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## Study on 1 John 3, 1-5

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130th Psalm, that memorable psalm of degrees, beginning with the words 'Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord' and continuing with the prayer 'Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.' This psalm may truly be called the psalm of the Reformation, containing the cardinal doctrines which Luther's Reformation again brought to light, the doctrine of human sin and of divine grace, the doctrine of redemption through Christ, the Messiah, and of justification by faith. And this Reformation psalm and prayer Professor Heintze made his own. . . .

"He was a Lutheran scholar and theologian, and in his historical studies and researches he was especially interested in the Reformation period. He knew very well why Luther selected just this psalm as the basis for what may well be considered the greatest hymn of Luther: *Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu Dir*, 'Out of the depths I cry to Thee.' This outstanding hymn expressed Luther's own conviction and confession, as it expresses the conviction and confession of every Christian. In these last months and weeks of his sickness Professor Heintze indeed had to wait for the Lord, but in God's Word did he hope. His soul had to wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. But we may truly believe that with the psalmist he rose *de profundis*, out of the depths, to the great and blessed, yea, triumphant faith and hope that with the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption. And now the Lord has graciously delivered him from every evil and has preserved him unto His heavenly kingdom. And therefore, reviewing his life, his work, and his end, I close with the words: 'The Lord hath done all things well; praised be His name now and forevermore. Amen.'"

W. G. POLACK

### Study on 1 John 3, 1-5

Eisenach Epistle for Christmas Day

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not," v. 1. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." These were the last words written by the apostle before our text, 2, 29. As is his custom,



he meditates upon this grand fact; and as he stands in adoring contemplation, there comes to his mind the truly divine character of that love and the stupendous heights to which it rose in order to bring about this blessed birth, our regeneration. And now his pen, having rested for a moment, again begins to write. He calls on his readers to behold and adore like him that love of God manifested toward them and him in order that they might be called the children of God. "Behold," ἰδετε, see! "Perception as denoted by ἰδεῖν, when conceived of as completed, permits the sensuous element to be forgotten, and abides merely as an activity of the soul." (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 173.) Hence, behold, and let it sink deep down into your inmost soul there to remain as an abiding object of joyous, adoring contemplation. "What manner of love." Comparing Matt. 8, 27 and 2 Pet. 3, 11, *Expositor's Greek Testament* holds that ποταμὸν here "retains something of its proper and original signification," viz., of what country? and continues: "The love of God in Christ is foreign to this world: from what far realm what unearthly love!" While Robertson maintains that it has already lost completely its original force and is simply a synonym of ποῖος, it seems to us that in our passage as well as in the passages adduced above the meaning of "unearthly, other-worldly" is still in evidence. "The Father," not in the sense of the modernistic universal fatherhood of God. John in this very verse distinguishes the children of this Father from the world, which does not know them. It is a fatherhood made possible only through the atoning sacrifice of His Son and is enjoyed by such only as have been born out of God, 2, 29. "Hath bestowed." The perfect denotes past action with abiding results; the gift of His love and its consequent blessings still continue with us. "Upon us." He includes himself with his readers, with all believers. To all alike this love has been given; out of its fulness have all we received, and grace for grace, John 1, 16.

"That we should be called the sons of God." Ἰνα denotes the purpose, in this instance a purpose which has been realized; for the apostle continues: "And we are," viz. God's children. These words, omitted in our English and German Bibles, are undoubtedly genuine, being found in the most and best manuscripts. Sons of God! The use of this name without God's permission would render it an empty title, void of value, yea, a blasphemous usurpation of a right belonging to God alone. But God Himself, the God of Truth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, calls us His sons, His children, for we are born of Him. Triumphantly therefore the apostle adds: "And we are!" On the basis of the fact that God's love goes so far as to call and make us God's own children, he confidently asserts this sonship of all Christians as an indisputable fact.



Indeed a marvelous love, a love unique, altogether unworldly, truly heavenly, a love of which God alone is capable. The sending of His own Son, the revelation of His plan of salvation in the written Word, the preaching of His Word to us, all these marvelous manifestations of His love have no other aim and purpose than that we should be called the children of God; and, thank God for His love! we *are* that.

At Christmas-time we celebrate the beginning of the manifestation of the Father's love toward us. There in the manger lies the evidence of this love, the evidence as other-worldly as the love is unearthly. A child, the offspring of a human mother, like other children of men partaking of flesh and blood, Heb. 2, 14, 16; and yet, how utterly unearthly! Here lies that Holy One (v. 5; Luke 1, 35), while all the world lies in wickedness (1 John 5, 19; Rom. 3, 22, 23); the Mighty God, etc. (Is. 9, 6), while all the world is flesh, grass (Is. 40, 6-8). What manner of gift is this! Who else could give, who else would give, this gift than God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercy! 2 Cor. 1, 3. And how otherworldly, how truly heavenly, is the purpose of this love! There in the manger lies the gift of His love, His own Son, our Jesus, to begin His work of salvation that we might be delivered out of the hands of our enemies, be His bond-servants, thrice blessed in a service without fear, Luke 1, 74, 75. There lies the Light and Life of the world. There lies the royal High Priest that through Him we might be made a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2, 9. Yet, even that does not compass the love of the Father. That love went farther. There lies the Son of God, God's own beloved Child, that through Him, through His holy birth, His suffering and death, we might be made children of God, sons and daughters of the Father of that child Jesus, His own Son. And that, nothing less, we are!

"Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." "Therefore," by reason of, because of, this, is not anticipative of the following *on* clause, but refers to what has just been said. Just because of the fact that we are called and are the children of God, the world does not know us. The present here is timeless and durative. As long as there is a world, and as long as the world remains world, lying in wickedness (1 John 5, 19; Eph. 2, 1-3; 2 Cor. 4, 3, 4), so long the world, cultured or unlettered, civilized or barbarian, does not know, does not come to a knowledge of, the children of God. To know a person is not merely to be acquainted with him, to be able to tell him from other persons. It means to recognize one's real nature, in this connection the high honor bestowed upon all Christians, their exalted position before God. That is utterly beyond comprehension, even the perception,



of the unbelieving, blind world. The unbeliever has not the power, the ability, to perceive, much less to understand, the Christians' true nature. Lenski, in his comments on v. 2 says: "Nobody sees us in the white robe of Christ's righteousness, which now already is ours, but hidden; nobody beholds the crown of hope upon our brow, the diamond of faith upon our hearts, the pearls of love upon our hands. The imperfections of the flesh hide the glory we now have." Nor need we marvel at this non-recognition of our high estate, because, continues John, "it knows not Him." The world, just because it is world, never has come to the knowledge (aorist) of God, to that knowledge that recognizes in Him the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. This saving knowledge of God, a *nosse cum affectu et effectu*, is the logical prius. Before one can come to the knowledge of the sons of God, one must have come to the saving knowledge of God, the Author of salvation, the Father of these children, and the Father only through Christ. Cp. Eph. 3, 14, 15. Since the world knows not God, neither the Son nor the Father, John 16, 3, how can it possibly know His children! If the world by wisdom knows not God in His wisdom, 1 Cor. 1, 21, how can it possibly know those children who were made children by the foolishness of preaching! They foolishly prate of a universal fatherhood of God, of a universal brotherhood of man; but so little do they know the true sons of God that they hate them whom God calls His sons, 1 John 3, 13, just because of their claim to a childhood beyond that including all mankind, a divine sonship not based on that slogan of a pantheistic, self-righteous Modernism, that ancient lie whereby Satan succeeded to make of children of God slaves of sin and heirs of eternal damnation, Gen. 3, 5 ff. Compare also John 16, 2, 3 on this hatred of the world and its cause.

*"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is,"* v. 2. "Beloved." They are his beloved, because the same love granted to him has been bestowed upon his readers. Cp. the "us" in v. 1, the "we" in this verse. The love of God experienced by all Christians, shed abroad in every believer's heart, Rom. 5, 5, knits these hearts and minds together in brotherly love and affection, 1 John 3, 14; 4, 11. 20. 21; 5, 1. 2; Rom. 15, 5—7.

"Now we are the children of God." Whether we read *καὶ ἐμὲν* in v. 1 or not, this verse gives the true interpretation of the word "called." We are the children of God. And we are that now, at this present time. We need not wait for our adoption. The right to be sons of God lies not in some distant future. That is our present privilege, an honor that is ours now. Even if the world



fail to recognize us, that does not alter the fact that we are now and in this world the children of God. The fact that the world did not recognize God's Son while walking on earth veiled in human flesh did not change in the least, did not even affect, His Deity. He was the Son of God from the moment of His conception, Luke 1, 32. 35; John 1, 14, the Lord of Glory even when crucified, the Prince of Life even though killed by His enemies. So we are now God's own children, called that by Him in spite of all sneers and jibes of unbelievers, in spite of all our sins and shortcomings, in spite of all doubts arising in our own minds. In spite of death and corruption that will seize upon us, *now* children of God we are. That is an established, unalterable fact, guaranteed unto us by God Himself. He calls us His children, we are His children, now.

Even that does not exhaust the ocean of God's love. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "It doth not yet appear," rather, it has not yet appeared. "When He shall appear"; Luther: "when it shall appear." A large number of interpreters follow the Authorized Version, referring He throughout the passage to Christ. With Luther, Calov, S. Schmidt, *Hirschberger Bibel, Bible Commentary, Expositor's Bible, Expositor's Greek Testament*, and others, we prefer the translation "when it shall appear," and the reference to likeness with, and vision of, God. It seems unnecessarily harsh to connect φανερωθῆ with 2, 28 and 3, 5, rather than with the immediately preceding οὐπω ἐφανερώθη. For this reason we subscribe to the note of *Expositor's Greek Testament* "This obvious connection is decisive against the rendering "if He shall be manifested." Similarly Huther in *Meyer's Commentary*. Besides, the ἐκεῖνος of 3, 3 and 3, 5, which clearly points to Christ, is here missing before ἐφανερωθῆ, and αὐτῷ and αὐτόν refer quite naturally to θεοῦ. Cp. αὐτόν, v. 1. Calov speaks of a double manifestation of our future glory, one according to the soul at our death, the other according to body and soul on Resurrection Day. We prefer to restrict this manifestation to the Last Day, since then only shall it be manifested finally and completely what we shall be. In point of time, therefore, the appearance of Christ and our glory coincide. Again, being like Christ, we are like God; seeing God, we see Christ, and *vice versa*, John 10, 30; 14, 8-11. Still we prefer Luther's translation as being in better keeping with the immediate context and the apostle's line of thought.

"It has not yet appeared what we shall be." Note the contrast between "are," 2 a, and "shall be," 2 b, both words being emphatically placed at the end of the two clauses. The contrast is not between our present sonship and the non-recognition of this



dignity on the part of the world and of the Christians themselves. The contrast is rather between present sonship and a peculiar manifestation of this sonship lying in the future. When it shall appear, namely, what we shall be, then we shall be like God and see Him as He is. We shall never be God's equal; that is the prerogative of the essential Sonship, Phil. 2, 8; Heb. 1, 3. We shall never be God, nor gods, but ever remain human beings, creatures having human bodies, glorified even at the manifestation of the fulness of our glory not into equality with Christ's glorified body, but into likeness with it, similar, yet distinctly different. But just in what manner we shall be like God, just how we shall see Him, has not yet appeared, has not yet been shown. The world, which does not know and recognize our present dignity, much less can know and realize the future glory, and even we Christians, are not now able to understand the possibility and the nature of the state that awaits us at the manifestation of what we shall be. That is a glory still hidden with God, invisible to human eye, incomprehensible to human mind, beyond the earthly experience of Christians.

Yet the mystery surrounding this future glory does not make the whole matter doubtful, uncertain. On the contrary, the apostle says: "We know that, when it shall be revealed, we shall be like Him." We know, οἶδαμεν. Our hope and expectation is not a matter of conjecture, not a mere flight of fancy into the realms of the unknown. It is knowledge, and a knowledge arrived at not by our own careful reasonings and logical deductions, based not upon personal observations or on the promises and assurances of man. This knowledge was engendered in us when we became God's own children. Its nature and origin is as truly divine, heavenly, as our sonship is a heavenly, divine sonship. For that very reason it is a knowledge far more certain, sure, positive, than any knowledge of human origin. We know; that settles the matter, that ends all controversy, that silences all doubts and gainsayings. Although we have never seen a sinful mortal being changed to such a likeness of God that he is able to see God as He is; although this change seems so utterly incomprehensible, presents to our mind so many inexplicable difficulties, which even reason enlightened by the Word of God cannot begin to understand; although this remarkable change has never been manifested in this world, has never been experienced by mortal man, is altogether other-worldly, unearthly, yet we know that, when that blessed time has come, we shall be like Him, shall see Him — oh, beatific vision! — as He is. That is the Christmas gift kept hidden for us in heaven until that grand Christmas morn when the glory of the manger Child and our own glory which that Child has procured for us shall be finally and



completely manifested. And in the mean time we stand, children of God, at the threshold of the Father's home, eagerly awaiting the day when our Father shall open the door and when at last it shall be revealed what we poor, sinful, frail, weeping, sorrowing children of God shall be. Ah, the heavenly joy that shall fill our hearts as the gates of eternity open! the shouts of glad surprise, the jubilant songs of praise, that shall rise to the throne of God and the Lamb as we come into our own, into the full enjoyment of our adoption, of perfect likeness to God, of blissful seeing Him as He is! Read Rev. 5, 9-14 and with the elders fall down and thank God for His unspeakable gift. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! Father, make us truly grateful. That is the next thought brought out by the apostle.

*"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure,"* v. 3. And every one who has in his lasting possession, ἔχων, this hope in Him, resting upon Him, i. e., God. "This hope," the hope just described in v. 2, a hope so marvelous, so mysterious, so divine, that human reason rejects it, regards it as madness (Acts 26, 24),—this hope has its origin and basis not in the mind of man; it rests upon God as its foundation and for that very reason will not, cannot, make ashamed, Rom. 5, 5; 2 Cor. 1, 20. It is as safe and sure as God Himself. Resting on God, whose love accepted us as His children, who is One with Him who is the Propitiation for our sins, whose cleansing blood made possible our adoption, what is there on earth, in heaven, in hell, that can shake this hope, render it insecure, uncertain, doubtful? O wondrous Christmas hope, radiating from that lowly manger in Bethlehem, from that Child of hope, the Son of God and Mary's Son!

Every one that has this hope, has it as his enduring, lasting possession, has it not only in his intellect, on his lips, but as an abiding God-given hope in his heart and life, will purify himself, even as He, ἁγιός, Christ, is pure. The word ἁγνός is never used of God; there the term is ἅγιος. It is here used of Christ's holiness, purity, not the holiness essential to His divine nature, and communicated by the Son of God to His human nature, but of Christ's active obedience to the holy Law of God; that constant keeping Himself pure from all contamination of sin, though tempted in all points like as we are; that never-ceasing fulfilling of all righteousness, Matt. 3, 15; that obedience to God, evidenced in immaculate righteousness, unsullied purity of actions, words, thoughts, motives, desires; that obedience which Christ, though He was a Son, yet learned by the things which He suffered and in which He was perfected, Heb. 5, 8. 9. Note the timeless, durative presence, He is pure. There was never a moment in which He is not pure. Not the slightest lapse into impurity, not the least imperfection is



possible in Him, to Him, who is pure. Having the hope to see this Pure One, together with His Father, knowing that He, the Son of God, the Captain of our salvation, is pure, we, as followers of this Great Captain, who like Him and through Him are sons of God, likewise purify ourselves. Note the contrast: He pure; we purifying ourselves. He the perfect Example; we, no matter how hard we try, bungling imitators, constantly in need of purifying, but, thank God! constantly purifying ourselves, constantly washing away our sins in His blood, constantly fighting against all sin. The present indicative denotes a purifying which is ever going on, never finished, as long as we live. Such cleansing is possible only to him who has this hope resting upon God as his abiding possession. On God, the God of hope, the Fountain of life, rests our Christian hope. From that God and His Christmas gift to us our hope, which is but faith with regard to the future, draws life and strength, and willingness, and constant effort, and ever repeated success in that grand work of purifying ourselves, in resisting temptations, in overcoming the world and its uncleanness, in abstaining from all impurity, Phil. 4, 8. Turning to the Child in the manger, we behold in Him our Sanctification. Hymn 132, 3; 146, 4—9; 150, 13.

Such purification is not only possible, it is necessary; for without sanctification no man shall see the Lord. Without constant purifying we are doomed, lost, despite that heavenly hope, despite that marvelous love. That is emphasized in the next verse.

*"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the Law; for sin is the transgression of the Law,"* v. 4. At all times the flesh of the Christian has sought to deprive the Christians of the consciousness of sin. And one of the age-old tricks of Satan is to obscure the real nature of sin, to minimize its pernicious character, its baneful consequences. The very meaning of the word *ἀμαρτία* may have helped to lend plausibility to this line of argument. Originally this term means a missing of the mark, an error, a mistake. In like manner the Modernist of our day prefers to call sin a mistake, error, something that, of course, ought to be avoided and is avoided by careful people who follow proper ethical standards but, after all, something that can be corrected. All that is necessary is to make confession, to redouble one's efforts to do the right thing, to apply oneself the more studiously to one's duties, to grow more fervent and sincere in one's love and affection to those one has harmed. In other words, sin is not proper; certainly not! But man can just as certainly make satisfaction for his sins, and self-respect and regard for his fellow-man ought to compel him to make such satisfaction as rapidly and completely as possible. John is not a Modernist. In a few words he shows the utter untenableness of this argument, points out the viciousness of sin. *"Whosoever committeth sin."* The present participle de-



notes continuous action. He who is a continuous doer of sin, constantly missing the mark, habitually committing error, "transgresseth also the Law"; he is all the time doing that which must be classified as lawlessness. This term may imply either ignorance of, or contempt for, the Law. In New Testament usage it has the latter connotation, viz., violation of the Law, wickedness. Sin, call it what you will, is not the negligible matter that man often thinks it is. The sinner is a wicked man, a violator of the Law, and not the law of some weak human being, not the code of ethics devised by society for its self-preservation, a code which may change as conditions change, which may vary in various communities as they are more or less advanced in their ethical development. No; the sinner places himself in opposition to the Law of God; he violates the will of Supreme Majesty, the Judge of the living and the dead. "Every one that committeth sin." There is here no difference. The man of letters and the uncultured barbarian, the child in the cradle and the hoary-headed pilgrim, the outspoken unbeliever and the professed Christian, whosoever is a doer of sin, is a doer of lawlessness, a violator of the Law, an outlaw.

"For sin is the transgression of the Law." This is not a useless repetition, nor does it serve merely to emphasize the statement made in 4a; it is more than that. It serves to nip in the bud another excuse the flesh of the Christian may advance when it is told the uncomfortable truth that every doer of sin is one without, outside of, the Law. The flesh will seek to comfort the Christian by telling him, "You are not a habitual sinner, nor do you intend to be or become one. Yet an occasional error, an occasional slip, is quite a different matter. Surely missing the mark just once or twice will not stamp you an outlaw, a violator of the Law of God. That is not your intention, and no one can call you that. That would be an unwarranted charge, an insult to your Christian character." The apostle knows human nature and proceeds at once to silence the old wily flesh. Note that both *sin* and *transgression of the Law* have the article, denoting identity and convertibility (Robertson, *A Grammar*, etc., 1st ed., p. 768). Cp. 1 Cor. 11, 3; Matt. 6, 22; John 1, 4; 6, 63. Call it sin, and you have thereby identified, classified, it with violation of the Law. Not only habitual doing of sin, but the sin, sin as such, every specific sin, all that is called sin, is by its very nature lawlessness, outlawry, spiritual freebootery. It is failing to hit the mark of perfection, and missing the lion as he is about to spring upon you, missing him by an inch, is just as serious a mistake as missing him by twenty feet. All imperfections, even such as fall just a little short of perfection, are wickedness, just because they missed the perfection required of us. There is here no neutral ground. There is no half-way station on the journey from good to bad. The



slightest step out of perfection is wickedness; the slightest deviation from right is wrong, violation of that which is good. The fact that Christians are children of God does not make their sin less grievous, less wicked. When a Christian commits a sin, he is doing something utterly incompatible with his high calling, something that by its very nature is opposed to that God whose child he claims to be and actually is. And if a Christian continues in doing sin, if he becomes a habitual doer of sins, be they great or small, he is degrading, debasing himself, reducing himself from the rank of a child of God to that of the wicked, the lawless, the violators of God's will. What a powerful inducement for the Christian to purify himself!

*"And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin,"* v. 5. Again *ἐκεῖνος* refers to Christ Jesus. Once more the apostle calls the attention of his readers to a fact which is the very a-b-c of Christian knowledge, which for that very reason must be preached with untiring repetition to all believers, which is more necessary to them than daily food. John had laid down the law to his readers with all the sternness of his namesake, the Baptist; and now, in the very words of his former teacher, he proclaims the sweetest Gospel. At the same time, in a manner truly masterful, he links up this proclamation with the preceding statement and brings into full effect the justifying and sanctifying power of this plain, simple Gospel-message. He knows from his own experience that the believer needs both Law and Gospel—the Law to terrify the flesh, the Gospel to give nourishment, strength, willingness, to the new man, so that the Christian will gladly do what the Law demands but cannot effect.

*"He was manifested to take away our sins."* Evidently these words are a reminiscence of the words which John had heard out of the mouth of his former teacher. John 1, 29 is the only other time that *ἀμαρτία* and *αἱρεῖν* are joined together in the New Testament. In his old age that scene which had so indelibly impressed itself on his mind, had wrought so decisive a change in the whole course of his life, comes back vividly to his memory. Once more he sees Jesus passing by. Once more he hears the Baptist's voice: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." That word had caused him to follow Jesus. That sweet Gospel-message had been the burden of his life's preaching, had time and again proved to be the power and wisdom of God unto justification and sanctification. This old, yet ever new Gospel he after his stern proclamation recalls to the memory of his readers in order to remind them of their justification and make them willing unto sanctification. What does the word *αἱρεῖν* mean? A large number of interpreters take it here in the sense of removal without any connotation or suggestion of the manner of removal. While there is



no doubt that the word may designate simply a removal, *e.g.*, John 10, 18; 11, 48; 19, 15, etc., yet that is neither the etymological meaning nor the sense in which John uses the word here. The word originally means to raise up, lift up, as stones (John 8, 59), the hand (Rev. 10, 5), etc.; then, to take upon oneself and carry what has been lifted, to bear, a cross (Matt. 16, 24), a yoke (Matt. 11, 29); then, to bear away what has been raised upon oneself, to carry off, to remove by lifting or bearing, *e.g.*, tables (John 2, 16), the stone from the grave (John 11, 39; 20, 1), a body (John 20, 2. 13. 15); finally, simply to remove. Let us bear in mind that the Baptist's words are a reminiscence of Isaiah's grand prophecy in chap. 53, especially in vv. 5. 6. 11, a fact almost universally conceded. Let us recall to our memory that the vicarious atonement so clearly taught in Is. 53 is just as clearly set forth in the sacrificial ritual, the laying on of hands symbolizing the transference of the sinner's guilt to the sacrificial animal, which bore it and died for it; cp. Lev. 1, 4; 3, 2. 8. 13. Let us visualize the significant ritual of the scapegoat, Lev. 16, 8. 10. 20-22; let us remember all the other passages speaking so clearly of the substitutionary atonement, and there is no need to assume that a word which so frequently has just the meaning brought out by all these passages and symbolic acts was used by John without any suggestion whatsoever as to the manner of such removal. In John 1, 29 the present participle pictures the Lamb of God as having taken up the load and now bearing it for the purpose of removing it by complete expiation. In our passage the aorist pictures the whole life of Christ as one act of sin-bearing for the purpose of complete removal of that sin, of sin-removal by sin-bearing.

This meaning alone serves the purpose of the apostle of teaching removal of sin as the basis for both our justification and our sanctification. It is only the removal of sin by vicarious bearing of such sin that can move God to forgive sins, to justify the ungodly, and still remain the holy God of unalterable justice and unchanging righteousness, Rom. 3, 25. 26. It is only the removal of sin by the sin-bearing Lamb of God that can speak comfort to the sinner, that can silence all accusations of sin, Satan, Law, conscience; that can satisfy the doubting heart; that can give peace and divine assurance of forgiveness to the troubled soul. And how much more emphatic and more powerful a motive for sanctification of life does the fact of removal of all his sins by Christ become to the believer since he knows that this removal was effected and made possible only because the Son of God Himself bore our sin in His own body throughout His life and on to the cross, there to die for our sins! Shall we serve sin, so utterly beyond the power of our own removal? Shall we do the will of that monster sin, which bore down so heavily upon Him who bore it for us that



in His agony He cried: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me"? So great is the love of Jesus that He took upon Himself our sin. Shall we not gladly serve Him who has freed us by His vicarious sin-bearing from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin? In Him we have both righteousness and strength. He is of God made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption, for no other reason than that He became willing to take our sins upon Himself and, by carrying them and all their consequences, to remove them far away from us. Micah 7, 18, 19.

"There is no sin in Him." This word is added for a double purpose. In the first place, it gives the reason why Jesus could take upon Himself the sin of the world, because He was the Lamb without spot and without blemish. There can be no doubt as to His qualification for the work of sin-bearing and -removal, no doubt of our actual and complete justification. In the second place, the fact that our Savior is without sin, never knew sin, although tempted in like manner as we are, is another powerful motive unto sanctification, to follow the example of our sinless Savior. That Child lying in Bethlehem's manger, bearing as the Lamb of God the sin of the world, is indeed in the fullest sense of the term the perfect Savior.

In our text we hear the tolling of Christmas-bells, jubilantly proclaiming the blessings of the Nativity, solemnly admonishing all that hear to make proper use of these blessings, to accept them in adoring faith, to manifest them in their daily lives, to become ever more closely united with, and ever more like, that Son of God who came into the world that all men might be made the sons of God. Though the birth of the Christ-child is not especially mentioned, the text breathes the true Christmas spirit, that of joyous faith, expectant hope, holy endeavor. This Christmas spirit must be reflected in the sermon. One may take as his theme *God's Christmas Gift*. In yonder manger lies the pure and holy Son of God; there lies the Captain of our salvation; there lies the Author of our sanctification. Or one may present *John's Christmas Sermon*. He speaks to us of our present dignity, of our future destiny, of our lifelong indebtedness. One may call attention to the fact that though the world celebrates Christmas, the Christ-child is foolishness to them, and then show that *the Babe of Bethlehem is the Wisdom of God*, for He is our Justification, our eternal Salvation, our Sanctification. One may speak on *The Proper Christmas Spirit*, rejoicing in our adoption, glorying in our hope, untiring in our service. Professor Hoyer offers the following: *Behold, What Manner of Love the Father hath Bestowed upon Us!* This love has made us children of God, heirs of God, followers of God. CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, Vol. VII (1936), p. 922.

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