

We are Children of God

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Text: 1 Jn 3:1-10

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

I. We are Children of God

1Jn 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

“and such we are”

This phrase is not found in the King James Version of the Bible because it was not included in the later Greek manuscripts on which the KJV is based. However, this phrase does appear in several of the most ancient Greek manuscripts

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

1Jn 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1Jn 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

II. Perspective:

A. This passage has been the center of controversy between

Christian perfectionism, or entire sanctification (Rom 6) and the **continuing sinfulness** of the Christian (Rom 7).

B. The goal for believers:

All believers are to long for total deliverance from sin. (Rom 6)

Through Christ's power we have the potential for sinless living.

C. The passage must fit into the larger context of the entire book of I John

1. 1Jn 1:8-2:2 We all sin at times, and need forgiveness.

2. 1Jn 5:1-4 We are called to live an overcoming life.

3. 1Jn 5:13 We are to have the assurance of salvation.

4. The passage relates to the extreme of the false teachers claims:

A Christian lives a sinlessness life (1Jn 1:8-2:2)
Sin is insignificant in a Christian's life (1Jn 3:1-10)

5. The paradoxical relationship between two extremes.

1) A Christian will sin (1Jn 1:8-2:2; Rom 7) but are not to live in sin (1Jn 3:1-10; Rom 6).
2) Predestination (or security) versus free will (and perseverance).

These paradox provides a theological balance and attacks the extreme positions.
The false teachers were presenting two errors in the area of sin.

6. Perspective - This entire debate is based on a misunderstanding of the difference between:

1) Our position in Christ - We are free from sin's penalty (justification) in Christ.
2) Our struggle with sins power (progressive sanctification) - we still struggle.
3) The promise that victory will be ours (glorification) - one day we will be free of its presence.

This book as a whole teaches the priority of admitting our sin and striving toward sinlessness.

III. Word and phrase study of 1Jn 3:4-10

the one who "practices sin" - emphasizes habitual, ongoing, lifestyle action

1Jn 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness;
1Jn 3:8 the one who practices sin is of the devil;
1Jn 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin,

"lawlessness"

1Jn 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

This speaks not of the breaking of a law (Moses Law or societal norms) as much as an attitude of rebellion.

This same word is used to describe the Antichrist

2Thes 2:3 ... and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
2Thes 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work;

A fuller Bible definition of sin:

Jn 9:41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Rom 14:23 ... his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

Jas 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

1Jn 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, ...

"He appeared" - (Phanerōs) = means to clearly reveal or manifest

1Jn 3:5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins;

1Jn 3:8 The Son of God appeared for this purpose

This speaks of Jesus' incarnation.

2 Tim 1:9-10 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

The purpose of His coming:

1Jn 3:5 You know that He appeared in order **to take away sins**;
(Mt 1:21; Jn 1:29; 12:27; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:26; 1Pt 2:24; Rev 1:5)

1Jn 3:8 The Son of God appeared for this purpose , **to destroy the works of the devil**
(Gen 3:15; Isa 27:1; Jn 12:31-32; 16:11; Rom 16:20; Col 2:13-15; Eph 1:20-21)

Lk 4:43 "I must **preach the kingdom of God** to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."

Lk 19:10 "For the Son of Man has come **to seek and to save that which was lost.**"

Jn 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life**, and have it **abundantly**.

Eph 3:10-11 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Heb 2:14-15 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He **might render powerless** him who had the power of death, that is, **the devil**, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

The basic fact in all of these expressions is that Jesus Christ has done something for man which man could not do for himself.

“to take away sins”

Referring to what Jesus did on the cross (Isa 53:11-12; Heb 9:28; 1Pt 2:24).

“and in Him there is no sin”

Jesus Christ's sinlessness is the basis for His substitutionary death on our behalf.
(2Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1Pt 1:19; 2:22)

Notice that “sin” is plural in the first part of v. 5 and singular in the second part.

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins (refers to acts of sin);
and in Him there is no sin (refers to His righteous character).

Believers are to share both the positional sanctification and progressive sanctification of Christ. Sin is to be an alien thing for His followers.

“No one who abides in Him sins”

While abiding in Christ you can't sin!

“no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him”

Continual flagrant sinning reveals that one does not know Christ and has never known Christ.

“make sure no one deceives you”

1Jn 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Eph 5:6-7 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;

Jas 1:21-22 ... in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

“the one who practices righteousness is righteous”

The NT is clear that man cannot approach God by their personal merit.

Rom 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight;

Rom 4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Humans are not saved by self-effort.

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Humans must respond to God's offer of salvation in the finished work of Christ.

Rom 3:23-24 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Eph 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Our efforts do not bring us to God.

They do show that we have met Him. They clearly reveal our spiritual condition and maturity after salvation. We are not saved “by” good works, but “unto” good works. The goal of God's free gift in Christ is Christ like followers. The ultimate will of God for every believer is not just heaven when he dies, but Christ likeness now (Mt 5:48; Rom 8:28-29; Gal 4:19).

“the one who practices sin is of the devil”

God's children are known by how they live, as are Satan's children (1Jn 3:10; Eph 2:1-3)

“for the devil has sinned from the beginning”

His nature from the beginning - to murder and speak lies

Jn 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Names given to the activity of the devil and demons from the Bible:

Accuser (Rev 12:10)

Adversary (1Pt 5:8)

Angel of light (2Cor 11:14)

Apollyon [king of demons] (Rev 9:11)

Belzebulb [“Lord of flies”] (Mt 10:25)

Belial (2Cor 6:15)

Deceiver (Rev 12:9)

Destroyer (1 Cor 10:10; Jn 10:10)

Devil (Rev 12:9)

Devourer (Mal 3:11)

Dragon (Rev 12:9)

Enemy (Luke 10:19)

Evil One (Jn 17:15)

Liar (Jn 8:44)

Lucifer (Isa 14:12)

Murderer (Jn 8:44)

Old Serpent (Rev 20:2)

Prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:1)

Ruler of Demons (Matt 12:24)

Ruler of darkness (Eph 6:12)

Satan (Rev 12:9)

Thief (Jn 10:10)

Wicked One (Mt 13:18)

“the Son of God”

This is the most **significant title** (after LORD Phil 2:6-11) used of and by Jesus.

“to destroy the works of the devil”

1Jn 3:8 The Son of God appeared for this purpose , **to destroy the works of the devil**
(Gen 3:15; Isa 27:1; Jn 12:31-32; 16:11; Rom 16:20; Col 2:13-15; Eph 1:20-21)

The purpose of Jesus’ manifestation in time and flesh was to destroy (Gk. *luō*)
which means “to loose,” “to unbind,” or “to destroy.”

The “already and not yet” tension of the NT also relates to the destruction of evil. The devil has been defeated, but he is still active in the world until the full consummation of the Kingdom of God.

“No one who is born of God”

"born of God", "born of Him" = used 9 times;

John uses familial terms to describe the believer’s relationship with God

1Jn 2:29 ... everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1Jn 3:9a No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; ...

1Jn 3:9b ... and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1Jn 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1Jn 5:1a Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ...

1Jn 5:1b ... and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

1Jn 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.

1Jn 5:18a We know that no one who is born of God sins...

1Jn 5:18b ... but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

“because His seed abides in him”

There have been several theories as to exactly what the Greek phrase, “His seed,” means.

1) Augustine and Luther said it refers to God’s Word (Lk 8:11; Jn 5:38; Jas 1:18; 1Pt 1:23)

2) Calvin said it refers to the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5, 6, 8; 1Jn 3:24; 4:4, 13)

3) Others said it refers to the Divine Nature or new self (2Pt 1:4; Eph 4:24)

4) It could refer to Christ Himself as the “seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:16)

5) Some say it is synonymous with the phrase “born of God” (Lk 1:55; Jn 8:33, 37)

6) Apparently this was a term used by the gnostics to speak of the divine spark in all humans.

The following references were used in this study

I John Study Guide (by R. J. Utley)
Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words
Dictionary of Bible Themes