



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Children of God (1 John 2:28-3:3)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, April 9, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, April 9, 8:30 PM in Office #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

INTRODUCTION

After warning his beloved children in the faith concerning the sinful, temporary things of this world (1 John 2:15-17) and concerning the deceptions and wrong teachings of the false teachers (1 John 2:18-27), the Apostle John breaks into a section of excited exhortation.

1 John 2:28-3:3 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. ²⁹If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. ^{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. ²Beloved, 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. ³And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

While this section spans two chapters, it should be considered as one. In it, John addressed the people of God with the admonition to abide in Christ and to live in purity. Two encouraging motivations stand behind this call.

The first is the great promise that Jesus will one day return. On the night of the last supper, Jesus told His disciples, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also" (John 14:2-3). And on the day that Jesus ascended into heaven, two men dressed in white

said to those who watched, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The Apostle Paul wrote on the return of Christ numerous times in his letter (i.e. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Titus 2:13). And John wrote the book of Revelation on that which was revealed to him concerning the last days and the return of Jesus.

The "for sure promise" that Jesus Christ will return for His people is a great motivator and source of peace for those who follow Him.

The second source of encouragement is the magnificence of God's great love for His children. John exclaimed "See how great..." (3:1--KJV says "Behold, what manner..."). It astounded him, as it should all whom God has redeemed, that God would even care about, let alone, love such rebellious sinful creatures. It was God's love for people that He sent His Son (John 3:16) to save those who were enemies standing against Him (Romans 5:6-10). "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). More on this will be addressed later in this study.

With these two sources of encouragement in mind, John addressed a number of characteristics and challenges for those who are children of God.

THE CHILD OF GOD HAS A CONFIDENCE

John encouraged his readers, his children of the faith, to continue to abide in Christ for one day (no one knows what day), He will appear again. And when He does, the children of God will not have to draw back in embarrassment.

Isaiah cried out in fear "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). Peter told Jesus, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

But for the children of God, who are living and growing in the grace and knowledge of God, they are able to stand without shame when Jesus returns. Their sins have been cleansed. The righteousness that covers them is the

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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righteousness of Christ, not their own. Therefore, God sees them as perfect, clean, sinless.

It is not a flippancy nor is it a prideful arrogance. Rather it is an openness or freedom, and courage for those who continue to abide in Christ; knowing that God has made them qualified to be able to stand before Him. “It is a confidence which stems from a personal, obedient, abiding relationship with the Coming One.”¹

The nominal believers, the ones who do not abide, will shrink back in shame for their hypocrisy will be fully exposed. But for the true believer, the return of Christ is excitedly anticipated for there will be no need to be ashamed.

THE CHILD OF GOD DOES WHAT IS RIGHT

Another characteristic of a child of God is righteousness (2:29). This is a new way of stating what John had already written. John taught that one cannot live a life patterned by sin and still claim to be in fellowship with God (1:6); that the one who says that he knows God but does not keep His commandments is a liar (2:4); and that one who claims to walk in the light and yet hates his brother is, in reality, still in darkness (2:9).

But the one who lives a life patterned by obedience has fellowship with God (1:7). The one who keeps God’s commandments truly knows Him (2:5) and the one who loves his brother abides in the light (2:10).

In 1 John 2:29, John said that one can know that if he or she is born of Him (in other words, a “child of God”) if one is living a life patterned by righteousness. Again, no one will be perfect, but rather is known by right living—“right” as defined by the One who is right in all that He does.

THE CHILD OF GOD IS DEEPLY LOVED

As was noted earlier, John let out an exclamation concerning the great love. It was incredible to Him that God’s love is so great that those whom God has redeemed can be called “children of God” (3:1). What makes this love so remarkable? It is found in the vast expanse which was created between God and man due to the sin of man.

Think of it this way: A king has a beautiful kingdom. He has shown much care and concern and protection for his people that they lack nothing. But

deceived into wanting more, they rebel against this benevolent monarch. They constantly fight and stand against him. They offend him in every way possible. They do not care to know him. They hate him. They loathe his very being. They would like to see him taken off the throne and in their own mind, they have kicked him out of the castle.

IF IMITATION IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF FLATTERY, THEN JESUS WILL BE THE ONE TO WHOM ALL GLORY IS GIVEN AS GOD’S CHILDREN WILL RESEMBLE HIM.

But the king cares too much for these people. While he has every right to punish and exterminate those rebels, he extends grace. Thus, he furnishes a path, which he has provided all expenses, which these people may return and he calls them to return. Those that do are no longer considered rebels; and are not simply considered citizens again, but are now considered to be a child, an heir of the king.

No earthly king has ever or probably will ever do such a thing. But the Sovereign King of the Universe has shown this love—no wonder then that John exclaimed “LOOK, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE IS THIS...” And it is no wonder that John used it as a source of motivation and comfort for those who are God’s children.

THE CHILD OF GOD IS UNKNOWN

While the children of God are known and loved by God, those who still live in rebellion to God do not know them (3:1b). The world considers the people of God to be “strangers and exiles” (Hebrews 11:13), “aliens and strangers” (1 Peter 2:11; 1:1). They do not understand and are surprised when believers “do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you” (1 Peter 4:4).

Knowing that this type of reaction is to be expected is a source of encouragement to the believer. There could be the temptation that when a believer is going against the grain of everyone else that something could be wrong with him or her and that one can be off in his or her thinking. But John wrote so that his beloved children of the faith will not lose heart when

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persecution comes, but to expect it. Even Jesus said, “You will be hated by all because of My name” (Matthew 10:22a).

Christians who are persecuted sometimes feel cut off from God because they are in a difficult and sometimes unpleasant situation, and they may be tempted to give up their faith; on the contrary, the very fact that they are being persecuted should strengthen their faith since it is an indication that the evil world recognizes that they have passed from death to life.²

THE CHILD OF GOD WILL BE TRANSFORMED

John moved from the world not knowing the child of God to a reminder of the anticipated coming future event. He does so with an element of mystery. He acknowledged that the state and nature of believers in the future has not been revealed to him. Paul wrote that believers will have new bodies and that the mortal will take on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). But questions like “What will they look like? What are they composed of and able to do?” have not been fully revealed.

What has been revealed is quite encouraging, though. First of all, the children of God will become like Jesus. They will finally be forever rid of sin. They will be filled with perfect righteousness and be made holy. And their love and worship will be unstained and pure. If imitation is the highest form of flattery, then Jesus will be the One to whom all glory is given as God’s children will resemble Him.

The second known revelation is that the children of God will see Jesus. They will be able to gaze upon, worship, and personally interact with the One who willingly gave His life for the purpose of redeeming them. How encouraging it is to know that one day, God’s people will see their beloved Savior. What hope awaits those who long for that day!

¹ Daniel Akin, *1, 2, 3 John* The New American Commentary, Vol. 38 (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 129.

THE CHILD OF GOD IS CHARACTERIZED BY PURITY

With this hope in mind, John challenges his readers to be pure as Christ is pure. This is simply an encouragement to continue to grow in sanctification; to grow in becoming more and more like the Savior.

John has also written that “they may not sin” (2:1), they are to continue to “keep His word” (2:5) and to “abide in Him” (2:6, 27-28) and to let that which they heard from the beginning to remain in them (2:24).

These all teach the same thing. The child of God is to live a life that reflects the one who saved them and the state to which they have been saved. God sees the righteousness of His Son on the life of His children (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, the child of God is live in a way that resembles his or her status before God.

The child of God will not be perfect in this life; that comes in the future. If he or she sins, the promise has been given that forgiveness is given when repentance is found. One is to pursue holiness for the Savior is holy.

CONCLUSION

What motivation is given by John for the people of God to remain in Him, to live righteously and to look longingly for the day in which they will see their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Not all are children of God. Biblically speaking, to be a child of God, a person’s sins must be removed. And through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins--are you interested?

² I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 171.