

1 John 3:1-3 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The heroes of faith, the heroes of the church are not like other heroes. For we know who and what they were. They were sinners like us. The proverb, “never meet your heroes” does not apply to us, because we know before we meet them their depth of sin.

If we met the Apostle Paul we would find a serious flawed human. We know already the multitude of character flaws of the Apostle Peter. In fact that is mostly all we hear about Peter. Perhaps one of the greatest heroes of faith in all of scripture is King David, and yet he murdered Uriah because he lusted after his wife.

Many times Christians feel the need to try and explain how Noah getting drunk wasn't really a sin, or how David and Solomon's having many wives wasn't sinful.

Another good example is John the Baptist, he was thrown in prison by King Herod, and while there sent word to Jesus, “Are you really the Messiah?” Many people again try to explain this away. They say how could John the Baptist doubt? He is the one who pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

But we know the truth, that he was just a man, just a sinner like us. And it does not surprise us that he did indeed begin to doubt as he lay there in prison day after day.

What about Martin Luther? How much would we like to hold him up as the greatest teacher, the greatest preacher. And yet we have this book, “On Jews and their Lies,” which although it is certainly not the heart of all anti-Semitism that many would make it out to be, is nevertheless filled with mean, base, hatred instead of the Love of God.

All these and many more, knowing the depth of their sin, we still celebrate them today. We call them saints and we rejoice with them. Not because of the great things they did, but because of **the** great thing Jesus did for them.

Noah the drunkard, Abraham an idol worshiper and an adulterer, David a murderer, Peter the arrogant, and Luther the potty mouth, how great is the Love of God that these are the ones who God called his children, and loved them as a good Father loves his own children. As He also calls us His children and loves us as a Father loves His children

Because we are His Children, we will be persecuted

Because we are His children the world cannot understand us. Most of you know when you get married you all of the sudden have this other person who is not part of your family. And their traditions and way of doing things just don't make any sense to you. This is especially true if you come from another cultural.

But the gap between two spouses even of very different traditions cannot even begin to parallel the gap between the sons of God and the children of this world.

This world cannot understand why God would come to earth and die on the cross, rather than use his power and angels to make everything perfect and destroy any evil people.

In 2015 Justice Kennedy stated that the only reason anyone would oppose homosexual marriages is because they hate homosexuals. Yet our Lord teaches us that while we hate sin, we love the sinner. He taught us this by his own example, that even while he condemned sin He still died for the sinner. Justice Kennedy cannot understand this, the world cannot understand.

Another good example is Martin Luther. They cannot deny the incredible place he holds in history, but neither can they understand it. They want him to be a revolutionary, one who defied the authority and led Europe into a glorious age of democracy. But then what about the peasants war?

Because we are God's children the world cannot understand us, and because they cannot understand us they hate and persecute us. We can see it coming, like one of those waves that looks like it is big enough to wipe out New York city in a movie, the persecution against Christianity is building.

What shall we do? Complain? Run? Hide? No. We simply accept it.

This is the way it is and ever will be while this earth remains. We follow the example of Stephen, and while they throw stones at us we pray for them and preach the gospel. And we wait for the fulfillment of our faith, the heaven that is picture in our scripture reading from revelation.

Because we are His Children we want to be just like him.

Most children have that age when they want to be just like their mom or dad. They put on their shoes, they pretend to be farmers or pastors or whatever, and they want to help you out with the dishes.

That is the picture John gives here, little children trying to imitate their father.

We are too small even to understand what that means, our lives are so filled with sin, and we cannot even begin to understand what it would be like to be like Him, perfect and holy. Yet we desire it and strive for it.

Like little children who wear their father's shoes but then trip and fall flat on their face, such are we. Because we are His children we desire to be like him, therefore we purify ourselves even as He is pure.

But of course we fail constantly sinning every day. Yet even though we fail every day still we are His children because of our baptism, and as His children we are also saints, and will stand one day with all the rest in His glorious kingdom.