

Children of Privilege
I John 3:1-3

April 22, 2007

A. Introduction

1. though not the subject of this message, being Children of Privilege in a world of underprivileged children gives us a responsibility in the matter of social justice ... think on that.
2. a free translation of this text: ¹ Look at the kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be named as children of God, as also we indeed are. On this account, the world does not know us for it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now children of God we are and what we shall be has not yet been made manifest. We know that whenever He shall be manifest we shall be like unto Him, because we shall see him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope based upon Him purifies himself according as He Himself is pure.
3. how can you see love?

B. Children of a Present Privilege

1. Privilege of Being Beloved (3:1a)
 - a. “what manner of love” implies its
 - b. Romans 5:8, I John 4:10 — how is God’s love visible?
2. Privilege of Position ...
 - a. ... as acknowledged by God (3:1b) — Matthew 10:10, Psalm 147:4, John 10:3 — because He ...

- b. ... as demonstrated by the world (3:1d) — John 1:11-12 — for the world ...

3. Privilege of Possession

- a. we can take possession of this position because it is a ... (3:1c)
- b. Romans 8:15-16: as well this possession is a ... (3:2a)

C. Children with a Precious Prospect

1. The Prospect of Christ’s Return (3:2c) — what gives us assurance of the certainty of this (eg., Acts 1:11)?
2. The Prospect of Our Seeing Him (3:2e) — what does this prospect include (cf. Job 19:25-26, I Thessalonians 4:16-17)?
3. The prospect of Our Being Like Him (3:2b, 2d) — what will this prospect finish in us (cf. Romans 12:2)?

D. Children Pursuing Purity

1. Because of our Hope in Christ (3:3a) — what is the nature of hope in God’s word?
2. Because of Christ’s Example (3:3b) — how can we possibly be pure like Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 2:13)?

A. Introduction

1. this morning in our Bible class
 - a. we looked at the matter of Social Justice
 - (A) taking our lesson from Amos 5 and 6
 - (B) one of the concerns of Amos' day, as it is of our's
 - (C) is the matter justice for the poor and underprivileged
 - (D) and, particularly today, of underprivileged children
 - (E) the target of the efforts of social agencies today
 - (F) to meet their physical needs of poverty and famine
 - (G) and rightly so
 - b. but this morning I would like to turn our thoughts 180°
 - (A) from the physical to the spiritual
 - (B) from the underprivileged to the privileged
 - (C) as we look at 1 John 3:1–3
 - (1) meditating on the fact when we become Christians
 - (2) we are children of God
 - (3) we are 'Children of Privilege'
 - (4) which is the title of this morning's message
 - c. now, there was an alternative title I could have chosen
 - (A) 'Test of Fellowship #5, Family Resemblance'
 - (B) but we will leave this for May 20, when, Lord willing,
 - (C) we come to speak on John 3:7–10
 - (D) 'The Parenthood Test (#5)'
 - d. what John writes in these verses arises directly from what is written in the last verse of chapter 2: "... everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." (NAS)

2. 1 John 3:1-3 reads as follows: See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. —(1977 NAS)
 3. Can you see love? Isn't love something internal? ... invisible?
 - a. what does a lonely or hurt child see when mother reaches down to put her arms around, to comfort and to soothe?
 - (A) not simply mother
 - (B) but love personified; love in action
 - b. love can be seen by the action it takes
 - c. that is why John can say here, 'see the Father's love'
 - d. because of what the Father has done, showing His love
 - e. which makes us 'Children of Privilege'
 4. our title for this passage could have been considerably longer
 - a. it is only by way of an introduction to the message
 - b. the fuller title would form an outline of these three verses:
 - (A) Children of a Present Privilege
 - (B) Children with a Precious Prospect
 - (C) Children Pursuing Purity
- B. Children of a Present Privilege
1. Privilege of Being Beloved
 - a. ^{1a} 'Behold what manner of love' (AV), 'see how great a love' (NAS), 'look at the kind of love the Father has given to us'
 - (A) the word translated 'what manner' or 'how great'
 - (B) seems to have originally meant, 'from what region or country' ... used to question something manifestly foreign to common knowledge, to experience

- (C) is used here to exclaim, 'how wonderful', marvellous not just in quantity, but also in quality
- b. this, says John, is a love which can be seen, it is visible because of the Father's specific activity on our behalf
 - (A) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8 NAS)
 - (B) so that John says in the next chapter (4:10) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (NAS)
- c. this is God's love made visible to us
 - (A) love incomprehensible
 - (B) but love that is lavish, freely given, richly bestowed

2. Privilege of Position

- a. Our position as children is acknowledged by God
 - (A) ^{1b} ... the Father has given to us that we should be named as children of God, ...
 - (B) God has called, named us as children
 - (1) in my youth, we would have pickup games
 - (a) with the ritual of choosing up sides: I take ...
 - (b) the humiliation of being called last ...
 - (c) ... OK, we'll take the skinny one ... Garth
 - (2) that's not how God calls us, names us
 - (a) He's a Father who has numbered the very hairs of our head (Matthew 10:30) – number 174,361 fell out this morning!
 - (b) "He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them." (Psalms 147:4 NAS)
 - (c) the Good Shepherd shows His Sonship, for He, too, "... calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out." (John 10:3 NAS)
- b. Our position as children is shown by the world's treatment
 - (A) ^{1d} ... On this account, the world does not know us for it did not know Him.
 - (B) the world doesn't recognize who Jesus is, so the world doesn't recognize us; the hymn-writer expressed it, -2.

Sweet, little Jesus boy, they made you be born in a manger;
Sweet, little Holy Child, they didn't know who you was.
Didn't know you come to save us, Lord, to take our sins away?
Our eyes was blind, they could not see; they didn't know who you was.
The world treat you mean, Lord, treat me mean, too;
But that's how things is down here – they don't know who you is.

- (C) John 1:11–12, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name," (John 1: 11-12 NAS)
- (1) this, then, is a proof of our spiritual affinity to the Son of God
 - (2) when we share in His suffering
 - (3) you and I may suffer only imperceptibly compared to many of our world-wide brothers and sisters, but we are part of that body of Christ which the world does not understand nor recognize

3. Privilege of Possession (our Position has been Possessed)

- a. this is a reality; something to be possessed
 - (A) ^{1c} ... named as children of God, as also we indeed are ...
 - (B) if, say, you are reading the KJV or NKJV you will not find that last phrase ... but, in all the oldest major Greek manuscripts it is to be found
 - (C) for, we are the children of God
 - (1) no simply in point of name or title
 - (2) but in fact, in reality!
- b. A Sunday school class of first-graders was asked to draw a picture of God. When the pastor stopped by to inspect their work, the children were happy to show him their drawings. One had depicted God in the form of a brightly coloured rainbow. Another had drawn the face of an old man coming out of billowing clouds. And there was one rendition which looked a lot like Superman. But perhaps the best was the one proudly displayed by a girl who said, "I didn't know what God looked like, so I just drew a picture of my daddy." The first-grader showed a lot of wisdom. Nobody knows what God looks like because

nobody has seen Him, but God has revealed Himself as a Father to those who are related to Him by faith. ^{-(3)}}.

- c. being children of God is a present reality, a possession
 - (A) ^{2a} Beloved, now children of God we are ...
 - (B) that sounds strange when we read it that way
 - (1) not what we read in any of the Bible versions
 - (2) but this is to imitate the Greek, which is put in this order in order to arrest our attention as we read it
 - (3) the 'now' comes first – not just a future possibility but a present reality
 - (4) and to emphasize this, it is completed by 'we are' – not we may be, we should be, we might be, nor we will be ... but, 'now ... we are!'
- d. this reality is demonstrated by our calling Him, 'Father'
 - (A) it isn't the much criticized, 'pie in the sky, by and by,' but it is the now abundant life
 - (B) "... by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God," (Romans 8:15b, 16 NAS)

C. Children with a Precious Prospect

1. The Prospect of Christ's Return

- a. ^{2c} We know that whenever He shall be manifest ...
- b. ... whenever He shall appear, ...
 - (A) there is no uncertainty as to fact in this 'whenever'
 - (B) the only uncertainty as to time, which Father knows
 - (C) Christ is coming to earth again – we are assured by
 - (1) His promises to His disciples
 - (2) His resurrection from the dead
 - (3) His time spent with them after His resurrection
 - (4) His ascension to the right hand of the Majesty
 - (5) the words of the angels on His ascension: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11 NAS)

c. what a precious prospect for the Christian is His return!

d. so, we sing ^{-(4)}}.

Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away!

2. The Prospect of Our Seeing Him

a. ^{2e} ... because we shall see him as He is.

b. so, as Christian believers we have

(A) the prospect of the return of our Saviour Jesus Christ — now that's great

(B) the prospect that we shall see Him when He returns – snatched up to behold Him face to face – even greater

c. we ourselves shall see Him

(A) Job, by faith, had this hope, millennia before His birth: “And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26 NAS)

(B) so also for us, “... the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17 NAS)

d. but, most marvellous – and this is John's point ...

3. The Prospect of Our Being Like Him

a. ^{2b,d} ... and what we shall be has not yet been made manifest. We know that whenever He shall be manifest we shall be like unto Him ...

b. very few of us are really pleased with our own looks. You have probably heard the story of ... an old farmer who loaded his wife and son in the truck and went to the big city. The farmer had never seen an elevator. He went to the hotel with his son to check in, leaving his wife in the truck. There he caught his first glimpse of a modern elevator, not knowing what it was. There were two beautiful shiny brass doors. He watched them open. An elderly gentleman entered the tiny room and the doors closed. The lights above the elevator flashed. A few minutes later the doors opened again. Out stepped a handsome young man. Then an old elderly lady stepped in. Again the doors closed, again the flashed, again, after

a few minutes, the doors opened again. Out stepped a beautiful young woman. At this the old farmer turned to his son and said, "Son, go get your Maw." —^{5}.

- c. God's purpose His children is a far greater transformation than anything like that; the Father's purpose is
 - (A) in the here and now the sanctification phase of our redemption is a slow, painful, gradual process
 - (1) Romans 12:2a ... **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind** (NAS) ... J. B. Philips: **Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould you minds from within** ...
 - (2) sometimes, though, it seems as if we are taking three steps forward and then 2 backward
 - (3) often our spiritual growth seems the same
 - (B) BUT, redemption of our body at Christ's appearing
 - (1) will be one of instant sanctification
 - (2) will be one instant transformation from this body of sin, from this corruptible body into our eternal, incorruptible body
- d. **whenever He shall appear, we shall be like Him**
 - (A) there is no uncertainty as to fact in that 'whenever' but only uncertainty as to time
 - (B) so with this promised transformation: the resurrection of Jesus Christ make this sure and certain

D. Children Pursuing Purity

- 1. Dr James McCullen, pastor of Liberty Baptist, Belgrade, Mo., gives this very concise outline of this verse: —^{6}.
 - a. **purity by concentration on Him**
 - b. **purity by comparison with Him**
- 2. Because of Our Hope (Expectance) in Christ
 - a. ^{3a} **And everyone who has this hope based upon Him purifies himself** ...
 - b. the foundation of our hope is Christ's resurrection
 - c. hope is not a like to have, a wish to have, a might have
 - d. it is a legal matter; a promise drafted in a will or contract; until the will or contract reaches its maturity, it is a hope or expectancy; once the due date arrives, it is received; it is no less real in the first period

than the second

- e. Christ Jesus ratified this covenant, testament or will with His blood; this covenant matures on His return to earth
- f. the response to this hope, this expectancy is to seek purity

3. Because of Christ's Example

- a. ^{3b} ... purifies himself according as He Himself is pure.
- b. the Imitation of Christ – sanctifying work of Spirit
- c. the Power of Christ
 - (A) 'but how,' we cry, 'can we ever be pure like Him?'
 - (B) the answer, 'WE cannot'
 - (C) the answer, 'HE can'
- d. "for it is God", as Philippians 2: 13 reminds us, "who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (NAS) – works of the flesh do not make purity possible, it is the sovereign grace of God that will accomplish this in you and me, if we will but not quench His Holy Spirit

E. Conclusion

- 1. Spurgeon summed up the great truths of these verses with one sentence: **The Holy Spirit shall purify our minds, and divine power shall refine our bodies, then shall we see Him as He is.** ^{-{7}}.
- 2. I hope that this may be
 - a. the enticement, the lifting up of Jesus Christ, that will draw you to Himself as your Saviour Lord
 - b. the encouragement, that will cheer you heart in those dark moments which you will face this week
 - c. the event to which you look forward in eager anticipation:
 - It will be worth it all When we see Jesus,**
 - Life's trials will seem so small When we see Christ;**
 - One glimpse of His dear face All sorrow will erase,**
 - So bravely run the race Till we see Christ.** ^{-{8}}.
- 3. Our concluding hymn is 'Children of the Heavenly Father'

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. 'Sweet Little Jesus Boy' by Robert MacGimsey, © 1934, 1935 by Carl Fisher, Inc., New York
3. “Fathers Should Reflect God's Likeness” from Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements, Kerux illustrations #11912
4. 'I'll Fly Away' by Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977)
5. From sermon, “We Shall Be Like Him” by Rev. David Hoke, Kerux sermons #2634.
6. “What We Have from a Loving God” by Dr McCullen, Kerux sermons #8038
7. From Spurgeon's Devotionals, Kerux illustration #27668
8. “When We See Christ” by Esther Kerr Rusthoi (1909-1962)