

Who's Your Father?

1 John 3:4-10

We live in a confused, post-modern world.

Many want us to believe that issues of truth are relative & not absolute.

They work hard to leave us with the impression that there are many ways to God, that everyone has to take their own path, & that as long as we are people of faith, we will make it, regardless of whether or not our faith is in the right object.

1 John 3:4-10 contradicts such post-modern thinking.

Each person belongs to one of two families. A person is either a child of God by trusting Christ or a child of the devil.

People who are children of God, who have trusted in Christ & are in fellowship with Him, live differently. We either are children of God, or we are not.

We've seen John's thought that to enjoy fellowship with a holy God, we must be holy!

It's impossible to continue practicing sin & at the same time continue in fellowship with God.

John has presented **4 evidences** that we're in fellowship with God:

1. Obeying His commands
2. Loving one another
3. Not loving the world
4. Rejecting false teachers

In 1 John 2:28-3:10, John concludes with an exhortation to apply this truth in our daily lives and demonstrate holiness.

EXHORTATION FOR US TO REFLECT GOD'S HOLINESS (2:28-3:10)

The key to a holy life is abiding in Christ (2:28a)

Apart from abiding in Christ, it's impossible to live in a way that pleases God and produces the fruit He desires.

As a branch draws from the vine all it needs for life & fruit production, so we must draw from Christ what we need to live a holy life.

When we abide, we'll be ready for Jesus to come (2:28-3:3)

We'll be confident & unashamed

We'll be like Him

We're not yet fully like Jesus. God hasn't finished His work in us.

What God has started, He'll complete. When Jesus appears, we'll see Him as He is and be completely transformed to be like Him -His character will be totally developed in us.

Our hope for the future motivates us to commit ourselves to purity now

Since God's plan is for us to be made to be like Christ that should motivate us to abide in Him and live more like Him now.

In 1 John 3:4-10, John underscores how significant the issue of sin is & explains what its characteristic presence or absence in our lives indicates about us.

“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.”

God’s children won’t practice sin (3:4-6):

John addresses the seriousness of sin by referring to those who habitually sin as doing lawlessness.

John uses the term lawlessness to capture the rebellion & disregard for God’s authority in the person who practices sin.

God’s children will not be characterized by lawlessness. Why not?

Because of what Jesus did and who He is (3:4-5).

Jesus came to take away sin

He came to earth, was crucified, & rose again, to remove not only the guilt & punishment, but the actual sins.

The presence of sin won’t be completely removed from our lives until Jesus appears again, but Christ’s purpose is that the process of removing sin’s presence should be happening now.

Jesus is without sin.

He is pure, spotless, & perfect. In Him there is no darkness at all. No act or attitude of sin can be attributed to Him. God’s children will be committed to bearing the family likeness. We’ll desire to be without sin as Jesus is without sin.

God's children will live in a way that reflects Christ's person & work.

How is it that the child of God is able not to habitually sin?

God's children are able not to practice sin:

By abiding in Christ (3:6)

People characterized by abiding in Christ won't continually sin (3:6a)

"No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning."

Many Christians struggle with this passage. They say,

"If no one who abides in Christ keeps on sinning, where does that leave me? I know I sin and at times struggle with sinful habits. Does this mean I am not really one of God's children?"

When John writes that *"no one who lives in him keeps on sinning,"* he doesn't mean that Christians never sin again, but rather that sin does not characterize the life of the one abiding in Christ.

How could those who are abiding in the Sinless One who came to take away sin have sin be the characteristic of their lives?

They can't. It's impossible!

John says emphatically, *"no one who lives (abides) in Him keeps on sinning."*

Don't forget the rest of what John has said: *We're deceiving ourselves if we claim to be without sin.*

John acknowledges that as believers, we will sin (2:1).

When we sin, God has provided a way to restore fellowship (1:9).

People characterized by sin have never seen or known Christ (3:6b)

If our life is marked by habitual sin, that person doesn't know Jesus—he or she is not a child of God. Though we've considered what John means when he says, *"No one who lives in him keeps on sinning,"* we still haven't answered all the questions we struggle with from this passage.

Many of us face this dilemma: "How frequently does sin need to be before it's considered characteristic sin?"

There've been occasions in our life when we've wrestled with patterns of seemingly habitual sin.

At such times, though we're slow to say it, we wonder if we're really saved.

Some things to consider when we find ourselves in such a dilemma:

What does it mean to say that sin characterizes a person's life.

Yes, we might have told a lie or lied several times that we know of, but are we characterized as being a liar?

We might have gossiped, but are we characterized as a gossip?

When people consider our life, do they label us by a sin or do they think of us as a child of God?

When we have an ongoing struggle with sin. Are we concerned about it & desirous of removing it? Are we miserable?

Have we discovered that the way to joy is to confess our sin with a view toward having our fellowship with God restored?

God's children face this when we're in sin.

There are times when we slip into flesh mode, trying to live a holy life in our own strength. The result will be a struggle with sin. Even so, this struggle with sin will not characterize our life.

In 1 John 3:7, John warns, *“Don’t let anyone lead you astray.”* Apparently, there were false teachers saying that a person can be right with God and live like the devil.

1 John 3:7-10 *“Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

The characteristic pattern of our conduct reveals to which of two groups of children we belong

People characterized by righteousness have been born of God. People characterized by sinful deeds have not been born of God.

There are 2 kinds of children. We are wise to examine the character of our life and make sure it demonstrates that we’re God’s children.

God’s children:

Characteristically do what is righteous just as their

Father is righteous (3:7)

“He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.”
 God’s children make a habit of doing what is righteous, reflecting their relationship to their Heavenly Father who is righteous.

They don’t habitually practice sin because God’s seed abides in them (3:9a)

“No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him.”

God’s seed passes on His characteristics to us

No matter how much my children might want to, there’s no way they’ll be able to change some of the characteristics I’ve passed down to them

In a similar way, God’s character will be evident in His children as He has passed down His characteristics to us—His seed remains in us.

The child partakes of the nature of His parent. As God’s children, we partake of the nature of God and as the result will not be characterized by sin.

Cannot habitually practice sin because they have been born of God (3:9b)

“He can’t go on sinning, because he’s been born of God.”

It’s impossible for a person who has genuinely trusted Christ & been born of God will sin as the continual, unbroken pattern of his or her life.

When we’re born of God by trusting Jesus, God transforms our lives, making us new creatures.

The work of God in making us new will be evident in our lives.

The Devil's children:

Characteristically do what is sinful just like their father (3:8a, 10a)

"He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning."

Just as God's children reflect God's character by how they live, the devil's children will reflect the devil's character.

Like their father, the devil's children live in a pattern of habitual sin, showing disregard for God, His character, & His Word as the characteristic of their lives.

Oppose Christ's work, living for what He came to destroy (3:8b)

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

Jesus came to earth to break the controlling power of the devil who is inciting men to rebel against God.

Characteristically don't love their brothers (3:10b)

3:10 is a transition verse; John begins to address the 2nd characteristic that will be evident in a child of God in fellowship with God.

God is love; people in fellowship with God will be characterized by love.

John here describes the characteristic failure to love as

one of the specific areas in which those who are not children of God reveal it.

God is love; His children will be characterized by the same characteristic of their Father.

The devil's children are characterized by the opposite –they are not characterized by love!

There are 2 kinds of children. Some are characterized by righteousness, who have been born of God. They are God's children.

Some are characterized by sin, who have not been born of God. They are the devil's children.

Practical implications?

Whose child am I?

Does our life reflect the character of our Father?

GOD IS LIGHT, in Him is no darkness!

To enjoy fellowship with our Father, we must be like Him!

Can people see the family likeness in US?

Abide in Christ to remain in and enjoy fellowship with God.