoyed with us, feeling like we're rubbish Christians, Martin Lloyd-Jones says you've got to stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself.

And that was such a brilliant statement, because what he's basically saying is you've got to take a verse like this and tell it to yourself, and just keep telling it to yourself until you are able to see that that's what you really are.

So great lessons there for us as Christians. For anyone here who's not yet a Christian, there's a key word in this verse for you, but it's not ad, it's not we, it's not so, it's not and, it's not children of God, it's not called, it's not given to us, it's not the Father, the love, the what, it's that word.

Do you see what this is saying? Do you see what this is saying?

[ 37 : 12 ] Now, if you're like really very firm in doubting, in thinking like Christianity's not for me, I don't know if anybody, I don't think anybody in here is saying that, but maybe someone online is thinking that, that actually I don't believe any of this stuff or I'm really not sure about it, then just like the word see is what you need, because you need to see what the Gospel is offering.

You need to make sure what you're rejecting is actually the Gospel and you need to think about, well, if you're fundamental you are, it's not going to be the Gospel, what the heck is it going to be? What do you want to say, I am, I don't know what else, I've got nothing else I can offer you. So you need to think about that word see if you're really quite, if you're definitely rejecting the Gospel, but I don't think there's anybody in here who's doing that.

If you're actually thinking more, I know I need Jesus and I know I want him and I'm full of doubts and I don't know enough and I'm waiting for some crash or lightning or something because I know that I need Jesus.

I just want you to see that you are longing to be something that you already are, because all Jesus asks you to do is trust him and trust in Jesus, you just simply have to say to him, Lord, please save me, Father, I want to be your child.

[ 39 : 03 ] If you're even praying that prayer, I would say that you already are the thing that you long to be. It's a very cool verse and I was going to finish at seven, but I got carried away.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God and so we are. It's a verse that you can take into this week and it's a verse that you can take into eternity.