

Discerning the True Nature of a Child of God – Part I

Evidenced by Love of Righteousness

(I John 3:1-10)

Introduction:

1. Let's review some fundamental truths and understanding that the Apostle John has already established in his letter, so that we keep this passage in context of what John is saying to his readers:
 - John is writing the letter to _____
 - To be in fellowship with God, a person must trust in _____, who John refers to as “The Word of Life”. (I I John 1:1, I John 2:23, John 3:16)
 - A mark of a believer (follower of Christ) is the desire to walk in the _____ (righteousness) and to not walk in _____ (sin).
 - A follower of Christ is still capable of _____ (I John 1:8), and can/will seek and receive God's forgiveness by confessing those sins to God directly.
 - Jesus (who is at the right hand of the Father) continues as our _____ and our _____ (propitiation), declaring to the Father that we are _____ through His blood that He shed on the cross for our sin. (I John 2:1-2, Romans 8:1-11)
 - A genuine follower of Christ is _____ by the Holy Spirit (I John 2:20-21)
 - One who opposes Christ is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit and John refers to them as “antichrists”, and they declare false things about Christ. (I John 2:22-23)

2. In the first two chapters of his letter, John establishes a pattern/model that governs the follower of Christ:

- A genuine and continual _____ in Christ as Savior and Lord
- A genuine and continual desire to _____ sin
- A genuine and continual desire to _____ God
- A genuine and continual desire to _____ as God _____

3. The apostle John also describes the pattern or model of the “antichrist”:

- They _____ Christ as God
- They actively pursue _____
- They _____ the true teachings of Christ and the apostles and pursue their own means of salvation. (I John 2:19)
- They _____ worldly things and actively pursue them as opposed to the things of God. (I John 2:15-16)

4. It is important to keep all of this in mind as we look further into this letter written by John:

- Following the Lord is a serious matter and requires diligent obedience to the teachings of Christ and the apostles.
- As we mature in our faith we come to an understanding of what _____ is all about:

1) It is to be separated to _____

2) It is to be separated from the _____

5. It is this process of _____ that John will now focus on

Understanding Our Relationship with God (I John 3:1-3)

1. Take note of what John says in I John 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”. How does a person become a child of God? (John 1:12)
2. Our salvation (deliverance from death) originated from God’s love, and the moment that we embrace (trust and believe) the Son of God we are set free from the bondage (pursuit) of sin and free instead to pursue right things (righteousness).
 - The genuine child of God will display genuine _____ behavior because (as children of God) it is in their new nature to do so. (I John 2:29, Romans 8:1-14, II Corinthians 5:17-21)
 - It is important to remind ourselves that although we are free from the bondage (pursuit) of sin, we are not free from its external influences and temptations. As such we need to be continually reminded to flee the temptation of sin and confess when we succumb to it. (I John 1:8-9, 2:1)
 - Here are two evidences of a true child of God:
 - 1) The desire to pursue _____
 - 2) The desire to _____ our wrongdoing when we sin
3. Take just a moment to ponder these words; “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called the children of God”. Write your thoughts below as to what that means to you personally:
4. As you think about what you wrote above, take a moment to think about these words; “For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him”. What sort of things come to your mind when you read those words?

5. John reminds his readers of a very important doctrine that is the result of being a child of God, and that is the doctrine of the _____. (I John 3:2-3, Philippians 3:24, I Cor. 15:52-54)
- In our present state as children of God, there may not be an outward “physical” change that is evidenced by our new nature.
 - John instructs his readers, that while we wait for our “glorified” bodies (which we receive at the resurrection), in our present state we (those whose hope is in the Resurrection – John 11:25-26), are to pursue a life of holiness and purity. This is made possible by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that indwells all who believe and trust in Jesus Christ. (I John 2:25-29, Ephesians 1:13-14)
 - It is this _____ that drives us to live obediently to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, even though (at times) we may struggle with the things of the flesh. (Romans 8:9-25)
 - It is with great anticipation that we long for the day when this “corruptible” body will take on “incorruption”. (I Corinthians 15:52-58)
6. The apostle John has already made it clear that to have genuine fellowship with God, a person must trust in Jesus Christ (I John 1:1-7)
7. The apostle Paul declares the same thing “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:9-10)
8. It is because of this unique relationship as “**children of God**”, that John encourages his readers to not lose hope (even though false teachings and persecution surround them), and to maintain an obedient life, because it is in the nature of a follower of Christ to do so; “and everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself, just as He is pure” (I John 3:3)
9. The apostle Peter also expresses our unique relationship in this way; “But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, you shall be holy for I AM Holy” (I Peter 1:15-16)

Understanding Our Old Nature (I John 3:4-10)

1. The very thing that stands in opposition to a life of purity/holiness is _____.
2. It is best to conclude that John is continuing with the same thought process that a “genuine” follower of Christ is one who:
 - _____ sin
 - _____ righteousness
3. John defines sin as _____ which in its most general sense is defined as the pursuit of evil or ungodly things.
4. Take note of the contrast in this portion of John’s letter:
 - _____ who has no sin and is incapable of sin (I John 3:3)
 - _____ who can do nothing but sin (I John 3:8, John 8:44)
5. Our old nature is _____ and its pursuit is rebellion (lawlessness) against God
6. Why does John talk about sin so much in this letter, if in fact the follower of Christ has been delivered from this bondage of sin?
 - Because we are still _____ of sinning (I John 1:8), and when we do we need to _____ it to God. (I John 1:9)
 - So that we recognize sin for what it is in order that we not walk in _____ but instead walk in the _____.
 - So that we can recognize _____ teaching that promotes heresies that teach that sin either doesn’t exist or has no _____. (I John 1:5-7)

Understanding Our New Nature (I John 3:4-10)

1. **It is with great pleasure that I can announce to you that we have been delivered from this old “sin” nature and we are totally free to pursue righteousness! (II Cor. 5:17-21)**
2. John declares that the follower of Christ has been set free to pursue _____ and it is in their new nature to do so (I John 3:7)
 - He is encouraging his readers to do just that by declaring that as children of God, we should pursue “**right things**”. (I John 3:3)
 - He is not teaching “*sinless perfection*” as some might conclude; because he has already declared that a believer is capable of sin. He is merely teaching that our pursuits ought to be _____ pursuits. The more we focus on _____, the less we focus on _____.
3. It is highly probable that John was making a clear distinction between what the false teachers (antichrists) were promoting and the true teachings of Jesus and the apostles:
 - The false teachers promoted the idea that sin was permissible and alright to pursue either in moderation or in reckless abandonment.
 - 1) His description of sin as “lawlessness” was intentional as it argued against even the slightest acceptance of sin as permissible.....and not a part of one who was a Christ follower.
 - 2) Take note of his comparison of sin to the works of the devil; “the one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning”, it was to show that allegiance to sin is to be aligned with the devil. (I John 3:8)
 - A true “child of God” desires and practices _____. (I John 3:7)
 - A true “child of the devil” desires and practices _____ (I John 3:8)

4. John is making a very bold and totally true declaration that sin is satanic and as such it is not from God, nor is it a part of a Christ followers new nature; “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. 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 John 3:9-10)

- A genuine Christ follower is a “child of God” and as such is given a new nature that desires to pursue _____.
- As a child of God, we no longer have a nature that is bent on pursuing _____.
- As a child of God, we are still capable of _____, but it is no longer our active pursuit.
- As a child of God, we are totally free to pursue _____, since it is in our nature to do so.
- As a child of God, the more we pursue _____ (the light), the less we will pursue _____ (darkness). This is what _____ is all about;
 - 1) Separating ourselves to _____
 - 2) Separating ourselves from the _____

Concluding Thoughts

1. This is totally my thoughts here, but I think it is high time that the Christian community stops focusing so much on sin (since it is no longer our nature), and focus more on doing right and loving as God loves.
2. In other words – we need to grow up and obey the Lord, stop beating ourselves up, and rather than let the world influence us, we need to influence the world.
3. Your thought/comments: