

1st John 3:1-10

1 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3 And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. 4 Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. 10 The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters (NRSV).

I selected the title due to its impact. A destroyer is a person that puts an end to the existence of something, or completely ruins something. The Scripture reveals Jesus to be the destroyer of evil. That sounds like the makings of a good movie Jesus: *The Destroyer of Evil*. The synopsis will be something like this – Jesus the Destroyer of Evil goes toe to toe against God's number one enemy the Devil, watch the dramatic events unfold in the ultimate battle in the war between good and evil. The problem is we missed it live. But that's OK, because we experience Jesus from the Holy Spirit and the written word.

John's letters provide basic tenants of Christianity; confess faith that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, sent into the world for the atonement of our sin. We are a family fellowship with divine family traits of righteousness, purity, and justice. We are to do God's will, conduct our lives based on the loving characteristic of God, and love God as well as our neighbor. The Scripture addresses some of these basic concepts. We are children of God, we are to abide in Jesus – be righteous as Jesus is righteous. The sinner is a child of the devil. The Son of God – came to destroy the works of the devil.

John is bold and blunt. The children of God do not sin because the likeness of God is in them. Since God is righteous, the faithful are righteous. If you do not do what is right you are not from God. The deceiver will claim righteousness but fail the test. The righteous follow the example of Christ. If you do not love your brothers and sisters then you are not righteous. It is a simple lesson. You have to love everybody as Jesus loves everybody. It is the good tree that bears the good fruit. First John repeatedly insists that the believer must selflessly love others like Jesus does.

We have kinship with God as children of God. Unity is required for disciples as members of one divine family This is accomplished by abiding in Jesus and walking in the ways of Christ. Sin is alien to the character of God and is alien to those who abide in the Lord. In First John sin is lawlessness, a failure to love your brothers and sisters. Sin has always been a very big problem. If it weren't such a big problem we would not need the solution of Jesus Christ coming to the earth to eradicate the consequences of our sin.

Humans are justified in Christ. We are constantly in need of forgiveness. Children of God make mistakes like all children do. It is a part of living, learning, and maturing in appreciation. Children of God will commit an occasional sin but do not live a sinful lifestyle that is continuously placing your own desire above the care for others. Children of God are not perfect; we live by love and faith, and rely on Jesus for forgiveness. Christians practice the loving lifestyle that the life of Jesus demonstrates. Believers do not purify themselves, we only purify through the saving work of Jesus. He did not need purification but all of his followers do. Jesus demonstrates complete love and we are to follow his example of love. Those that keep sinning fail to imitate his example. The Son of God is the perfect example for us to follow in our love for others. Children of devil hate others while the children of God imitate Jesus and love others.

In First John, righteousness is not a matter of moral goodness, following a list of ethical instructions, or maintaining upright social values. Righteousness is a matter of love as commanded by Jesus. As God is faithful and just, we are to be faithful and just and love others as God loves us. Love is understood to be based on the word and action of Jesus. There is no sin in Jesus. We are to abide in him. We do not do what is right in order to become children of God. We do what is right because we are children of God. We do not have the power of God or the knowledge of God, but we do have God's love. To be free of sin is not a principle to be put into practice. It is not a struggle that we are to strive to achieve. To be free of sin is a spiritual being with a likeness of God and the genetic resemblance. Christians are to love all of humanity as Jesus does. John's problem is that people claim to be Christians without the love of others. John's claim is that God's children do sin but when they do, they have the faithfulness of God giving to them the blood and intercession of Christ, prayers of brothers and sisters for redemption. The children of God are revealed when others sees Christians loving one another.

On my birthday I reflected on one of my fondest gifts. Of course, the overall best gift is the gift of God's love through Jesus Christ. What makes this gift so special is the thought that went into it. Christmas away from home was a very sentimental time for me. We were on maneuvers in Europe. It was cold and damp. Out in the field all you had was field rations, war games, and boredom. Mail call come around every few weeks and all of us longed for letters from home. Well, two weeks after Christmas a package arrived for me. I opened it up and it was a fruit cake. At the time, everyone in my family loved fruit cake except for me. I love fruit and I love cake but the two together just doesn't do it for me. It's the thought that went into the gift that made it so special. I was a hero for a day as all of my friends were begging for a piece of fruit cake. What do you give someone that is living out of a tent on the other side of the ocean? My brother took the time to think about what I might want for Christmas.

There are a lot of meaningful ways to show someone the love of the Lord. How we treat others is to be through the heart of Jesus. We are to love other people the same way Jesus loves other people; the same Lord loves us. Let people see you are a Christian by your love.