

## Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 337 – December 3<sup>rd</sup> – 1 John 3:7-24

### Works frequently referenced in these notes on John's Epistles

Marshall, I Howard	<i>The Epistles of John</i> , The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978
Smalley, Stephen S	<i>1, 2, 3 John</i> , Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 51, Word Books, Dallas, 1984
Stott, John R.W.	<i>Epistles of John</i> , Tyndale Commentary, IVF, London, 1964
Westcott, B.F	<i>The Epistles of St John</i> , MacMillan & Co, Cambridge & London, 1886

#### Verse 7

τεκνία, μηδεις πλανάτω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν·

τεκνιον, ου n little child, child  
μηδεις, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing  
πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

John underlines and repeats the point. His comment 'let no one deceive you' is obviously directed against the heretical secessionists who were causing division in the church (cf. 2:19).

δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness  
δικαιος, α, ον righteous

"Righteousness is the sign of divine sonship (2:29). The 'doing righteousness' reveals the character and does not create it. The man who is righteous is recognised by his actions." Westcott. Cf. Matt 7:16 // Luke 6:44.

#### Verse 8

ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου.

διαβολος, ου m the devil

Cf. 2:16; Jn 8:44

ἀρχη, ης f beginning

"The force of the argument lies in the recognition of the state of things at the first dawn of human history. From the very beginning we see a power in action hostile to God. Between these two, as between light and darkness, there can be no middle term. He who does not belong to one belongs to the other... It will be noticed that as St Paul traces back sin to the act of the typical representative of mankind, Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22), so St John traces it back yet further to a spiritual origin." Westcott.

λύσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s λυω loose,  
untie, set aside

"The works of the devil' are represented as having a certain consistency, and coherence. They shew a kind of solid front. But Christ by His coming has revealed them in their complete unsubstantiality. He has 'undone' the seeming bonds by which they were held together." Westcott.

Marshall thinks that the term also alludes to the devil's enslavement of mankind.

#### Verse 9

πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.

"John concludes this section by reminding his readers that the true child of God is (like the Father himself) opposed to sin. Whereas the determined sinner (the heretic in John's church, perhaps, as opposed to the orthodox Christian) belongs to the devil (v 8), the spiritually reborn believer, being a member of God's family, cannot as a settled policy act lawlessly (cf. v 4). In other words, we reproduce in our lives a 'family' likeness, depending upon our spiritual parentage; and those who are 'born of God' do not sin (cf. vv 7, 8, 10)." Smalley.

γεγεννημένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s  
γενναω bear; pass be born

"The exact form is important. The perfect (ὁ γεγεννημενος) marks not only the single act (aor. ἐγεννηθησαν John 1:13; 5:18) but the continuous presence of its efficacy." Westcott.

σπερμα, τοσ n seed

"The principle of life which He has given continues to be the ruling principle of the believer's growth. God gives, as it were, of Himself to the Christian. He does not only work upon him and leave him...

"The instrument by which this vital element is conveyed is the 'word': James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Luke 8:12,15." Westcott.

Marshall and Smalley argue that the 'seed' is both the word and the Spirit.

δυναμαι can, be able to, be capable of

The presence of God and the presence of sin are incompatible. Smalley cites the new covenant promises of Jer 31:33-34 and Ezek 36:25-27 and concludes, "Against such a background, with which John would have been familiar, we may now understand σπέρμα to mean the word of God which is received in faith by the Christian, and which (through the inward activity of the Spirit) leads to rebirth, and the experience of increasing holiness by living in Jesus."

γενένηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γεννω

### Verse 10

Smalley argues that v. 10 forms the beginning of a new section (3:10-24 – though he acknowledges it as a bridge verse) whereas Marshall thinks the verse concludes the present section.

### Verse 10

ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστὶν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου· πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

φανερως, α, ον known, evident, plain, visible

It is possible to determine who are the children of God and the children of the devil by how they live. John writes to encourage the faithful and make clear to them the parentage of the false teachers.

ἀγαπαω love, show love for

"Righteousness involves the fulfilment of all law, of relations to God and to man, both personally and socially. The love of Christian for Christian, resting on the sense of a divine fellowship (1:3) carries forward to its loftiest embodiment the righteousness which man can reach." Westcott.

Smalley writes, "The last phrase in this v clarifies what has been said in v 10a (and, indeed, in the last section), as well as leading into the theme of obedience (= love) which dominates the present passage. The connecting particle καὶ thus carries the sense of 'that is,' or 'namely'."

### Verse 11

Ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους·

"John now introduces the basis for the statement which he made in v 10. Mutual love is the content of the good news heard from the very beginning ... Therefore the true child of God must not only renounce sin (3:4-9), but also demonstrate his divine origin by obeying the command to love." Smalley.

ἀγγελια ας f message, news; command

Some MSS read ἐπαγγελία rather than ἀγγελία (found in NT only here and at 1:5). This is clearly the result of careless copying with a more common word replacing a less familiar one.

ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς i.e. from the start of their hearing of the gospel – it has been central to the message they heard.

ἀλλήλων οἰς οὖς reciprocal pronoun one another

Cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17. This is firstly a demand to love within the community of the people of God – but it is not to stop there. Like the love of God it is to be shown also to those not yet drawn to him.

### Verse 12

οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια.

πονηρος α ον evil, bad, wicked

'the case is not with us as it was with Cain; he was of the evil one...'

σφαζω slaughter, put to death  
χαριν prep with gen for the sake of,  
because of

δικαιος α ον righteous, just

From the beginning there was enmity between those who are children of God (the righteous) and those who are of the evil one. Smalley comments, "The contrast between Cain's attitude and that of his brother provides John with a paradigm, as we discover from the passage which follows (vv 13-18). For the disobedient hatred of Cain is regarded as typical of the world (v 13), while Abel's righteousness (it is suggested) should characterize the loving community of the Christian Church (v 14). More than that, John probably finds in the behavior of the two brothers prototypes of the heretical and orthodox groups within his own congregation."

**Verse 13**

μη θαναμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος.

καί is omitted by some MSS. Metzger writes concerning the UBS Text, "It is difficult to decide whether και was added by copyists in order to provide a closer connection with what goes before; or whether, because of the preceding word (δικαία), copyists accidentally omitted και."

θανμαζω wonder, be amazed

Cf. John 5:28.

μισω hate, despise

Cf. 4:11; 5:9; John 15:18. Smalley thinks that the present tense μισεῖ suggests "that John is here describing a present fact, not a future possibility."

**Verse 14**

ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ.

The reverse of vv. 12-13 is now expressed.

οἶδα know

μεταβεβήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl

μεταβαινω leave, move, cross over

θανατος ου m death

ζωη ης f life

"Death and life are regarded as two spheres in which men move." Westcott. Smalley writes that they, "represent the alternative spiritual dominions to which man may give his allegiance." Cf. John 5:24.

Some MSS (⌘ Vg, et al) add ἡμῶν after τοὺς ἀδελφούς. This appears to be a secondary expansion.

Smalley comments, "The present tense of the verb ἀγαπῶμεν ('we love') indicates that the need for brotherly love, as a mark of those who belong to God's family and are his children, is constant."

Some texts (C K Ψ et al) add τὸν ἀδελφόν το μὴ ἀγαπῶν while some include also αὐτοῦ after ἀδελφον. These appear to be natural expansions.

μενει ἐν τῷ θανατῳ "It is not said that he dies. Death is his natural state." Westcott.

**Verse 15**

πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν.

"There are Cain's in the new family." Westcott.

ἀνθρωποκτονος ου m murderer

Marshall writes, "John takes up the thought implied in Matthew 5:21f. and states quite bluntly that hatred is tantamount to murder. Hatred is the wish that the other person was not there; it is the refusal to recognise his rights as a person, the longing that he might be dead. We may not like to put the point quite so frankly, but it is good that the real character of hatred should be so unambiguously displayed, so as to warn us against it. If I hate somebody, I am no different from a murderer in my attitude toward him."

Cf. Jn 8:44 where the word is used of the devil.

αἰωνιος ον eternal, everlasting

**Verse 16**

ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν· καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφειλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι.

ἐγνώκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl γινωσκω

The perfect suggests that the reference is to a particular historical event.

ἐκεῖνος η ο that (one), he, she, it

ψυχη ης f self, life, 'soul'

ἔθηκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s τιθημι place, set

'lay down', cf. Jn 10:11,15,17ff.; 13:37ff.; 15:13.

ὀφειλω owe, ought, must, be obligated

The present tense suggests a continuing obligation.

θεῖναι Verb, aor act infin τιθημι

"The cross is an example to copy, and not simply a revelation of love to admire." Smalley.

**Verse 17**

ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχη τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ;

The obligation to love is not something vague and theoretical but is expressed in practical and down-to-earth ways.

ὃς ἂν whoever

βιος ου m life, living, possessions

"The phrase includes all the endowments which make up our earthly riches, wealth, station, intellect." Westcott.

θεωρεω see, observe, notice

χρεια ας f need, want

κλείσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s κλειω shut, shut up, lock

σπλαγχνον ου n affections, heart

Cf. Ps 77:9 (76:10 LXX).

ἢ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ "It is not certain whether John means 'God's love channelled through us,' or 'our love for God,' or (as is most probable) 'the type of love shown by God.'" Marshall.

### Verse 18

Τεκνία, μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μηδὲ τῇ γλώσσῃ ἀλλὰ ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

τεκνιον ου n little child, child  
μηδε negative particle nor, and not, neither  
γλωσσα ης f tongue, language, speech  
αληθεια ας f truth, reality

For the contrast between lip-service and action in the life of the believer cf. Matt 7:21; Jas 1:22–25; 2:14–17.

### Verses 19-24

Marshall writes, "This passage can be regarded as the conclusion to the preceding part of the letter and also as a bridge to the remaining part. Its main purpose is to give assurance to the readers, on the basis of which they may have confidence to approach God in prayer. Yet, although John emphasises that our assurance ultimately depends on God himself, nevertheless he insists that we must continue to keep his commands to believe in Jesus and to love one another. When we do this, the Spirit inwardly assures us of our spiritual position. The passage is a difficult one to follow, since it relates the divine and human aspects of assurance in a paradoxical fashion." Smalley similarly writes, "The general sense of vv 19–24 is clear enough, even if the Greek expression occasionally presents problems. Six points are made: (a) the practice of love is a guarantee of Christian sonship; (b) so is God's knowledge of the believer; (c) a clear conscience enables the Christian to enjoy a confident spiritual relationship with God; (d) faith and love are the summary of God's commands; (e) obedience to those demands is the basis for living in God through Christ; (f) the gift of the Spirit assures the Christian of God's presence in his daily life."

### Verse 19

ἐν τούτῳ γνωσόμεθα ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμὲν, καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν

Verses 19 and 20 can be understood properly only if they are read together.

The case for inclusion or omission of an opening καὶ is similar to that in v. 13.

The 'in this' looks back to what John has just said in vv. 16-18. "In this, the consciousness of active and sincere love of the brethren, resting upon and moulded by the love of Christ." Westcott.

γνωσόμεθα Verb, fut midd indic, 1 pl  
γινωσκω

The future tense points forward to some future time of crisis of confidence or of faith – 'Can I be sure I am his?'

ἐμπροσθεν prep + gen before, in front of  
πείσομεν Verb, fut act indic, 1 pl πειθω  
persuade, convince, assure

"The many conflicting interpretations of this passage spring out of the different translations of (i) the verb πείσομεν, and (ii) the double conjunction or relative ὅτι (ὁ τι)." Westcott. Smalley thinks that the second ὅτι should be regarded as the neuter of the relative pronoun ὅστις ('who/which') and directly associated with the following ἐάν. The meaning then becomes '(in) whatever (matters)' (so Westcott), or, as in RSV, NIV, 'whenever'. Westcott says that πείσομεν may be either 'persuade' or 'assure'. Smalley favours the sense, 'satisfy' or 'set at ease' (cf. Matt 28:14). He writes, "John is saying that loving behaviour is a means of being reassured in the searching presence of God."

### Verse 20

ὅτι ἐάν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν καὶ γινώσκει πάντα.

ὅτι ἐάν Westcott understands this to mean 'wherinssoever,' Smalley as 'whenever.'

καταγινωσκω condemn

The internal judgment of conscience. cf. Gal 2:11.

The exegetical difficulties involved in this verse caused the second ὅτι (read by κ B C K L, et al.), to be omitted by A Vg, et al. But precisely because of its difficulty the inclusion of ὅτι is obviously original.

μείζων ου greater, greatest

"The meaning of the whole passage will be: The sense within us of a sincere love for the brethren, which is the sign of God's presence with us, will enable us to stay the accusations of our conscience, whatever they may be, because God, who gives us the love, and so blesses us with His fellowship, is greater than our heart; and He, having perfect knowledge, forgives all on which the heart sadly dwells." Westcott. Cf. Paul's statement in 1 Cor 4:3-5.

The thought of vv 19-20 will reappear in vv 22b-24.

### Verse 21

ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ καρδιά μὴ καταγινώσκη ἡμῶν<sup>1</sup>, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,

ἀγαπητος η ον beloved

The great majority of MSS include ἡμῶν after καρδιά but there are significant omissions (A B Ψ 33 436 et al).

"It does not imply a claim to sinlessness, nor yet an insensibility to the heinousness of sin, but the action of a lively faith which retains a real sense of fellowship with God, and this carries with it confidence and peace."

Westcott.

Marshall writes, "If we can set our hearts at rest by remembering that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything, then our hearts will no longer condemn us, and we shall be able to approach God with boldness."

παρρησια ας f boldness, assurance

"The thought here is of the boldness with which the son appears before the Father, and not that with which the accused appears before the Judge." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "The child of God, who walks in the light and obeys the love command (cf. 1:7; 2:6, 10), has the privilege of 'bold speech' in the presence of God. But he also possesses the certainty that God hears and answers prayer (v 22)."

### Verse 22

καὶ ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἄρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.

αἰτεω ask, request

Cf. John 14:14; 16:23, also 15:16.

ἐντολη ης f command, order

τηρεω keep, observe

"The answer to prayer is given not as a reward for meritorious action, but because the prayer itself rightly understood coincides with God's will (comp. John 8:29; 11:42). The sole object of the believer is to do thoroughly the part which has been assigned to him: his petitions are directed to this end and so are necessarily granted. Comp John 15:7." Westcott.

ἄρεστος η ον pleasing

Marshall writes, "John's purpose is to encourage us to enter fully into the filial relationship in which God delights to hear and answer the requests of his children. The more fully we enter into that relationship, the more will our asking be in accordance with his will." Again, cf. John 15:7.

### Verse 23

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολὴν ἡμῖν.

The *one* command is then described as having two facets, but they remain facets of the one command.

πιστεω believe (in), have faith (in)

Cf. Jn 6:29. This is the first occurrence of πιστεω in this letter (99 occurrences in John's Gospel), though it will now occur again in 4:1, 16; 5:1, 5, 10, 13.

For the aorist subjunctive ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν (B K L, et al), some MSS (e.g. Ⲛ A C) substitute the present subjunctive, ἵνα πιστεύωμεν, which has virtually the same meaning. Either reading makes sense in the context, but the aorist is perhaps original.

ὄνομα τος η name

To 'believe in the name' suggests a meaning close to ὁμολογεῖν in 2:23 (cf. 4:2-3, 15). It "implies a confession of his character and authority ... as truly Son of God and Messiah." Smalley.

ἀλλήλων ος ους see v.11

Cf. 4:7,11,12; 2 Jn 5; Jn 13:34; 15:12,17.

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι

Smalley concludes, "John has thus provided his readers with what Maurice (214) calls two 'counter-signs,' to distinguish the true child of God from the offspring of the devil (cf. v 10): right belief (in Jesus as both man and God), and right behaviour (expressed in terms of obedience; in particular, and following the example of Jesus mentioned in v 16, obedience to the love command). In this way a distinction is clearly drawn yet again between orthodox and heterodox members within or around the Johannine community."

**Verse 24**

καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει  
καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν  
ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν  
ἔδωκεν.

Cf. Jn 15, also the prophetic promise in Ezek 37:27 and its ultimate fulfilment in Rev 21:3. Smalley comments, "The point which John is making in the first part of this verse, that obedience and reciprocal indwelling (between God and the believer) are inextricably associated, has been anticipated to some extent in earlier parts of this letter (cf. 2:5, 24, 27–29; 3:6, 9, 10, 18–19; and, for the notion of 'obedient reciprocity' with reference to the Father-Son relationship, see John 10:37–38; 12:48–49; 14:10–11)."

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι

Westcott links the 'in this' to the first half of the verse, writing, "The love which the Christian feels and which is the spring of his obedience, assures him of God's fellowship with him. In other words, God has given him of His Spirit."

Smalley says that this is an unlikely meaning. He argues (as does Marshall) that the reference here is to the internal witness of the Spirit without explaining precisely how that is manifest. Smalley writes, "Like Paul, John here regards the witness of the Spirit as a source of confidence, when this is required (Rom 8:14–16; cf. 1 John 3:19–20)."