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Capitol Commission Bible Study
The Nature of a Relationship with God
1 John 2:28 - 3:3

A True Relationship with God - 2:28 - 3:3

John begins a new thought in verse 28 of chapter two with the simple urge to *abide in Him*. The sense of this admonition is not that Christ followers should touch base with God on occasion, but that they should “keep on remaining” in Christ as a lifestyle.

We must keep in mind that the Christian faith is based on relationship, not on intellectual knowledge. There will come a time when we actually meet Christ at his second coming. John warns us to keep in mind that when that happens, we don’t want to find ourselves in a position where we *shrink away from Him in shame at His coming* because we have not been living in that relationship.

In verse 29, John asserts that *He (God) is righteous*. This is a trait in God which makes him avoid interaction with sin. He goes on to say that *everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him*. Abiding in the Father involves more than mere feelings of closeness. It is based on a lifestyle of doing what is right.

Being *born of Him* is an expression that ties a believer’s lifestyle to the very person of God. Just as physical traits are passed on to one’s children by physical birth, spiritual traits are passed on to believers when they are born spiritually. Thus, those who have been *born of God* have the spiritual trait of righteousness and will feel an inner tug to live a righteous lifestyle.

Many believe that every person is a child of God because all were created by him. And God certainly does have an extraordinary love toward all those he has created. In 3:1, John indicates that the fact God has allowed for the possibility of adoption into his family is evidence of the great *love the Father has bestowed on us*. But potential relationship is not actual relationship. Entering God’s family requires that the individual accept Christ. And, in fact, John confirms that his readers are already part of God’s family. Thus, the “special knowledge” of the Gnostic teachers is not necessary for them because God’s “love” (his salvation) has already been bestowed.

In verse 2, John says that the relationship believers have with God does not have to wait until heaven to be enjoyed. He says we are already *children of God*. While we may not yet know fully *what we will be* (what things will be like in heaven), that fact does not keep us from interacting with God as our Father in the here and now.

What we do know is *that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is*. The nature of the material universe is such that we are not able to experience the fullness of reality in this life. There is a spiritual realm which is beyond the material. During the time we are confined to the material, we can only know what God has chosen to reveal in Scripture about eternity. However, when we enter eternity we will be able to see the fullness of God.

John focuses, in verse 3, on the lifestyle of a true believer. He says, *everyone who has this hope (firm expectation) fixed on Him purifies himself, just as he is pure*. That is, those who live in God’s “hope” are already on a path of personal transformation into his moral likeness – and not just some vague sense of purity, but at the same level of purity that characterizes Jesus himself.

Why This Passage is Important Today

Most religious and philosophical systems in the world today operate off of the premise that human beings can achieve a sufficient level of goodness to please God based on their own actions. The idea is that if we can just do enough good deeds in life, we can please God, or at least find personal fulfillment in life.

But the truth is, our existence is such that we are incapable of achieving that level of goodness. The very inner core of humanity is corrupt. The only thing that can possibly change it is for us to, somehow, be reborn into a different kind of creature. And that is exactly what happens when a person enters into a personal relationship with God through Christ. God changes the individual from the inside out, and puts us on a road of increasing spiritual maturity and lifestyle purity.

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