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THE SONS OF GOD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN
NUMBER 15
1 JOHN 3:1-3

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1 JOHN 3:1-3 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

In our last study we saw that the word "behold" is a command to concentrate. This concentration is to be on the kind of love our heavenly father has bestowed upon us. The word for "bestowed" is in the perfect tense and this therefore means this is a permanent gift. He will never take it back. Then we had the phrase "We should be called" and that brings up a very important doctrine.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

1. All members of the human race are potentially elected in the plan of God. We call this the doctrine of unlimited atonement.
1 JOHN 2:2 "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
2 TIMOTHY 2:10 "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."
2. Christ was elected in eternity past.
ISAIAH 42:1 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."
1 PETER 2:4 "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,"
1 PETER 2:6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."
3. This election took place as a part of the doctrine of divine decrees.
JOHN 15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."
EPHESIANS 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"
1 PETER 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

4. Every believer in the Church Age shares the election of Christ. This is what we call positional truth. This is for Church Age saints only.
1 CORINTHIANS 1:2 "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"

1 CORINTHIANS 1:30 "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:"
5. Election is the present as well as the future possession of every believer.
COLOSSIANS 3:12 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;"
6. Election takes place at the moment of salvation.
2 TIMOTHY 1:9 "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truths:"
7. Election is the foundation of the church.
1 THESSALONIANS 1:4 "Knowing, brethren beloved your election of God."

All of this adds up to the fact that as a believer you are in the plan of God and you are in it to stay. You can't run (like Jonah) and no sin you can commit (like David) and no aberration of grace of which you can be guilty (like Paul) can remove you from the plan of God. Once you have believed in Christ, you are in the plan of God, whether you succeed or fail. This gives you some basis for stability and security. This security doesn't depend on you but rather on the plan of God and the perfection of God and the character of God. Your security is based on the fact that you will never face a need for which God did not make provision in eternity past. As we live we actually see God's plan unfold before our eyes.

One Day At A Time

It comes down to this---we must take in the Word of God day by day. It is not necessary to think about what will happen next year or next month or even next week. Why? Because in eternity past God looked down the line for you and saw every need you would have and at that moment he made provision for your every need. Since God did the providing millions of years ago, what can you or I add to it by worrying or fretting about something for which he has already made provision? It is not our problem to figure out the future. Our task is to launch out on the basis of the provision God has already made.

Life, after all, is very simple.

Look how simple life actually is. God has made ample provision and all we need to do is to live on the basis of that provision. But we over-complicate our lives and we snatch things out of God's hands and begin to worry about how things are going to come out. Remember this, God didn't worry when he thought about you. He just rose up and made provision for you and that provision is always adequate and glorious. You may worry about what is coming tomorrow, but it didn't worry God in the least. His provision is adequate and complete. We can sing with confidence and on absolute scriptural foundation.

"All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you."

No Right To Worry

No believer has ever been given the right by God to worry. But we snatch things out of his hands and try to substitute our provision for the provision God has made. The Bible gives this doctrine of election in Isaiah, in Ephesians, in 1st Corinthians, and in 1st Thessalonians and on the basis of this great truth, we can give up worrying forever. Now this doesn't mean you can slip into a state of limbo and become stupid. About the only thing you need to worry about is how you are going to learn the Word of God and apply it to your daily living.

The Election Of Israel

The doctrine of election also includes the regenerated Jews of the previous dispensation. This election is a part of the plan of God. Paul discussed this in Romans 11:1-7. Therefore, we can conclude that the principle of election is the same in every dispensation. For Israel the doctrine of election can be summed up in the four unconditional covenants to Israel.

So these words "should be called" are in the aorist tense and this refers to an occurrence in eternity past. The subjunctive mood of "called" here goes with the result clause and also has a potential connotation. Our election is always dependent upon our personal faith in Christ. No belief in Christ, no election.

Sons Of God

We are called "sons of God" and the word for sons is teknon and it means a child relationship. God is our Father and we are his sons. The Greek adds something that we do not have here in the English and that something is "And we are." So this phrase says, "We should be called the sons of God, and we are."

Now because of this relationship to God our Father, the world Kosmos doesn't know us. The kosmos is Satan's system which he has devised in opposition to God's plan for us. It is a very tricky and brilliant system, whereby Satan stimulates people into doing good. You see, Satan wants people to do good so they will substitute their good for divine good. To explain this phrase "the world knoweth us not" we need to go down and pick up verse 13.

1 JOHN 3:13 "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

The world of Satan actually hates every believer. The world rejects doctrine, therefore the world, Satan's system, does not know us. Satan not only rejects doctrine, he also rejects grace. But remember, your kingdom is stronger than his kingdom.

1 JOHN 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." This word "now" is an adverb and emphasizes the Church Age in which we are now living. "We are" is the present, active, indicative of eimi and it means that we now are and we keep on being. This anticipates verse 13 where we discover that Satan's system actually hates us. Satan not only has no place for us, he hates us just like he hates Jesus Christ. That's why this verse says "it knew him not." This is an aorist tense and refers to the time when Jesus was on the earth. Therefore, you are in the angelic conflict whether you know it or not. Since Jesus has been resurrected, and since he ascended and is now in heaven, the Devil has shifted his major opposition to you and the conflict is on in intensity. Satan seeks to neutralize everything the Word of God does for us, and in many instances, he is doing a good job. The only solution to the Devil's hate and opposition is Bible doctrine in the human spirit. God is giving us assurance in this verse for he wants us always to remember that we are in the family of God and that is why he says "Now we are the sons of God" with emphasis on that word "now." We are in the family, we are tied in with the plan of God even from eternity past. This says, "We keep on being the sons of God."

All The World Is Not In The Family

There are millions of people who believe that all men are sons of God and God is the father of all. This is not true. The family of God is made up of believers only, and the kosmos hates everyone who is in that family. There is no such thing as the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. Many people believe in universal brotherhood and universal fatherhood. This is a terrible Satanic lie. We have to be teknons in order to be in the family.

GALATIANS 3:26 "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

There is only one family of God and we get into the family through faith in Jesus Christ.

Open Opposition

Quite often this Satanic opposition will break out in the open and Christians will be beaten and slaughtered. This was true in apostolic times and for centuries during what we call "the middle ages" millions were slaughtered for their faith. This period in history is often referred to as the "dark ages." But many times right in the midst of this intense persecution, little groups of faithful believers would always spring up. These were the believers who understood what it means to be the sons of God. Sons of God is the name given believers in the Church Age and under grace, God has given them protection and sustenance.

Protection Beyond This Life

The protection and provision of God not only is sufficient in this life but in the life to come. That is why we now have the words "It doth not yet appear" and this is an aorist, passive, indicative of phaneroo. This is a point of time in the future when the glory of God's provision will be a reality. The passive voice means that every believer will receive this wonderful provision from God. "What we shall be" is future, but it is so real it is as though it were a present reality.

Next we have the words "We know" and this is a perfect, active, indicative of oida. This is inner knowledge that is beyond any doubt. Look at what we know--

Salvation--we know that we have believed and are saved.

The Christian life--we know we are living in the family of God now and as long as we live here he will provide for us.

The future--we know that his provision for the future is perfect and adequate.

The unknown becomes the known through the known. Christ was resurrected and now we can say with assurance that we will be resurrected just like he was. "He shall appear" and this is the aorist, passive, subjunctive of phaneroo and this refers to the moment of time when the Rapture of the Church will take place. This is described in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. This is the time when Christ will be manifest to the Church and this is the time when the Church Age saints will become his bride. The subjunctive mood goes with the conditional clause. The Greek says "If he shall appear" and it doesn't mean there is any doubt of his appearing, it just means that it hasn't taken place yet.

A Most Important Announcement

We are told here that we shall be like him. The word for like him is homoios and this means an exact copy. We are going to have a resurrection body exactly like his. "We shall be" is the future, active, indicative of eimi and it means we shall be and there is no doubt about it.

PHILIPPIANS 3:21 "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working where by he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The Greek next says, "For we shall be like him as he is." It means that he has a resurrection body and we will have an exact copy like his.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION

1. THERE ARE TWO SEPARATE AND DISTINCT RESURRECTIONS.
Two categories of resurrection. This is taught in John 5:24-29 and in Daniel 12:2 and in Revelation 20:6 and 13. The first resurrection is for believers and the second resurrection is for unbelievers.
2. THE FIRST RESURRECTION IS IN SEVERAL PARTS OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME.
The second resurrection is simultaneous. All unbelievers in all dispensations are resurrected at the same time, right at the end of the age and are sent to the lake of fire forever.
3. THE FIRST RESURRECTION IS TAUGHT IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15:23
"Each in his own order" is a military term and means each in his own battalion.
The resurrection battalion is made up of four companies.

A Company--Christ is called "the firstfruits." He has already been resurrected and is the only one who has, up to now.

B Company--The next ones to be resurrected are the Church Age saints. First the "dead in Christ" and then "those who are alive."

C Company--At the end of the Tribulation, seven years after the Church Age saints have been resurrected, all the Old Testament saints will be raised.

D Company--These are the last ones to be raised up and these are the Millennial saints at the end of the Millennium.

These are the four parts of the first Resurrection and will take place over a period of several thousands of years.

4. THE SECOND RESURRECTION IS FOR UNBELIEVERS ONLY.

This is taught in Rev. 20:12-15, 2 Peter 3:9, Matthew 25:41 and John 5:28 and 29. This includes all the unbelievers since the beginning of time. They are cast into the lake of fire and John 3:18 and John 3:36 tells the reason why. They did not believe in Jesus Christ.

1 JOHN 3:3 "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The words "Every man" come from pas and means everyone. This means every believer, everyone who is in the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Next we have a present, active, participle of echo and it means "to have and keep on having." The word for "hope" is from elpis and means confidence. This event hasn't taken place as yet but you have absolute confidence that it will take place. You are confident as to the outcome. The word "hope" here doesn't mean what we have in mind when we say "hope." Here it means assurance, confidence.

Instead of the words "In him" the Greek says "Upon him" and it means he has this confidence upon his human spirit.

Now we have a present, active, indicative of agnizo and it means to be ceremonially pure. It means to rebound and get back in fellowship. It also has to do with ultimate sanctification, which every believer will possess one of these days.

This third verse ends with the words "even as Christ has always been pure and always will be." The only purity we have now comes from grace, but when we are raised up, we will be given his kind of purity and this is what we call ultimate sanctification.