

14. The Epistle of 1 John—3:2-8

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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1 John 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

In this statement, John is not speaking *universally* of all mankind—but *exclusively* of those who have received Jesus as their Savior.

John 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

As we pointed out last week—all people are the '*creation of God*'—but only the redeemed are the children of God.

For those who are children of God, John has some important words of exhortation—

1 John 3:2 (NKJV)

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

In other words, verse 2 tells us that, as children of God—we are all '*a work in progress*'. And while it is true that most of us would admit (and lament) that we are not yet all that we want to be (like Jesus)—we also rejoice that we are not what we once were either!

The good news is, as Paul the apostle promised us—

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;

Paul is telling us that the work of sanctification (which started with our salvation) will be completely fulfilled at the moment of our glorification (rapture)!

That's what Paul is referring to when he said that God's work in each of our lives as children of God will be completed in the "day of Jesus Christ"—or in other words, on the day when the Lord Jesus appears in the clouds and we are caught up to meet Him in the air.

At that time our mortal bodies will be fully redeemed (made perfect) when they are instantaneously transformed into glorified bodies—

Romans 8:15-25 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons

of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 (NKJV)

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*"

This truth is echoed by John in verse 2 when he said—"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed [rapture], we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Philippians 3:20-21a (NKJV)

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...

Then John adds another statement designed to be a 'litmus' test as to whether or not a person professing to know Jesus really is a child of God—

1 John 3:3 (NKJV)

³ **And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

This 'hope' that John is referring to here is the hope that God will complete the work He began at the moment of our salvation—that He will come for us someday (rapture) or if a Christian dies ('sleeps') before the rapture happens that God will raise them from the dead and give to them and us who are raptured a glorified body that will never be subject to death ever again!

Again, Paul's words in Romans 8:24-25 comes to mind—"For we were saved in this hope [the context is the redemption of our bodies], but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."

John goes on to tell us that all true Christians (children of God) will submit to and join in the process of sanctification (being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ—2Cor. 3:18) by doing what God has commanded (and John has repeated in this epistle) to abide in Christ and in His Word.

1 John 2:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ **Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.**

Of course, the implication that John introduces in verse 3, is that all true Christians pursue a life of purity and holiness—generally speaking. It is true that there are carnal Christians who—even though they won't lose their salvation because of their carnality—will lose the assurance of their salvation. (Comment)

Here in verses 4 thru 15 of Chapter 3, John is really addressing the counterfeit Christians in the church of Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:4-9 (NKJV)

⁴ Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

It's interesting (and very telling) how the writers of the New Testament dealt with sin and carnality in the early church as compared with how most pastors deal with it today.

Today, pastors are so worried about hurting people's feelings and damaging their fragile self-esteem (and offend the biggest givers) that they try 'water down' any talk of sin—or side-step all-together.

This has led to much carnality and compromise in the church as pastor's have become men-pleasers instead of faithful servants of Christ—

Galatians 1:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

John and the other New Testament writers were more concerned about honoring God than pleasing men.

Let's 'unpack' these verses and see what John is saying on this important subject—

1 John 3:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Whoever commits sin [practices, has as their lifestyle] also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

All sin is *lawlessness* against God—in other words, all sin violates God's laws (commandments).

This is the nature of unbelievers—even if they go to church on a regular basis—their lifestyle is to sin because that is their nature.

This will cause the Lord Jesus to pronounce them guilty on the Day of Judgment—not because they committed 'sins', but because they were demonstrating their 'sin' nature that they were not true children of God and didn't have *His* nature within them (i.e. weren't 'born-again').

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' [as an expression of their nature]

There are a lot of ‘counterfeit Christians’ in churches today as there were in first century church.

Jesus, in the **parable of the wheat and tares**, warned us that the devil would sow the **tares** (counterfeit Christians) in with the **wheat** (true Christians) to weaken and destroy the people of God—just like the devil did with the ‘mixed-multitude’ that came out of Egypt and caused the people of God to murmur and complain in the wilderness. (Numbers 21:4-8)

John is giving us some guidelines for knowing true Christians from counterfeit Christians—

From Warren Wiersbe

“The United States Treasury Department has a special group of men whose job it is to track down counterfeiters. Naturally, these men need to know a counterfeit bill when they see it.

How do they learn to identify fake bills?

Oddly enough, they are not trained by spending hours examining counterfeit money. Rather, they study the real thing. They become so familiar with authentic bills that they can spot a counterfeit by looking at it or, often, simply by feeling it.

This is the approach in 1 John 3, which warns us that in today’s world there are counterfeit Christians—“children of the devil” (1 John 3:10). But instead of listing the evil characteristics of Satan’s children, the Scripture gives us a clear description of God’s children. The contrast between the two is obvious.

The key verse of this chapter is 1 John 3:10: a true child of God practices righteousness and loves other Christians despite differences. First John 3:1–10 deals with the first topic, and 1 John 3:11–24 takes up the second.”

1 John 3:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ **And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.**

First of all let me say that John’s statement here comes directly against some of the false teaching in his day—that only the spirit of man is important and that the physical body doesn’t matter to God so indulge it all you want because God only cares about our spirit. (Comment)

Again, when John says that Jesus came to the earth (“manifested”)—He came to **“take away our sins”** (to pay our debt with His blood).

One author had this to say about what it means that Jesus took away our sins—

1. *Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the penalty of our sin—this is immediately accomplished when one comes by faith to Jesus.*
2. *Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the power of sin away—this is an ongoing work in the lives of those who walk after Jesus.*
3. *Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the presence of sin away—this is a work that will be completed when we pass into eternity and are glorified with Jesus.”*

The angel Gabriel promised Joseph regarding the ministry of Jesus: “...you shall call His name **JESUS**, for He shall save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21). Again, save us from the *penalty* of sin (hell); from the *power* of sin (on earth); and the *presence* of sin (in heaven).

The statement—“**in Him there is no sin**” is a reference not only to the fact that Jesus was born without a fallen sin nature (which He would have received if He had had an earthly father)—but also to the fact that He never sinned in all His years upon the earth.

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.

1 Peter 2:22 (NKJV)

²² *"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";*

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 John 3:5 (NKJV)

⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

1 Peter 1:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

That was the only sacrifice the Father would have accepted for guilty sinners—a Man who was Himself sinless—only the God-Man, Jesus Christ, fit that description.

1 John 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ **Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.**

Let me paraphrase the first part of verse 6—“*Whoever abides in Him (is saved and remaining in communion with Jesus) does not live habitually in sin.*”

Conversely, a person who deliberately and habitually sins is proving that he or she does not know Christ and therefore cannot be abiding in Him.

One pastor and author had this to say about making sure we know the context of a statement in the Bible *before* we try to interpret it—

“It is very important to understand what the Bible means—and what it does not mean—when it says **does not sin**. According to the verb tense John uses, **does not sin** means does not live a lifestyle of habitual sin. John has already told us in 1 John 1:8—“*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*” In 1 John 1:8, the grammar indicates John is speaking about *occasional* acts of sin. The grammar of 1 John 3:6 indicates that John is speaking of a settled, continued *lifestyle* of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection.”

The Amplified Bible translates verse 6—

1 John 3:6 (AMP)

⁶ No one who abides in Him [who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him—deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] commits (practices) sin. No one who [habitually] sins has either seen *or* known Him [recognized, perceived, or understood Him, or has had an experiential acquaintance with Him].

1 John 3:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

⁸ He who sins [practices sin] is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

There are people today that consider themselves Christians but who are actively practicing the homosexual lifestyle—John says they are deceiving themselves.

There are people who attend churches that are more concerned about their ‘felt needs’ than in teaching them to obey God’s Word and holding them accountable when they violate what God has commanded—in that regard, they are basically giving them ‘license’ to sin.

➔ Talk about Bachelorette Hannah Brown having sex with a male contestant 4 times and justifying it.

➔ Talk about Hillsong song writer and worship leader Marty Sampson—*“I’m genuinely losing my faith.. and it doesn’t bother me... like, what bothers me now is nothing... I am so happy now, so at peace with the world... it’s crazy”* (Comment)

We are in the last days and God is separating the true from the false—like a bottle of ‘salad dressing’ made up of oil and vinegar which, once shaken starts to separate—we are seeing the false is separating from the true—and as Jesus said, *“You will know them by their fruit.”*

Galatians 6:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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