

SESSION 5 – WEEK OF 14 FEB 2021

WHO ARE THE TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD?

SCRIPTURE: 1JOHN 2: 28-3:10

Theme:

In previous weeks, we explored and discussed how obedience to Christ's commands is essential to living in the light and living as Christ (1:5-10 and 2:3-6). The theme this week explores the emphasis on who the true children of God are. The benchmark of what John sets to identify the true children of God are found in obedience, love and hope.

Key Verse:

"This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister." (1John 3:10)

Read 1 John 2: 28-3:10

Core Questions for Discussion

(If your group meets fortnightly, combine Core Questions of two sessions and choose one Further Question from either session.)

1. From 2:28-29 and 3:9-10, what qualities or attributes distinguishes children of God apart from children of the devil?
 - Those who continue in Christ; those who are expectant of His return; those who know His righteousness; those who do what is right by God, including those who obey the command to love their brother and sister – these are those traits seen in children of God.
 - However, the test of obedience of Christ's commands in 1:5-10 and 2:3-6 takes a slightly different emphasis. Here, the concept of being born of God is introduced. Our status as children of God becomes the reason for the practice of righteousness.
 - It is being born of God (like being born again) which now imparts the life of God within us that is responsible for our family likeness (2:29; 3:9; see also 4:7-8; 5:1, 4, 18).

2. At verse 28 we are told to continue in Jesus, "so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming".
 - a. When Jesus "appears", what is something we can hope for and be confident in?

- Those who continue in Christ may be confident and unashamed before Christ at His coming (2:28).
- Those who are children of God, have confidence that they shall be like Him, for they shall see Christ as He is (3:2).
- All who have this hope in Christ purify themselves, just as He is pure (3:3). We do not hold on to things temporal or transient, we hold on to Christ and our inheritance in Him.

b. How does the hope of Christ's appearance (3:2-3) serve as a purifying influence in your life?

- We do not live without purpose or direction. We carry the hope of Christ returning to us.
- As believers, our hope is in Christ's righteousness and purity bestowed upon us. We can, however, also clothe ourselves with His righteousness (Ephesians 6:14).
- This question seeks a discussion on how we might live in expectation of Christ's return, putting on Christ's righteousness, living a life of purity, influenced by the life of Christ and the holiness of Christ.

3. Why is it impossible for any follower of Christ or one who is born of God to continue in sin (3:4-10)? What is the deception that John warns against (3:7)?

- John sets out in 3:5-9 a series of considerations that would deter believers from indulging in sin. It follows from John's certainty that children of God who are born of God do live in obedience of God because of their sonship/daughtership:

- (a) All sin is a violation of the law of God (3:4);
 - (b) The very purpose of the coming of Christ was to deliver us from sin, so there is no indwelling sin (3:5);
 - (c) Those who are true Christians do not habitually sin (3:6);
 - (d) Those who sin cannot be true Christians, but are of the devil, for Jesus came to destroy the devil's work (3:8);
- and
- (e) He who is born of God has God's seed in him and cannot sin (3:9).

- We are righteous because Jesus is righteous. Yet John also emphasises that "The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous." (v. 7)

- The deception that John is likely seeking to address here is similar to that raised in 2:26, a false teaching under the broad banner of "antinomianism," which says that because we are under the grace of God, we no longer are bound to any moral law. In

John Stott on "the new birth"

"The new birth involves the acquisition of a new nature through the implanting within us of the very seed or life-giving power of God. Birth from God is a deep, radical, inward transformation. Moreover, the new nature received at the new birth remains. It exerts a strong internal pressure towards holiness. It is the abiding influence of His seed within everyone who is born of God, which enables John to affirm without fear of contradiction that he cannot go on living in sin"

- John Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), p. 127.

other words, these false teachers were emphasising that it is possible to be righteous without ever attempting to practice righteousness.

- Perhaps another way of looking at this passage is that because we are born of God and have His seed in us, we are innate in our spirit to sin no more. However, because we live in this world, we struggle with the temptations and deceptions of this world, and old habits of our previous condition. We indeed become aware of sin and the way of righteousness, but we need to be determined to live and walk in the light, to do what is right by God (v. 10).

- Verse 9 read with verse 10 probably encourages us that we do need to exercise our positions as children of God to follow Christ, to love as He loved, to serve as He served, to hate sin and darkness as He does. We literally clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14); and we love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. The test of who the true children of God are can be identified as those who obey, those who love and those who hope (Rev Jeremy Ong). What are some of the things you might have to change in your life to truly reflect that you are a true child of God?

- a. Test of obedience – sin is detestable to God do you treat sin as God does? Can we, as a child of God, obey God and keep on sinning? (v.4, 6, 9)
- b. Test of love – do we love our brothers and sisters? (v.10 and 1 John 2:15-16)
- c. Test of hope – are we a people of hope? Where does our hope lie? Is it entirely in God and His kingdom to come? (v.3)

Can we be a people of obedience, love and hope?

Church theme 2021:

Jesus, Our Light In The Darkness;
A Lamp In Every Home

To live in the light is:

- to obey God with regard to sin
- to love our brothers and sisters
- to hope in the midst of darkness holding to Jesus as our light, and a lamp in our home

Further Questions for Discussion

(Optional question for discussion if time permits. Do allocate adequate time for prayer and fellowship.)

5. *If You Have Time ...*

How does John's definition of sin (3:4) compare with some of the viewpoints people have today?

- John did not give a precise definition of sin, but equated the act of sinning as an act of lawlessness.

- It could be suggested that for many Christians, sin itself is understated, in that it is not taken seriously. In the age of "grace", we might minimise the sin for the sake of loving the sinner. In our haste to forgive and seek forgiveness, we could also reduce the seriousness of sin.

- Taking the definition of sin to be “missing the mark” of God’s righteousness, or departing from what is right, another perspective that some Christians might take is that it is impossible to meet and consequently, may treat it more as an aspiration rather than a serious commitment.
- This may be why John equates the act of sin as lawlessness, because it is seen as an act of rebellion against God’s revealed will and a deliberate violation of His holy law.
- As children of God, we need to acknowledge our position as children of God and to live a life that is in Christ, that is walking and living in the light.

Suggestions for Prayer

1. We could pray for:

- a. Ourselves: Are you “born of God”? If you are not, or are not sure, perhaps now is the time to invite Jesus into your life. Confess your sins, accept what Jesus has done for you on the cross, believe that He is risen from the dead and invite Him into your life.
Perhaps you have invited Jesus into your life, but have not fully committed to living right by God. You have knowingly or unknowingly allowed various “idols” to displace God as the center of your life. You have lived primarily for yourself and have subtly entertained sin in your life. Confess your sins, for God will forgive you. Then accept His forgiveness, accept His affirmation that you are His child, commit to doing what is right by God, and look to God to empower you in living your life for Him and Him alone.
- b. Others: Would you take this opportunity to pray for someone who might need to hear this message, pray for them, pray for an opportunity to share the link to the sermon recording from our website
<<http://www.brmc.org.sg/category/resources/sermons>>.
Be ready and open to share and discuss this passage with them. Pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit and boldness and courage.