

## 1 John 3

Intro – the rise of “secret societies” in our lives

Most of us are familiar w sororities, fraternities, or groups like the Masons or maybe Eastern Star.

These groups often used secret passwords or phrases, or initiation rites. Their secret nature made them special.

I’m not worried about these groups because 1) I don’t think they’re as popular now as they used to be, and 2) I don’t think any of us took their secret initiations all that seriously – I don’t think most Xns mixed their faith w these groups.

But back in John’s day, these groups were on the rise, and their secret knowledge was mixing w religion, and it was beginning to mix w Xnity – so much that it threatened to distort Xnity.

John is writing at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> C, & in the 2<sup>nd</sup> C these groups w “secret knowledge” would increase.

Gnosticism became known for exalting secret knowledge (spirituality was good)

to the point that our actions did not matter at all. John writes to refute this false theology by

1) portraying X’s actions as necessary, & 2) our actions to follow his ways are also necessary.

From these verses today we can sense the 2 main directions the false teachings were taking:

- 1) Creating a sense of inadequacy on the part of the Xns (you don’t know our secrets, X’s commands were not enough, we have special knowledge about the end times)
- 2) Their new teachings will conflict w the teachings of the gospel

### Read 1 John 3: 1-10

v. 1 Because of God’s love for us, we are children of God! God’s love will last, and our relationship w God will also last.

v. 7 let no one deceive you – the true gospel is in danger

v. 9 Sin is real, and dangerous, w consequences - do not continue sinning.

Do not disregard God’s commands. Do not be at peace w sin. The devil is the author of sin.

### Read vv. 11-17

Love one another.

He laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Do not shut your heart from your brother in need.

A quote from C.S. Lewis’ The Screwtape Letters – the Master Demon Screwtape is instructing his young devil Wormwood how to undermine the faith of a new Xn who is feeling the need for repentance:

“It remains to consider how we can retrieve this disaster. The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. Let the little brute wallow in it. Let him, if he has any bent that way, write a book about it; that is often an excellent way of sterilizing the seeds which the Enemy plants in a human soul. Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will. As one of the humans has said, active habits are strengthened by repetition but passive ones are weakened. The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel.” (pp.69-70)

We cannot develop an accurate theology without emphasizing both the words of Jesus and the acts of Jesus.

What he said, and what he did must both be emphasized. Thus, both our words and our actions are also important if we are to follow his way of life and salvation.

Read vv. 18-24

Love not just by our words, but also by our actions