

Theme: Faith in Exile – I Peter 1:17-19

Title: Think About His Love – I John 3:1-10

Aim: Urge contemplation/response to God's love. We are His children!

Intro: I like the way John the Apostle wrote. If you'll notice, he smoothly moves from one important thought to another, almost seamlessly. That's called a "segue," an Italian word, which by definition is, a "transition from one topic or section to the next," or in music, "movement w/out interruption from 1 piece to another." That's not to be confused w/this (picture), which is a Segway, "a motorized personal vehicle." John had reminded his readers of the One he personally heard/saw/touched – the living Word of Life, Jesus. He reminded them that by faith in Jesus they could have fellowship w/God & those who are His. But if they claimed to know God, it should show in how they lived – walking in the light. They needed to deal w/sin in their lives by confession, agreeing w/God about their sin. He urged them not to sin, but if they did they were assured that Jesus Christ the Righteous is their Advocate, having been the propitiation provided by God the Father for our sin. Knowing Him should lead to obeying Him. Then John introduced what is a recurring theme: God's primary command is to love Him & one another. He urged them to remember who they were & what they knew, to not love the world but do the will of God. He warned them of antichrists among them & urged them to not believe their lies but stick w/the truth they knew, abide in the truth & in Christ. Then John "segues" into the truth of God's love, which envelopes our lives & gives us sure hope. That's where we start today. Theme: Faith in exile. We who are Christian exiles in a non-Christian world need to contemplate the love of God & be transformed by its hope. I John 3:1-10 [READ]. I) **BEHOLD! Contemplate the love of God.** That word "see" can be translated "behold," which is how some translations read. It's more emphatic, meaning "take a good, intense look," "study intently."

The Apostle Paul wrote of the “breadth & length & height & depth” of God’s love – it’s immeasurableness. An old chorus urges us to “think about His love, think about His goodness, think about His grace that’s brought us through; for as high as the heavens above, so great is the measure of the Father’s love.” The hymnwriter pointed to the same: “How deep the Father’s love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son, to make a wretch His treasure.” John wrote: “See/ behold what kind of love” – what sort of quality, what manner of, how great the love (agape) the Father – Almighty, eternal God – has given from Himself, of His own accord. That might be translated “lavished.” It’s a one-sided transaction. God has lavished, has set His love on His children. The measure of that is “that we should be called children of God.” We can be called children of God because He has reconciled us to Himself, those who accept by faith His provision of redemption through the atoning work of Christ. Said it before – not everyone is a child of God. Everyone is a creation of God, bearing His image (marred by sin), but not everyone is a child of God through faith in Christ. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish (the curse/wages of sin which all of us deserve) but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “As many as [receive] Him, who [believe] in His name (believe He is Son of God/God the Son who died to pay for our sins, is our Savior/Lord), He [gives] the right to become children of God, who [are] born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). That’s how we know God loves us, that He has made us His children. Some erroneously have the idea that if God loves us, our lives are going to be easy. “God wants me to be happy & wouldn’t let me go thru hard times.” No! I think the Church has often promoted that thinking. But God will not let us go thru hard times alone or w/out His help or w/out His using those times to shape us & make us more like Christ or use the

experience to help others going thru the same. The way we know God loves us is that He has made us His children. That's who we are. The world, "the ungodly multitude, the whole mass of mankind alienated from God & therefore hostile to the cause of Christ" (those antichrists) doesn't know us as children of God nor care that we are, because they don't know God. Stop looking for acknowledgement from the world & rejoice that you have that from God. II) **Being God's children sets in place our future**. Andi & I are thinking about our future. Where will we live, will we have enough to live on, what will we do w/ourselves? It will all fall into place, but we should think about it & plan. But as far as we are concerned spiritually, we are all set – kind of like a child of a billionaire: "set for life" (at least financially). We're set for life here & for eternity & so are you – all who are children of God. We can only imagine how it will be, "what we will be," because that will be manifested when Jesus comes again, but John gives this great hope/assurance: "We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." David Gudzik points out that to be like Him/Jesus is "the fulfillment of God's purpose for us" (Romans 8:29). And when we see Him (read Rev.1:13-16 & 19:11-13) we will be immediately transformed, completed. Paul wrote, "this perishable must put on the imperishable, & this mortal must put on immortality..." (I Cor.15:53). But we'll not only be changed physically w/new resurrected bodies, we'll also be changed into the moral character of Christ & the mental capacity of Christ – we shall "know fully" even as we are "fully known" (I Cor.13:12). In the means time, III) **Such hope directs our lives now/here** – vs3. Gudzik wrote: "John made the connection between seeing Him as He is & our transformation to be like Jesus. We can say that the same principle is at work right now. To the extent that you see Jesus as He is, to that same extent, you are like Him in your life." In other words, the better we know Jesus, the more we want to be like

Him & we pursue that purity of life. Purity means single focused. So focused on following Christ, we will recognize sin – missing the mark set by God, His standard which reveals His character – we will recognize sin for what it is: lawlessness – contempt for & violation of law. If you practice sin, it sin is your lifestyle – you settle into it, continue in sin, then you’re showing contempt for God, who sent His Son to “take away sins” – to deal w/the matter of sin, which (Gudzik) has defiled the image of God in man & made void the possibility of relationship w/God.” God hates sin & “in Him there is no sin.” John is urging us to think about God’s immeasurable love; to think about what He has done for us in Christ as the ultimate expression of that love; to not be deceived & pulled away from our relationship w/God by the confusion, false teaching around us & to set our gaze on Jesus. Abide in Him – draw your life from Him, learn from Him & His word, be led by the Holy Spirit. How do we do that? Focus. Realign, realign, realign! Be mindful of God moment by moment. When we sin, humbly confess, run to the Father, don’t let sin dominate your life, battle against sin by the word of God & in submission to the Spirit of God. Give way to the transformation God will bring about in your life by His grace, which trains “us to renounce ungodliness & worldly passions, & to live self-controlled, upright & godly lives in the present age” (Titus 2:12). Charles Spurgeon wrote, “The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.” IV) **Such God-worked transformation gives evidence of whose children we are**. John warns us not to be deceived. If you practice (lifestyle of) righteousness, then you are righteous. If you practice (lifestyle of) sinning you are not righteous. Rather, you are of the devil, who “has been sinning (rebellious against, in contempt of God) from the beginning. Jesus came to “destroy the works of the devil,” so to be of him is against God & will draw His wrath. But if you’re born of God, sin will no longer be your lifestyle because “God’s seed abides” in

you. God's seed, deposited in the believer, is the Holy Spirit. A true believer "CANNOT keep on sinning because he/she has been born of God." That doesn't mean that a believer cannot sin – we do & must battle & confess & get back on track, realign, refocus when we do. It means the direction of our lives has changed. We have a new navigator, the Holy Spirit. It should be clearly evident that we are children of God, just as it is clearly evident who are the children of the devil: "whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his/her brother/sister." That's a very good segue to the passage we'll look at next week. But listen: if you're unsure of where you are w/God, let's be sure. Let us help you be sure. All of us, contemplate God's love, be amazed at His love, know that He deeply loves His children. Set your focus/gaze on Christ Jesus w/the eyes of faith & be transformed by what you see. That's what we will be! Oh, indeed, this Christian life must be lived by faith – faith in exile.