

## What God's Children Possess

By Mark Jarvinen

I'll never forget the Christmas season of 1993, when my sister Lisa, and her husband, Jeff, visited our home in PA for the first time. The fact that they brought their newly adopted baby daughter, Maija, with them made their visit extra special. They shared the sometimes harrowing details of Lisa's month long stay in Bogata, Columbia, Maija's birthplace, and all the red tape involved in bringing her stateside to her new home. Maija is now 25 years old and very much a part of our extended family. It's fun to reflect on the special way in which Maija was placed into our family. She was chosen. Her mommy flew a long distance so that she and Jeff could claim her as their own. They were smitten by her. The bond was instantaneous. By adoption, Maija became their child.

Friends in Christ, you are a child of God because God chose you and wanted you for his very own. We read in **Ephesians 1:4-5**:

***“ ... he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, ....”***

In love, God made your place in His family possible by carrying out a plan of salvation, involving the death and resurrection of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Then, in time, God made His adoption of you a reality by creating faith in your heart, giving you the gift of the Holy Spirit, and making you his own. You could say, He put His name on you in baptism, and has continued His saving work in you until this very day, enabling you to say, **“I am a child of God!”**

**What do we possess as children of God?** Let's hear what the Word of God tells us in today's text found in **I John 3:1-3**:

**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (I John 3:1-3 -ESV)**

**As Children of God We Possess ...**

### **I. A CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S LOVE (v. 1).**

**“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”**

Dr. Kenneth Wuest, in his renowned New Testament Word Studies says that the “*kind*” or “*manner*” of love used in v. 1, taken from the Greek word (*potapen*) literally means “**of what country.**” Expanding on this he says that the love of God is foreign, or “out of this world.” It is unlike any other love known to man. It is greater than a mother's love or a father's love, much higher than the love that one might have even for a spouse. (*Sermon Central*).

John was not a young man when he wrote these words. In fact, scholars suggest that he was pushing 90 years of age. You would think by this time he would have grown very comfortable with his place in God's family. Not John. Can you hear the wonderment, mixed with confidence in his words? The **NIV** speaks of a love that the Father has “**lavished**” upon us, as His children, which means “**bestowed in generous or extravagant quantities.**” Synonyms are “**luxurious, costly, expensive.**” (The Oxford Dictionary)

Remember the musical, **Annie**? All the children in the orphanage hope that someday, someone will want to take them home and make them their children. Never in her wildest dreams did Annie think that someone rich and wonderful like Daddy Warbucks would choose her to come and live with him! Why would he want someone plain and ordinary like her? For Annie the very thought of it was surreal.

For John, God's love, that made him God's child, caused wonderment and awe, yet it was very real – prompting him to emphatically declare - **“and so we are,”** in **v. 1**. As humans, there's no reason for us to hold hope in our hearts that God would want us in His family. You and I are born in sin, which separates us from God. We inherited the sin of Adam and Eve, going way back to the Garden. We were born sinful and rebellious. As Scripture says in **Ephesians 2:3** – **“... Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”** In other words, we don't become sinners because we sin, but we sin because we're sinners. We all **“act out”** on the sinful condition into which we're born. Have you ever misused God's name? Have you always loved our parents and obeyed those in authority? Have you ever lost your temper and spoken words you've later regretted? We don't deserve to be God's children. Yet, because of God's love, by a work of His grace, we are gifted with family status. We are made children of God. **How can John be so confident of this? How can we be confident?** God wouldn't have sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for us if He didn't love us. He wouldn't put His name on us and claim us as His own, if He didn't love us. As children of God, we possess a confidence in His love. No more anxiety about whether or not we

belong in the family. No more fears about threats from our adversaries. We can simply rest in His love.

### ***As Children of God We Possess ...***

## **II. A HOPE IN CHRIST'S COMING (v. 2).**

***<sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.***

There's no doubting it in John's mind. He says, "***... we know that when he appears ....***" We don't know exactly when, but Jesus is coming for us, whether at his second coming or at our physical death. We enjoy talking about the dramatic events surrounding Jesus' second coming, but either way, in the end, we'll be with Jesus in heaven, for all eternity. There's plenty to fuel the imagination with that thought. What will heaven look like? Will there be trees, rivers, and gardens? What will there be to do? What will relationships be like with no more need to apologize or extend forgiveness to others?

John cuts to the chase by saying "***... when he (Jesus) appears, we shall be like him, ....***" i.e. we'll have resurrection bodies like Jesus possessed when He came forth from the tomb. I don't know about you, but I'm not all that interested any more in being able to whisk through walls. Teens love that stuff. The big question for those of us who are older now is how old will we look in heaven? My best answer? I'm not sure. All I can say is "I hope I'm in my prime!" ☺ Actually, I think John is more interested in telling us about the quality of life we'll have with Jesus. We shall be like Him, perfect and holy. We'll be like Adam and Eve, before their fall into sin, with nothing to mar the image of God in us. No more temptations. No more guilt and

shame over doing bad things, or failing to do good things. Can you imagine the joy of being perfectly loving all the time? There will be nothing to hinder our fellowship with Christ, (and each other) ***“because we shall see him as he is.”***

A number of years ago, I remember visiting an older Norwegian gentleman, named **Kris**, at his home in the country. His wife had left on an errand and I was alone at his bedside. He had waged a courageous battle with cancer and was near death. He had been wonderfully saved later in life through the ministry of the Salvation Army in Brooklyn. Although soft spoken in his Norwegian brogue, his countenance was aglow with the joy of the Lord. His bedroom became a sanctuary. The presence of the Lord was palpable. Weakened, but smiling and at peace, he spoke longingly of heaven. He could hardly wait to see Jesus. Having come that day to minister to a soul in need, I left as the one more greatly blessed. As I rose to leave his bedside, I remember turning to him for one last word, saying **“I’ll see you at your new address.”** We smiled and he gave me a big “thumbs up.” Later that day, Kris was **“promoted to glory,”** which was the way the Salvation Army spoke of a comrade who went to be with the Lord.

There’s much we don’t understand about the hereafter, but the way things really are will be so much more clear when we get to heaven. For now, as was true for my friend, Kris, we live with the hope of His appearing. Finally ...

***As Children of God We Possess ...***

**III. A DESIRE TO PURSUE PURITY (v. 3).**

***“And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”***

As members in our earthly families, we take on certain characteristics, both genetically and environmentally, of those who gave birth to us. In certain ways, we look like and act like our parents. John is writing to Christians, to those who belong to God’s family, reminding them of the fact that because Jesus, the One in whom they hope, is pure; they too, as family members, will tend to imitate him. It’s true that anyone who is in Christ is ***“... a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*** (II Cor. 5:17) Therefore, with the new birth comes a new desire to pursue purity, to imitate Jesus, as children imitate their parents. The verb translated in v. 3 as ***“purifies himself,”*** perhaps isn’t the clearest rendering of the Greek construction. A better translation might be ***“... keeps on purifying himself.”*** This implies a process. Therefore, v. 3 would read: ***“And everyone who thus hopes in him keeps on purifying himself as he (Jesus) is pure.”***

**What does it mean to keep on purifying ourselves as Jesus is pure?** We must remember first of all that in justification God has gifted us with His own righteousness, by grace, through faith in Christ. It’s through that lens that God sees us. Relationally, God doesn’t see our sins, He sees Jesus. From our vantage point in our earthly lives, however, there is a battle going on between the old nature and the new. We are simultaneously both justified, yet sinners, this side of heaven. The good news is that God never stops loving us. The Holy Spirit on a daily basis continues to work in us through both Law and Gospel, showing us our imperfections; the attitudes, desires, and

actions that are inconsistent with life in Christ; but thankfully, showing us again and again through the Word of Gospel, that which Christ has done for us in His death and resurrection, and the offer of forgiveness attached to His finished work. Through the Law and Gospel we are led to repent of our sin and trust again in Christ's finished work on our behalf. We are cleansed and renewed by God's grace each day. We are purified as he is pure.

## **CONCLUSION**

This text has spoken to us today both as a call to repentance and as a word of grace and encouragement. To pursue holiness is a desire God gives us when He makes us His own in Christ. To be pure as Christ is pure is part of life in God's family. To know that forgiveness is available when we forget we're family, is indeed good news. To be reminded that we don't deserve family status, but have been chosen and adopted and continuously loved is almost beyond belief and gives us great confidence in everyday life. To know that God has planned for our future in heaven takes the worry away from tomorrow. Thank God for all we possess as members of His family!  
**A-men.**