

Behold God's Love

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- [0 : 0 0] 1 John 2, 28, and we'll read on through chapter 3 and verse 10. And now, dear children, continue in him so that when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.
- If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. How great is the love the Father has lavished on 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. Dear friends, now we are children of God.
- And what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.
- Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law. In fact, sin is lawlessness.
- [1 : 0 9] But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.
- No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.
- He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.
- No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him. He cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.
- This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.
- [2 : 1 7] What is the most spectacular thing you have ever seen? Maybe it's the Grand Tetons or the Grand Canyon.
- Maybe it was your bride as she walked down the aisle towards you. Maybe it was the birth of your firstborn child. All spectacular things.
- I told you about my four trips. I have before my four trips to the Niagara Falls. The first time, it's spectacular. The second time, it's great.
- The third time, it's, wow, okay, that's pretty good. The fourth time, I'm here, and it's a lot of water running over that edge. I'd like to go back and see how I feel for the fifth time.
- But I've actually seen something that doesn't grow old like that. I suppose if you had the Grand Tetons in your backyard, you wouldn't be so amazed every time you saw it.
- [3 : 2 5] But I have seen something that doesn't grow old like that. And whenever I really see it, it's never ho-hum. It's never, eh. And that's actually how I know if I'm really seeing it or not.
- Because when I do see it, I'm amazed. And when I really don't see it, I, or when I'm not amazed, then I know I'm not actually really seeing it.

The fault is never with it. The fault is always with my eyes, with something with me. And so I've seen something that stirred my heart the very first time I saw it.

And the sun was shining brighter, and my feet felt like dancing after I saw it. And it thrilled my heart the very first time I saw it. But the wonder of wonders is the more I've seen it, the more amazing it becomes.

And it still stirs me. And it still thrills me. And it still makes me want to pull a Julie Andrews on the Alps in Switzerland and spin around with joy.

[4 : 36] I saw an article that said the vast majority of wines actually don't get better with age. The longer they sit, the worse they become. But I've seen something that isn't like that.

It actually gets better with age. It gets sweeter with time. Some things shrink when you get older. What I mean is high school seemed like a big deal.

It seemed like a big place. And then you leave and you come back a few years later and it seems smaller for some reason. It's you've grown and it hasn't.

But I've seen something that gets bigger the bigger you get. And it grows the more you grow, or at least you appreciate it more the more you grow. Well, what am I talking about?

I'm talking about the amazing love of God. Amazing love of God. There are no sweeter words than God loves me.

[5 : 42] The apostle John, who we're reading his letter, he had a name for himself that he gave himself in the gospels, a title.

Some way of referring to himself without saying his own name. Do you know what it was? The disciple that Jesus loved. So in John's mind, the most important thing about John was that Jesus loved him.

Jesus loves me. That's what John was excited about. John was loved. And it was something he couldn't get over. And the wonder of wonders is, I can say the same thing.

I could put my name in front of that. Jason, the disciple that Jesus loved. And you could put your name out front there too.

And I would encourage you, if you're taking notes, write your name. And put the disciple that Jesus loved. And so for the next couple of months, that's what we're going to be talking about.

[6 : 56] This love of God. Just maybe two months. Because there's nothing more important than the love of God. There's nothing more important about me than that God loves me.

And there's nothing more amazing than that God loves me. And so tonight we begin with 1 John 3, verse 1.

1 John 3, verse 1. And I hate beginning like this, because I hate beginning with an apology for the NIV. It doesn't quite get it right.

It is missing a word. And it's an important word that I want to start with. And it's a word that John starts with. And I'm so sorry to say that the NIV is missing the word, behold, or see.

The SV has, see what kind of love the Father has given us. The King James has, behold what manner of love. Even the updated NIV put it back.

[8 : 02] And it said, see what great love the Father has lavished on us. And it should be there. And it should be there because John put it there. And so we want to look at that word, behold.

Behold. And this is where we're going to start our entrance into this series with just that word of behold. Here in John, in 1 John, it's in the plural.

Usually it's in the singular. Usually it's saying, you, particular person, behold this. Look at what I'm showing you. But here, John is saying, you all.

All of you saints. He's gathering everyone. He's putting his arms around everyone. And he's drawing all of our attention. And he's saying, behold, all of you. Look at this. And so that brings us to our first point.

And our first point is this. What we need to do is behold. What we need to do is behold. So our brother Colin prayed, Lord, we want to be doers of your word.

[9 : 07] What is the doing of this sermon, of this message? It's just that word, to behold. John is calling each and every one of us to do something.

To look at something. To turn our attention away from other things or whatever else we're looking at and to look at that. We do that all the time.

We see something amazing. The moon is up in the daytime and we say to our child, look, there's the moon. Or we see something amazing. And we point it out to them.

And we don't want them to sit there and do nothing. We don't want them just to sort of hear about what we're describing to them. We want them to turn their attention away from what they're doing and look.

And that's what John is saying here. To behold, to look, to see. It's a call to do something. You can't sit there and not do anything. You have to, you gotta look.

[10 : 10] You gotta see this. Spurgeon, speaking for God, says, read other scriptures if you like with a glance, but stop here. I have put a way mark to tell you there is something eminently worthy of attention buried beneath these words.

So, this word behold is like a signpost saying, stop, slow down, look at, Ashley, what is here. And so, what do we need to do with God's love?

Well, we need to look at it. We need to behold it. We need to see it. We need to marvel at it. We need to consider it. We need to take it in.

We need to turn it this way and that way. We need to study it. We need to be amazed. That's John's call to action, to behold, to look, but it's not just a look of study, it's a look of faith.

That's how the word is used in the Bible. It's always connected to believing something. So, the Bible uses this word behold or look to introduce amazing things.

[11 : 22] It's the word that gets applied to Jesus again and again and again in the Bible because what is the central message of the Bible but look to Jesus. Here's the Savior.

Salvation is by faith in Him. So, Isaiah 40, see, the sovereign Lord comes with power and His arm rules for Him. See, His reward is with Him. He tends His flock like a shepherd. He gathers His lambs in His arms.

See, the Lord is coming. He's a king. He's strong. He's powerful. He's rewarding. But He's also the shepherd who gently carries His lambs.

Isaiah again says, see, see, behold, here is my servant whom I have uphold, who I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.

I will put my spirit on Him and He will bring justice to the nations. So, the Old Testament saints were looking forward, were beholding Jesus as He was coming to them.

[12 : 23] He's God's servant. He's full of the Spirit. He's going to bring justice and peace to the nations. He's the hope of the world. We, a few months ago, looked at Zechariah chapter 3 and again, this word is pointed or is showing up and it's pointing at Jesus and Zechariah says, listen, oh high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you who are men symbolic of things to come.

I am going to bring my servant the branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua. There are seven eyes on that one stone and I will engrave an inscription on it and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

So, listen, see, here's the branch, here's the servant, here's the stone and on him the sins of the land are going to be removed in one day. Isaiah 7, behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

And then, in the last Lord's Supper, we looked at John the Baptist. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

When the word, when the Bible uses behold, it's calling us away from the world and it's calling us to focus our hearts and our attention on Jesus Christ specifically.

[13 : 58] And we are called to do this. And so, by faith, what were the Old Testament believers supposed to do? By faith, they were to see him, put their trust in him, believe him, look to him, live upon him.

That's all in this word behold. It was look, marvel, rejoice, worship, live on this. And that's what the Old Testament saints did.

They lived on these sites of Jesus who was coming. And so, we can't miss this. This is our first point. We need to do something.

You need to do something. God is calling you to behold his love for you. to look at it, to live on it, to marvel in it, to rejoice in it, to put your hope in it, to relish it.

That's our first point. Now to our second point. Secondly, what do we need to behold? What do we need to behold? We need to behold God's great love.

[15 : 08] God's great love. And that's what John points out. This is what we need to take in. This is what we need to marvel at. This is what we need to consider. God's great love.

And so, what comfort we miss, what joy we lose, what problems, what motivation we lack, all because we miss God's love for us.

We are like cars that are driving around with sugar in our gas tank or something. We're not fully functioning when we are not beholding God's great, over-the-top, generous gift to us.

And so, he says, look to this love. Look at this love. The kind of love it is. The way he's loved us. How great it is.

The word that we have translated in English, how great, can be translated from what country? What country is this love from?

[16 : 14] Behold, where does this love come from? We don't see that around here. That's not Bremen, Indiana kind of love.

One translator translated it as exotic. The exotic love of God. When you run into something exotic, you say, that's not what we have around here.

That's not normal. Have you ever been to an authentic Hispanic grocery store? We have one in Plymouth, an authentic Hispanic grocery store.

It's pretty small, but when you walk into that place, it is like walking into not, from somewhere around here. I just remember the most stunning thing, besides the weird stuff they had in the deli, was they had a whole aisle, left, right, top, bottom, of dried peppers.

A whole aisle of dried peppers. And I called Stephanie over and I'm like, look at this. I didn't even know there were that many peppers in the world, but they're making this many, that's what they're using.

[17 : 30] And so we're not in Kansas anymore. This isn't Walmart. And that's what John is saying. Look at this love. It's not earthly. It's not human.

It's not from our country. It's not from around here love. Romans said something like that, for a good man, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love, his own kind of love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

See, that's the distinction we're making. People will occasionally die for a good man. They will. It's rare, but it happens. But God's love isn't like that.

He demonstrates his own love, his own kind of love in this. It's divine love. It's different. He doesn't die for his friends. Christ dies for his enemies in order to make them his friends.

So John says, look, that's the kind of love that God has loved you with. Not bremen love. Not even human love.

[18 : 41] It's amazing, divine love. And then look how he's loved us lavishly, generously, giving us his love.

It's permanent. The word lavished is in the perfect tense in the Greek, which is just to say, God has given us his love and he's not going to take it back.

He's given it to us and the action is now done. It's a permanent giving. He's given us his love and he's not taking it back.

We're going to talk about this, Lord willing, in another sermon to come, but that God has loved his own people. He has loved us from eternity past, forever ago.

And so in one sense, God gave us this love in eternity past. So, either way, he didn't just set his love on us 10 or 15 or 50 years ago when we became a Christian.

[19 : 52] That's he gave us his love forever ago. And now flowing out of that love, now flowing out of that forever love for us, he makes us his children.

He gives us, he adopts us. And that action is done. It's not changing. God is not going to turn his heart away.

God is not going to stop loving us. He has given us his love. And so what can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus? Neither height, no depth, or anything else in all of creation.

Nothing above, nothing below, nothing in ourselves, nothing in God's own heart. He has lavished permanently his love on us.

So John says, behold, that love, divine, permanent. And then it's an adopting love. It's a lot of different kinds of loves, I guess, but it's an adopting love.

[20 : 57] It's forgiving, it's patient, it's kind, it's saving, but what he says here is, oh, stop and look at this. It's an adopting love. How great, look at how great this father's love is, that he has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.

And that is what we are. So who are you? Not a rebel. You're a child.

You're not an orphan. You're a child. You aren't living life all by yourself. Your father's love is over you.

God and John reinforces it with, and that is what we are. That's an important thing.

That is what we are. We have been called children. Now, is that just some sort of label? Is that just some sort of pretend? Some sort of game?

[22 : 07] Words that just make us feel good? Are we just like his children? But not really. John says, and that is what we are.

Look at this love. You, with all of your faults, you, with all of your weaknesses, you, with all of your doubts, and failings, and your sins, little, all you.

God has loved you and made you his child, made you his. And so there we were, ruined, guilty, undone.

But God called the prodigals home, and he spread the lavish feast, and we're his. So you're his.

It's not fake. It's not fraud. God's not playing pretend you're his. On Caveman's birth certificate, it says, date of birth, 10-4-2010.

[23 : 18] Place of birth, Hawassa. Father's name, Jason Webb. Mother's name, Stephanie Webb. Not just a name, but that is what we are.

On July 28, 2012, a court order came down from Curtis Palmer, judge of the Marshall County Circuit Court, saying, among other things, it is further ordered and decreed that Abenezar Jason Webb shall hence force be known as Cayman Abenezar Webb, and shall have all the rights of a child and heir of Jason A.

Webb and Stephanie M. Webb. All the rights. All the privileges. privileges. What kind of love is this that God has given us?

We're his. And it wasn't a ruling by Curtis Palmer, judge of the Marshall County Circuit Court, and it wasn't a petition filed by Stephen Poling, the attorney who made the petition for us.

the judge was God Almighty who judges angels, who judges with righteousness, and his attorney was the son, our brother.

[24 : 43] So, children of God, that is what we are. That's the promise of the gospel. That's what the gospel is offering to sinners. That you can be a child of God.

And now God's adopting father arms are open, saying, come through my son, and you're welcomed. John says, behold that love. It's tender.

It's compassionate. It never grows old. It never grows small. And all I have to say is, isn't it good? Isn't it good how he loves us? So, that's what we need to do.

Behold. And that's what we need to behold God's great love for us. And now, third and last, why? Why is it so important for us to behold it? well, I have five reasons.

And I can't elaborate on all of them, but I want to hit on each of them. Why do we need to behold his love? Why, if you see anything, or focus on anything, or do anything in the coming week, should you focus and think about and plan and pursue beholding God's love?

[25 : 55] five reasons. And reason number one is, it's amazing. It's amazing. Really, there's no other reason than this, I mean, that John properly gives.

It's amazing. John isn't saying, here are some practical reasons for beholding. It's, God's love sweeps him away. And so, he sees it, and he says, behold it, look at it, it's amazing that we should be called the children of God.

So, you don't need any other reason than that, really. People don't go to the Grand Canyon every year, millions of them, and say, well, let me give you five reasons why you should look at the Grand Canyon.

They look at it because it's amazing. They don't go there for moral reasons, or intellectual reasons, or life reasons. they go because it's an amazing thing to see.

The Grand Canyon is deep. It's wide. It is long. If you were at the bottom, I'm sure it would be high. But God's love for us in Christ is deeper and wider and longer and higher.

[27 : 17] It takes the very spirit of God in us to give us strength to just begin to scratch the surface of how great his love for us is. Because it's something so amazing and so overwhelming.

It's too much for us. It's like looking at the sun. You just can't study it directly or it'll blind you. That's why we need the spirit of God to say this is how much you are loved.

Well, that's God's love. Why? Why behold it? Because it's amazing. And I guess my question is why wouldn't you stop and look? Do you have something else better to look at than that?

Do you have something better to think about than that? That's like so much of our lives we drive by the Grand Canyon and we stop at the McDonald's when there's McDonald's everywhere.

there's only one Grand Canyon. There's only one great thing that really demands our attention above everything else.

[28 : 23] Second reason, God is glorified when we appreciate it. God is glorified when we appreciate his love. When we take the time to stand in awe, that's when worship, that's when love, that's when adoration swells up and wells up out of our hearts when we look at it.

We exalt God when we behold it because we think wow, that's amazing and he's adored and he's worshipped. So why did God ever save us?

Ephesians 1 says it was for the praise of his glorious grace so that those who were saved would say God's grace is amazing.

God's love is amazing. So that was the ultimate end of salvation and so why should we look at God's love? Well because it glorifies him when we do.

So why should you stop doing whatever you're doing? Why should you take time to behold this love? Because God is glorified when you do it. It's like the wide open doors to worship.

[29 : 34] Third reason, we forget it so easily. we forget it so easily. We need to look at it because we forget it. God's love is amazing and yet we forget.

We lose track of it and nothing ever good happens when we lose sight of his love, when we forget his amazing love for us.

when we forget his love for us, we become like a man who forgets that he's married to a loving woman.

Now imagine that. A man is married to a woman who loves him a lot and yet he forgets it. I'm not talking, for the sake of the illustration, I'm not talking hypothetically, I'm talking about literally he walks out the door and he forgets he's married.

He forgets there's a woman that loves him. So imagine what that man would be getting himself into. What kind of trouble?

[30 : 43] What kind of nonsense? What kind of way would he live? If half of his life he just forgot he was married. But that's how it can be for us.

God's loved us. And we forget. So why do we run after our idols? Why do we have such a hard time giving them up?

Why do we eat too much, look at porn, and get lost in our fantasy worlds? Why do we even as Christians fall in love with money and live for ourselves, live for our pleasures instead of for God?

isn't it because we forget? We lose track of this great love. So that's why we need to behold God's love again, because we forget it so easily.

Fourth reason, we need it. We need it. You see something of it, even in this passage that we have, that John, after he talks about this, he brings up the problem that we are the children of God, and yet the world doesn't see us like that.

[32 : 06] The world doesn't call us that. The world doesn't understand us like that. So John's here talking about the world not knowing us, not understanding us, not appreciating what we are.

And so it can be a very lonely, isolating, thing to be a Christian in this world. Our families don't get us.

Our brothers, our sisters, our parents don't understand us. They don't get us. We get them, don't we?

Because we've been there before. We know, we understand them. But we're strangers to them. God's love.

And that's actually why we need to behold God's love. Because they don't get us, but God does get us. They don't understand us, but God understands us.

[33 : 09] We're strangers to them, but we're God's children. And he knows us, and he understands us, he appreciates us, he loves us as his children.

So we need to remember it because this world is a sad, lonely place. We need it because we can get caught up in so many doubts and fears and anxieties and worries.

Isn't that true? Worries, fears, anxieties. we live like orphans instead of children.

And how do orphans live? On their own, isolated, self-sufficient, competing, insecure, restless.

How do orphans view authority? Something dangerous? Something bad?

[34 : 23] Do you ever question, God, could your laws be good for me? Could you ruling over me be a good thing? And sometimes we could say, no, I don't think it is. We fear God's authority because we don't realize how much he loves us.

And so we're living like orphans, street children instead of sons and daughters. And all of that would be laid to rest if we beheld his love because love drives out fear.

The ultimate answer to the fears and the anxieties and the worries that we have, there's maybe a lot of remedies, but the ultimate one is beholding God's love for us.

And how can we sense what we don't look at? How can we appreciate it and live on it if we don't look at it? So that's why.

So are you worried? Are you anxious? Do you feel like you're an orphan, always on the block, always getting tested whether you can stay in God's family or not? Look at God's love. Are you filled with anxieties and worries about the future?

[35 : 35] God's love. You too need to look at God's love. Now fifth and last, why do we need to behold God's love? Because that's the only way we're going to be any help to other people.

That's the only way we're going to be any help to other people. You know, we're all called to be, well we all are counselors to each other.

We're counseling, I mean, you don't have any of those, any of us have the authentic or that title, but that's what we're doing.

After church, you're going to be talking to each other. You're going to be hearing each other. You're going to be giving advice. You're going to be listening. You're going to be loving on each other. You're going to be doing the act of counseling and ministry and loving your brothers and sisters.

And that's what we're doing all the time. And the question is, are we going to be good at it or not? But who is someone who's ready to help?

[36 : 42] Well, they're beholding the love of God. The love of God is big and it's heavy on their heart. If you're living like an orphan, then you're going to be worried first about yourself.

What do they think of me? What are they going to think about what I said? I don't want to be able to say that. Or I don't have time or space in my heart or in my life to listen to you, to care about you.

I have enough big problems of my own. And what are my big problems? It's all about providing for myself and caring for myself. And it's very self-centered. God's love.

And we'll use people. We'll manipulate those people. We'll listen to their woes in order to just feel better about ourselves.

That's using them. But we won't love them. But God's love frees us to love those people.

[37 : 46] And to not ask, what can I get them to do for me, but what can I do for them? And if we don't have a wondering sense of God's love, I'm going to ask, what are we going to be able to say to them?

What good news do we have? What do we have to say to those who are hurting and needy around us? We won't have anything to say.

We might give them some go-get-ems. And this is what God says you need to do, and we give it in this platootinous, heartless way. But we won't give them truth bathed in love.

Or we won't give them that strong admonition in love. Or that warning or rebuke in love. Because we'll be so worried about ourselves, we'll have nothing really, no life to give to them.

And so why behold God's love? Because your brothers and sisters need you to. your brothers and sisters need you to. You can help them if you do it, but you're not going to be much help to them if you don't.

[39 : 02] So three points. What do we need to do? Behold. What do we need to behold? God's amazing love for us. And the why? Because it is amazing.

God's love. You're not going to be poorer for focusing on God's love. It's God glorifying. We forget it too easily.

We need it. And it's the only way to help others. So may God bless us. May God help us to behold his love.

and hopefully in the next weeks to come we'll flesh this out more and more and be able to put it to practical use in our body here.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you and we praise you for this amazing love that you've given to us.

[40 : 02] We adore you, that you are this kind of God full of love for your people. And full of love even for the lost, that you would open up your arms to them and welcome them if they would but turn, repent, and believe in Jesus Christ.

We thank you for this great love that would call us children. Help us then to live as children and to be putting our orphan status away and to live on your love and your faithfulness and your word and less and less on our own self-centered resources.

And I pray especially that you would help us to love and counsel and speak to one another. That as we have opportunity in the coming week, that out of the overflow of our experience love for us, that we would have words to say and they would be encouraging, they would be convicting, they would be powerful words to one another, that we might build each other up in our most holy faith, and that we as a church might grow together into maturity.

Please save the lost. Bring them into the saving knowledge of how great your love is, that it wouldn't be a story that they've heard from afar, but you would write that love letter upon their own hearts.

I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.