

Introduction: Is everyone a child of God? What does it mean to be God's child? *** God's children die to their sins with Christ on His Cross AND now live new lives of righteousness IN Him. Two weeks ago, we heard: Those crucified to sin with Him are no longer slaves to sin and, having died, they are being made right from sin by the grace of God. All having died with Christ believe they will live with Him, considering themselves dead to sin, but living to God in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. (*Romans 6:5-11*) This is the true grace of God: sinners being forgiven by God because of faith in what Jesus did AND being made right by the power and love of The Holy Spirit so they live changed lives, becoming more like Jesus in all they say and do. *** We live in an age of 'cheap grace'. Our modern 'gospel' of forgiveness to 'go to heaven when we die' is almost a license to go on sinning. It downplays what God expects from His children while they continue to live on this earth. I have been guilty of speaking this way in the past. And, even though I am aware of my fault in this area, I am sure I am still guilty of preaching, teaching and living 'cheap grace'. *** There was no 'cheap grace' for the apostle John! His gospel is black and white, with no middle ground. And here is the deepest truth: God is love and grace AND God is the righteous judge who destroys the works of the devil. Therefore, God can and will change people, all those who are His children.

I. Those who are born again are becoming more pure by doing what is right. (*Verses 1-3*)

A. God's gift of grace is to adopt 'children' out of the world. (*Verse 1*)

1. John commands them to 'see' the greatness of God's gift of love: they are God's adopted children.

God's LOVE: The quality of The Father's LOVE results in His adopting all who are IN His Son.

2. Sadly, those who are still in the world do not know God or His children.

Two kinds of people: Since Jesus finished His first mission on earth, God's wrath is on those who suppress His truth and choose to remain in wickedness. (*Romans 1:18-21*) However, all who receive truth and obey Him in faith are set free from sin. (*John 8:31-32*)

3. Notice, the senior apostle, a 'father' in the Church, uses 'we' when writing to younger Christians. He is talking about fellowship with God and with one another. (*1 John 1:3; and Ephesians 2*)

B. The future hope and the present impact. (*Verses 2-3*)

1. At Jesus' second coming all His brothers and sisters will be like Him. Now, they are getting there, but they are not there yet!

The now and not yet: Those who are IN Christ by faith are now citizens in His Kingdom. But they must stand firm IN Him until He returns and fully changes their 'lowly' bodies. (*Philippians 3:20-4:1*)

2. The hope of seeing Jesus, the One whose death and life mean forgiveness AND a changed heart and actions, means Christians are becoming more and more pure – like Jesus!

Hope and purity: The gracious gift of Jesus giving Himself (on The Cross) was to purify us to do what is good. We can live upright and godly lives now because of the hope of His return. (*Titus 2:11-15*)

II. The conflict Christians are engaged in and its resolution. (*Verses 4-10*)

A. All are sinners and rebels by nature! But, Jesus came to take away sin so that God's children do not continue in sin. (*Verses 4-7*)

1. The conflict: All are rebels against God, His ways and His laws. (*Verse 4*)

2. But, Jesus Christ came to take away sin! (*Verse 5*)

The Cross: We heard in *Colossians* that when we were dead in our sins, God made us alive with Christ because of what He did on The Cross. When we receive Him in humble, dependent, obedient faith our sins are 'nailed to The Cross' with Him and we are forgiven. (*Colossians 2:13-14*)

The Son of God appeared to take away sins

3. All who are IN Him by faith will not continue to sin! (*Verse 6*)

Application-warning: It is impossible for a Christian to continue to live for himself. There are 'baby' Christians who will grow to be young men and fathers. But, there are no 'carnal' Christians! Such a person is deceived. He is still dead, in the world, and a child of the devil!

4. So, do not be led astray. Do right like Jesus! (*Verse 7*)

Planets and The Righteous Creator of planets: Astronomers in Jesus' day were perplexed by the movement of planets in the sky. They did not understand the solar system or the mathematics of it. So, when people were inconsistent in their behavior, they used the verb in this sentence, which came from the word for planet. John is urging all children of God to do right behavior to become righteous people, as The Creator of planets is righteous.

NO compromise: Putting it together: NO child of God should ever compromise with people who are still in the world, apart from God, and living for themselves as God's enemies. God's children are called IN Christ Jesus to strive to live more and more IN His righteousness. Therefore,

Children of God must not be led to unrighteousness

B. The one who continues to sin is still of the devil, the one who originated rebellion against God! But, Jesus Christ appeared to destroy the devil's work so that the dead may come to life! (*Verses 8-10*)

1. Those who practice sin are still 'sons of the devil'. (*Verse 8a; see John 8:31-37*)

2. Jesus came to destroy the devil's work. (*Verse 8b*)

3. All who are IN Christ will not continue to sin because God's 'seed' is in them. This 'seed' is The Word of God. (See *Matthew 13:1-23*) And, the Holy Spirit applies The Word in the believer's life. Righteous deeds will flow out of them. (*Verse 9, see verse 7*)

Quote: William Temple was Archbishop of Canterbury during WWII. He died in the war, but before he died, he gave this challenge: 'Nobody can be indwelt by The Spirit of God and keep that Spirit to himself. Where The Spirit is, He flows forth. And where there is no flowing forth, He is not there.'

4. Here is another test: Am I doing the righteous deeds that Jesus would have me do? Do I love my brothers and sisters in Christ? If not, I am still the devil's child. But, if I love and do righteous deeds, then I am God's adopted child! (*Verse 10*)

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III. Danger of 'cheap grace' and unrighteousness.

A. Grace that is effective changes us:

1. Can you say, 'I once was blind, but now I see'? And, has God's grace brought you through 'many dangers, toils and snares'? If not, maybe you have only received 'cheap grace'.
2. It is God who does the work! But, we all still have a sin nature which we must crucify (kill!) every morning, noon and night. But, we have the 'miracle of mercy' from God IN Christ!

B. We must do acts of righteousness to build God's Kingdom.

Kingdom of God: In the apostle Paul's letter to all people in Rome loved by God and called to live holy IN Christ (*Romans 1:7*), he said The Kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace and joy IN The Holy Spirit. Those who are serving Christ in this fruit of The Holy Spirit are well-pleasing to God and approved of others. And, all who are in God's Kingdom should pursue the things of peace and that build each other up. (*Romans 14:17-19*)

1. Children of God must do good works God planned for them to do. They must not be selfish!

Grace makes people new: Those saved by grace through faith are made new creations IN Christ Jesus. They are now enabled and empowered by God to do good works which He prepared in advance for them to do. (*Ephesians 2:8-10*)

2. But, God does it, if we cooperate with Him by an act of our will. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

Do NOT stay darkened: Children of God must not live as the people who do not know Jesus live. They still live in ignorance and darkness. But, those being taught by God (in The Holy Spirit) have put off darkness to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. They are becoming new people, able to live righteous and holy like God. So they do not grieve The Holy Spirit because they are letting all wickedness be taken from them. They are being kind and forgiving to people because God forgave them IN Christ. (*Ephesians 4:17-32*)

C. So, it comes down to two ways. All people have this choice:

1. The default choice is spiritual death, leading to evil deeds, hatred of others, and shameful judgment.
2. But, all who receive God's gracious gift of love in Jesus Christ will have His life, do God's righteous deeds, and love one another with confident assurance.

NO compromise: IF our hearts and minds have been renewed and made right in God's Son to become God's children, our choice is clear. We will NOT even consider doing anything to compromise what Father God is doing in us through His Son in The Holy Spirit to make us righteous as He is righteous (*verse 7*).

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Last word: All who are truly God's children through faith in what His Son Jesus did in His first coming will be changed by the power and love of The Holy Spirit He promised at the last Passover in the upper room and sent at the first Pentecost after His resurrection. God's children must be in the process of being made like Him. This can only be done by the gift of faith in Christ. We are responsible to receive God's LOVE in Christ and bear the fruit of that LOVE as we are living on earth being purified by the hope of His second coming. Remember,

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Conclusion: The apostle John admonishes fellow Christians to continue being connected with Jesus Christ because He IS the hope for victory over sin and the devil. Then they may DO righteous acts, love their brothers, and be confident when Jesus Christ appears again. They must NOT be led into sin, lawless deeds, and hatred.

ALL who compromise the righteousness God works in His children IN Christ, risk being judged into eternal shame.

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