

1Tim 24-03-20b

We pick up our study by turning to 1 John chapter 3. We are, I think, gaining some traction in putting what we're learning into application, and a big part of it is discernment. How do I know how I should act depending on who I'm interacting with? And one of the principles that is helpful in this regard is the sonship. This helps us understand the idea of fruit, by their fruit you shall know them.

This is in behavior. Behavior reflects our kinship, if you will. But if you take a look at 1 John chapter 3, there is a wonderful clarification that is made here by the Apostle John.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called what? Sons of God, children of God. Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Isn't that what we just saw in our previous context? You don't know me, you don't listen to me because you don't know the Father.

You are of your father, the devil. John emphasizes that here. The world does not know us because it did not know Him.

Beloved, verse 2. Now we are children of God, sons of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. If I say somebody is like somebody, is that likeness? Is that the likeness? We are in the likeness of Christ when we are like Him.

Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure. The Lord Jesus is pure, and when we purify ourselves, we enter into being like Him, likeness. Romans 12, 1 and 2. Offer yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.

Verse 4. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness, and you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin.

Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. This isn't occasional sin. This isn't the inevitable failures that we experience.

This is the pattern that establishes whether or not we are sons of God or sons of Belial, sons of darkness. Are we sons of light or sons of darkness? Are we sons of the Father or are we sons of the devil? If we engage in patterned sin, if there are ongoing behaviors that don't resolve and don't find us on our knees repenting and implementing the power of God in our lives to overcome them and to leave them behind, we are not really a son of the Father. We are not like Him.

He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Look at verse 6. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Little children, emphasizing the family aspect here, children of whom? They're not children of John, children of God. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous.

Notice this helps inform the notion of sinning or not sinning. This is the practice. What is the ongoing pattern? He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

He who sins is of the devil, verse 8, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifest that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin.

If you're born of God, what does that make you? What did John say in chapter 1 of his gospel? As many as received Him, to them He gave power to become sons of God, born of God. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus in chapter 3 of John? You must be born again. Born from above is a good translation of that Greek term *anōthen*, a-n-o-t-h-e-n.

It can mean again, it can mean born from above. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in Him, and He cannot sin because He has been born of God. This is the genuine image and likeness of God, is being born of God and then practicing righteousness and not practicing sin.

This is sonship. This is being a son of the Father, like the Father. Jesus is the Son of God, and He can say, if you've seen Me, you've seen the Father, because I am the Father's Son in the fullest sense.

In this, the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. We are in 1 John 3.10. The children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Notice there are two completely different races here.

There are the children of God and there are the children of the devil, and they do not overlap, and they do not coincide, and they do not have fellowship. They are different and other. This is the opposite of one another.

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. You cannot separate the two commands to love God and love one another. This is the message you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Verse 12, not as Cain, who was what? Of the wicked one. Notice there's nothing said about Cain being born and being in the image of Adam or in the likeness of Adam or in the image of God or likeness of God. Why? His actions prove him to be of the wicked one.

He murdered his brother. Why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers were righteous. What was Jesus talking about in John 8? The very same thing.

You are of your father the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning. He is a liar.

He is not of the truth. And Cain's actions reflect that. So do not marvel, verse 13, my brethren, if the world hates you.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

So whatever people want to say about the image of God and, well, we need to be concerned about strangers and those who are not anywhere near professing Christians. They're of other faiths. They're of other persuasions.

Their lives manifest the practice of sin and the practice of evil. They have devoted themselves to it. They identify themselves by it.

I am in this community that identifies itself with a string of alphabet soup. They are not of God. They are not brethren.

They do not qualify for one another command fulfillment. They will hate us. And regardless of what they say or how they act, if we are close enough to the Lord Jesus Christ and they hate him, they should and will hate us.

If they don't hate us but they hate Christ, what's the matter with us? Are we so dissimilar from the Lord Jesus that they can hate him and think we're fine? If the world loves us, there is something wrong with us because the world hates the Lord Jesus and hates those who are like him. And he said it, and John says it here. So whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

You continue here, by this we know love in verse 16, because he laid down his life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for whom? For others, for the brethren. This is specifically within the one another inner circle. Those who have like faith, like practice, they are brethren.

They are sons and daughters of the Father. They are brothers and sisters in Christ and of Christ. Those are the ones for whom we lay down our life.

Verse 17, whoever has this world's goods and sees who in need, his brother shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, speaking to the family about the family, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this, we know that we are of the truth and we will assure our hearts before him. Skip down to verse 22, whatever we ask, we receive from him.

Why? Because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. The one who has my words and keeps them, Jesus said in John's gospel, he's the

one who loves me. I and my father will come to him, make our home with him.

Whatever we ask, we receive because we keep his commandments and we do the things that are pleasing in his sight. 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. Verse 24, he who keeps his commandments abides in him and he in him.

And by this, we know that he abides in us by the spirit whom he has given us, abiding in Christ, reflecting the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. And it's not difficult to discern who is and who is not doing this. It's just not difficult.

Short periods of exposure quickly reveal who loves the Lord God, who has his words and is endeavoring to keep them. That is the one another circle and the one another's apply there. Those who are outside, there is a different standard.

So this love that we're talking about is within the inner circle, but those who are outside, we have a different standard. We basically do no harm. We give no cause for offense.

We are not angry. We are not judgmental. We are not oppositional.

We are not confrontational. And people say, well, you know, we need to be prophetic. We need to call out sin.

And you look at the passages that they quote in that connection that, you know, to call out evil and so on. The context is in the body. If people like in Corinth start to communicate or perpetrate evil, that needs to be called out in the body.

The one another's, the brothers and sisters in the faith need to be preserved. And so you expel the immoral brother. You have no fellowship with the one who is spreading falsehoods about the Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnation.

That needs to be identified and that needs to be dealt with. But evil out in the world, Paul says, God will judge that which is outside. And we are not called to quote unquote be prophetic.

And remember the prophets, all of them and all a prophecy in the Old Testament and in the new, all of that prophecy, even when it is talking about Moab and Ammon and Assyria and Babylon and outside nations, the prophets didn't go to those nations and prophesy. There's only one occasion where that ever happened. And that's Jonah going to Nineveh.

And that is a case, an object lesson, a living parable for Israel. The book of Jonah wasn't left in Nineveh. The book of Jonah was given to the people of God to rebuke them, to shame them.

The pagans have got more response to the word of God. A guy delivers a one sentence

oracle, yet 40 days in Nineveh will be destroyed. And these people are down on their knees in sackcloth and ashes, repenting of their evil deeds.

You with alleged kinship, going back to Abraham and beyond are not so responsive, but the prophets were sent to the people of God to confront the people of God with their failure to live up to their covenant relationship to God. The prophets were not dispersed out to the nations to try to get them to quit worshiping Molech and stop making the high places and then fornicating under the trees and worshiping Ashtarth and the stars and the sun and Shemesh and Dagon and the rest of them. How many prophets were ever sent to the Philistines? Well, we just need to send prophets to them and get them evangelized so that they'll quit attacking us and plundering our fields and taking our goods.

It never happens. In the New Testament, when does the Lord Jesus ever confront the sins of the Roman Empire and call out Caesar and call out Herod and call out the immorality in the palace and call out the immorality of arresting John the Baptist? His cousin, most likely. When does Jesus send his disciples or go himself with his disciples to the slave markets that were everywhere? What is the only socially conscious thing you can even begin to attach to the Lord Jesus? The money changers, cheating people, taking advantage of people.

And where are they? They are in the temple, on the ground that David purchased from Aaron. I just think it's fascinating. Jesus says the son of David is probably standing on hereditary property that belongs to him saying, you've turned this into a den of thieves.

Get off my property. Get off my lawn, in a way. But people want to turn the church into social justice warriors, and that is not our calling.

And in order to justify it, they are repurposing scripture that has a very clear context. You should love one another. If you see your brother in need, do something about it, that you may be sons of your father in heaven, and so on.

So it is so helpful to clearly discern what scripture assigns to us as responsibilities for one another and toward those who are outside. And there is no cause for abuse, for vituperation, for a lot of negative and disparaging comment about those who are outside. We are to mind our own business, work quietly with our hands.

You look at 1 Thessalonians 4 in that regard. It is very clear what our responsibilities toward those outside are. And in 1 Thessalonians 4, you have, Brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you abound more and more as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God.

You know the commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. This is the will of God, your sanctification, your unique, set-apart, holy manner of living, that you should

abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor. And whatever that vessel represents, it is something we possess, and whatever we possess should be held in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles, who do not know God.

There is a distinction and a difference between those who do not know God. Think again about John 8, and Jesus talking to Pharisees who are Jews and descendants of Abraham, and they don't know God. And because of that, they don't know Christ, and they can't hear the truth.

Those who do not know God, that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such as we have forewarned and testified. And this has to do with actions within the brotherhood. Don't defraud your brother.

God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Verse 9, concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you. You yourselves are taught by God to love one another, and you do toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.

We urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more, that you aspire also to lead a quiet life, verse 11, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside. It is a quiet, self-supported, non-confrontational, non-wave-making life. And then he goes on to talk about the rapture from there.

So those who are outside, walk in wisdom, Colossians 4.5, toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Ephesians 5.15, pay careful attention then to how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. But if you work with your own hands, if you endeavor to be independent and self-supporting and not beholden to the world or the structures and things that are in the world, we will walk properly toward outsiders, independent.

It is better for the church to look after and support one another than to have to go to charity that is outside. How could somebody be a member of the fellowship and body of Christ, and the body's not looking after them, and they've got to go to the Gentiles and to the unbelievers for relief? Paul chides the Corinthians because they are biting and devouring one another and dividing up from one another and taking each other to court before the Gentiles instead of looking after each other, and the body depending on Christ, and through Christ God the Father, and looking to Him to supply all needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. So these are helpful understandings to know when and how to fulfill the one another commands, those 59 do's and do not's, and you can put with those a couple of other passages that don't necessarily use the phrase one another, but in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, this is manifestly looking at those who are in the inner circle, those who are in the fellowship, and this is things to offer to idols.

We know that we have knowledge, knowledge puffs up, love builds up, love edifies. If anyone thinks he knows things that he doesn't actually know, if anyone loves God, this one is known by him in verse 3. Therefore, concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in this world, and there is no other God but one. So called gods, heaven or earth, for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him, one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

There are people who are in God and in Christ, and through God and through Christ live, and there are those who don't. That is the great separator, that is the difference between inside and outside. However, there is not in everyone that knowledge.

For some, I'm in verse 7, with consciousness of the idol, until now they eat it as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God, neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours, based on your knowledge, and we like to think that we have some knowledge because we've been studying the word of God together for quite a while, but there are others who are brothers and sisters in Christ, but don't necessarily have the foundation and the advantage of having spent time, Old Testament and new, verse by verse, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and coming to an understanding of some of these topics.

Beware that this liberty does not become a stumbling block to those who are weak. If anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?" Notice, if people do what they are doing because of the example of others, they'll perish. He doesn't say they'll be led astray or they won't grow as fast.

The brother who eats meat offered to idols because he sees you doing it will perish. Perish. You can be the cause of a fellow believer perishing.

Is this physical perishing, spiritual perishing? Whatever it is, I don't want to be responsible for it. And this is the diametric opposite of people who say we should model, we should mentor by consciously setting an example for others. Well, do what I do.

Well, it's a wonderful thing to have examples. Overseers are to be examples to the flock. Paul tells the Ephesian elders toward the end of Acts when he's leaving and thinks he's not going to see him anymore.

I think actually he ends up doing so. But he tells them, you'll see my face no more. But you would need to be examples for the flock.

That's a good thing. However, we've got to be careful that the example that is set isn't

one that actually causes people to stumble. You can set an example in based on knowledge that causes others to stumble.

And this is that horizontal love, not just loving your neighbor as yourself, but loving one another as Christ loves us. And there are times when the Lord Jesus doesn't reveal everything he knows because it would cause stumbling. And Jesus is careful about what he imparts and what he doesn't, what he discloses and what he doesn't.

And it is done in love. Sometimes we withhold what we know and we do not live out things that are within our freedom in Christ before other believers, because we are sensitive to not just their needs, but also to where they are and that they, without a foundation of faith, whatever is not of faith is sin. And if they're doing it based on, well, so-and-so does it, so I guess it's okay for me.

But the Holy Spirit is not able to activate the power of God for moderation, for understanding, for discretion, for self-control and the other fruits of the Spirit. And they start trying to do actions based on what they see other people doing instead of deeply from the heart acting in love, they can perish and it's our fault. So, because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? When you thus sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

If you have done it for the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me, both good and bad. Therefore, Paul says, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat lest I make my brother stumble. And we have to observe the effect that our fellowship has on others.

The result of our fellowship should be up-building, not divisive or destructive. It should shine a light that enables us to walk together on the narrow road through the straight gate and not create personal problems and cause someone to actually perish. Their seed has sprung up in shallow soil and our example is like the sun that beats down on it and causes that life to perish before it gets a chance to sink its roots any deeper.

And people who think that they are in a position to set an example have to consider what parts of this example are basic and fundamental and what parts of it are based on knowledge that I've gained across many years and others may not be quite ready. I've seen this when somebody asks me a question and I give the answer and I should have deflected that question or deferred it because my answer to the question caused so much confusion that fundamental and basic things that they really needed to hear couldn't be heard because they were vibrating in place about, you know, the eternality of the lake of fire or salvation for babies or whatever else. And you start talking about things that need a foundation and actually cause people to stumble and prevent them from gaining momentum on foundational fundamental truths.

That's what Paul is talking about here. But notice this is in the realm of the one and

others and it is a brother. If I cause a brother, I need to know where my brother stands with regard to his conscience and to his progress in the faith and be careful and considerate and express love in not taxing their understanding or stressing their faith or causing them to engage in behavior because of my example that is beyond faith and their understanding because they will be sinning and so will I. So 1 Corinthians 8.13, if what I eat causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat that food again.

It's not just meat. Meat means food. This can be anything.

And by association, there's an easy example in terms of alcohol and moderate consumption of alcohol, but it's association with alcoholism and the destruction of families and destruction of health and drunk driving and so many other problems. And if people are alive to the hazards of alcohol, it's not a good idea to imbibe or get your picture taken in your house and there's a wall of booze behind you and send it out in your Christmas card, which I have seen happen. That's an easy, facile example of causing someone to stumble.

If you have the presence and power of God in your life and you have that aspect of the fruit of the spirit, which is self-control and moderation, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with alcohol. Jesus turned 12 big jugs of water into real wine at the wedding feast of Cana. It doesn't mean that we should walk around with a glass in our hand around any old believer because you can cause people to stumble.

They will either associate you with sin and then other things you are associated with, like the other understandings you have from the word of God. They say, well, he's wrong on that. What else is he wrong on? He or she.

So we need to be considerate and thoughtful about things that we know and understand and that might be a part of our lives that other people may not be ready for or don't have the foundation to partake or understand or engage in. And this is not just personal habits. This extends to political activity and discourse.

This extends to conversation about a wide range of topics and opinions that we might express. We may need to hold closer to our vest because the reasons for which we support or do not support different ones. I'll give you an example.

Suppose there is a political candidate who is widely known and has a reputation for personal indiscretions in their private life. And there are women here and there who have said this and that happened and they're on their second or third wife and they're associated with immorality in their private life or indiscretion with their words in their private life. And if you just come out and talk to other believers and say, I support so-and-so and I'm going to vote for him.

Well, a weaker brother may not understand the policy reasons and the other

foundational truths from the word of God on which you say, based on the available choices, this one more closely comports with my understanding of the word of God. And this is part of my spiritual life that I'm going to vote in this direction and for this candidate or in harmony with this party or whatever it may be. You have to be careful about vocal support for someone around a weaker brother who all they say is, so you're supporting this lecherous, filthy mouth, but you know, what's the matter with you? And you cause a weaker brother to stumble.

Do you see the point here? We have to be discerning even within the realm of one another's and we are not completely free unless and until we are confident that we are not going to create that kind of problem because to do so is sin and you can cause someone to perish. They can say, whatever Christianity is that lets you vote for that guy, I'm out. I'm out of here.

Nobody can, you know, and you see a lot of these now. Well, nobody can be in this category and vote for so and so. Nobody can call themselves a Christian and support this policy of Israel or the Middle East or some other thing.

And they draw connections and draw conclusions from what we say and who we are. And mature believers have to be careful about vocalizing and making visible things that are a part of our life in terms of wisdom and understanding that weaker brothers and sisters don't share. And so I refrain from talking about who I'm going to vote for.

Even when I'm in a household where people have got signs in the lawn and everything else, I am very reserved because my first and foremost responsibility and our first and foremost responsibility is to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, not a candidate, not a party, not a political or social point of view, not what we support and what we condemn, but Jesus Christ. Paul said, I'm determined to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That's the issue.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. And unless I know people well, I don't talk politics. I don't talk social policy.

I don't talk who's right, who's wrong, what's evil, what's not. Hollywood this and social media that. It is dangerous because you can cause the weaker brother to stumble.

And Paul says, even something that's in my life, if it's going to trip somebody up, I'll, I'll stay out of it. I won't do it. Even though, you know, in the privacy of my own domicile, it's a different thing.

There are things that we can discuss among ourselves that shouldn't see the light of day to those who are outside, or even to those who are, we're not sure they're on real solid ground spiritually. This is the application of this principle of being body of Christ in this world. Jesus spoke one way to his disciples.

He spoke another way to those who came and were in sort of the neighbor category. And he spoke and treated those who are outside in yet another way. We look at his example.

We have that greatly developed in the epistles of Paul and John and Peter. And this is where we look for guidance. If somebody starts flying a flag of the image of God and saying, you need to support this and you need to do that.

And you need to express indistinguishable charity toward all, you know, without distinction, without discernment. This is always good. Clothing somebody that needs a shirt.

That's always good. Not in God's sight. And it's God's judgment that matters.

And if we squander our resources and squander our stewardship, we will actually be sinning. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we have come back.

So when we come back on Sunday, we'll continue our study. But for tonight, I hope that's been helpful. And we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the powerful and clear way that you have communicated to us and illuminated our path so that we can be fit representatives of the Lord Jesus. We can be and do those things that reflect his glory and yours.

We pray that as we meditate and pray over what we have discerned in your word, that that light will shine. Your word will be a lamp to our feet, a light to our paths, and that we will serve and represent as we should in the time that remains to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.