

Whose Child Are You?

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[0:00] I have a question for you. Have you ever doubted your faith? Have you ever wondered if you're truly saved?! If you're in true fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

! You know, sometimes as Christians we wonder and we question whether we are believers.

Sometimes others doubt whether we are Christians.

They wonder and they question. And you know, in fact, unfortunately churches even set up a list of hurdles to jump through to determine if someone is truly saved.

The sad thing is that often these lists and hurdles that the church has set up are man-made. And it depends on the flavor and the preferences of that church.

The list varies depending on that. But there are only two kinds of people in the world from God's perspective. Those who are of God and those who are of the devil.

[1:10] And the thing John would have us know from these verses in 1 John this morning is that it's how we know we are of God.

That's what he wants us to know. That's what he wants us to know in these verses. So have you had the question put to you? Or do you ask yourself, how do I know if I'm a real Christian?

Now, how we answer the question shows that we understand what a Christian is. First and foremost.

And John helps us and gives us a way of answering that question in a true way. And John helps us then by telling us in this letter what a Christian is.

And then he gives us all the wonderful privileges that comes with being a child of God. He wants us to know the mark of a Christian. And he wants us to enjoy the benefits of being a Christian.

[2:12] John shows us in this passage, 1 John, from verse 28 to chapter 3, verse 10.

It can be found in your pre-bible on page 1211. So I encourage you to open along as we dive in.

John shows us in these verses that a Christian is a child of God.

That is it. He again uses this favorite phrase of his in addressing us in verse 28. He says, little children, or dear children.

And I think John used this phrase in a two-fold way. By reason of his age. He's an old man at this point. And by reason of the fact that he's an apostle.

Probably the last living apostle at this point already. He is a father to the saints. That he's writing to. But I think even more true than that.

[3:15] Is that John is pointing beyond himself. He might be a father figure to them. And to us. But he wants us to see that their true father is God.

So then verse 29 he says, A true Christian is one who has been born of God. What John is saying here echoes his gospel.

In John chapter 3. The gospel of John. Remember when Jesus told Nicodemus. That to enter God's kingdom. One must be born again. And Jesus.

As Nicodemus is wondering. What in the world does that mean? Jesus says it's not a birth of the flesh. But a birth of the spirit. And it's clear to us.

Right? That to be a Christian is not something one becomes. From natural descent. You are not a Christian. Because your dad is a Christian. Because your grandparents are Christians.

[4:17] Or you might be because of that. Because they've shown you. And they've preached the gospel to you. And then you've come to know Jesus. But it's not automatically by genetics. It's not cultural either.

You're not a Christian. There's no such thing really. In reality as cultural Christians. You know. You know what a cultural Christian is. It's celebrate the Christian holidays.

And maybe go to church at Christmas and Easter. That's not what makes you a Christian. Conversely. You're not a Christian just because you go to church every Sunday. You're not a Christian just because you go to confession. Regularly. Or prayer meetings. Depending on your denomination. You're not a Christian. Because you come regularly to the table of the Lord.

To partake of his body and blood. I hope that when you come. It's because you are a Christian. So you're not eating the body and blood to damnation. To your own damnation. But that's not what makes you a Christian.

[5 : 24] Your regular attendance. Any of those things in the church. Of course. I want to quickly add. That if you neglect gathering. With the people of God.

If you forsake gathering with the people of God. In obedience of God's command. To worship him. If fellowship with God. Is not a priority for you.

It might mean you're not a Christian. At the very least. There's a broken relationship there. But. None of those things.

Of what you do. Makes you a Christian. Note that John sets. Only one marker for us. Here. In these verses. He says to us. Christians.

Christians are. Children. Of God. That's what makes you a Christian. But how is that done? Let's look in John. Chapter 1. Verse 12 to 13.

[6 : 19] John writes. Same John. The author of this epistle. Is right in his gospel. He says. This is our. But to all who did receive him. He gave them the right.

To be children of God. To those who believe. In his name. Who were born. Not of natural descent. Or of the will of the flesh. Or of the will of man. But born of God. So every real Christian. Is someone who has been born.

Of God. Into God's family. By supernatural birth. From heaven. So I hope you won't take this for granted.

Because I'm afraid there are many Nicodemuses. Still in the church today. What do I mean by that? You know. That means they're very religious. They're evil leaders.

[7 : 18] And teachers. Like Nicodemus was. Yet they do not know the fundamental mark. Of a true Christian. Remember when Jesus was telling him. And Nicodemus was like.

I don't. Because Nicodemus says. How do I get into God's kingdom? He didn't know. Jesus has to say. Are you a teacher in Israel? Yet you do not know this. This is the fundamental truth.

Brothers and sisters. To be a Christian. Is to be a child of God. So there you have it. If anyone asks. Are you a real Christian? If you've been born of water.

And the spirit. You can say to that person. Yes. I am. I am a Christian. I am a new man. I'm a new woman. I'm a new boy or girl. I'm a new creature.

The old man has died with Christ. And I've been raised with him. In newness of life. And John then goes on. If you are indeed a child of God.

[8 : 16] You will bear the family trait. Look there in verse 29. If you know that he is righteous. You may be sure that everyone. Who practices righteousness.

Has been born of him. You get to a. A sudden age. You know. And you realize. Yes. It's inescapable.

No matter how hard you try. You find yourself saying something. The exact same way your father did. You start to exhibit.

The same tendencies. As your mother. Even if you're sworn. I'm never going to be like that. And it shocks you.

Or you go back to your hometown. And someone easily recognizes you. Oh. I know you. You must be. So and so's daughter. Or you look just like your daddy.

[9 : 16] Well these things happen. In natural family relations. Don't they? And while some of the traits that we get. From our parents. And from our families. Are not so. So good. Because of human sinfulness.

And brokenness. It is not so. In the family of God. Here. John tells us. He is righteous. Altogether perfect.

Altogether good. So we don't ever have to recoil in horror. When we find that we are acting like him. Rather we rejoice.

When we find that we are starting to exhibit. And bear the family trait. We rejoice because we know we bear. Royal noble traits.

We rejoice because we know we were traitors. Rebels. Discerning death. But we have been adopted. Into his royal family. That's why.

[10:23] John says. Then in chapter 3 verse 1. Incredulously. See what kind of love. The father has given to us. That we should be called children of God.

And so we are. Now do you ever pause. And marvel. At the grace of God. By which you have been redeemed. To you.

John is inviting us to do that here. What have you done. To be a son or daughter. In God's household. And if your answer is.

Let me give you a list of my accomplishments. Let me give you a list of all my service. To earn my place. In God's family. If that's your answer. Might I suggest that you've got it all wrong.

Might I suggest that you might be farther away from his love. Than you think. If that is your thinking. Rather. The son of God's children.

[11:27] Is one of wondrous amazement. That they should be found numbered. Among the elect. Because you recognize it. It's all love. Love divine.

Shown to those who are loveless. It's the son of those who are adopted into God's family. It's best put in the words of this 17th century hymn. My son is love unknown.

My savior's love to me. Love to the loveless shown. That they my lovely be. Oh who am I. That for my sake.

The Lord should take frail flesh. And die. That's our son. When we marvel. When we marvel. We say see what kind of love the father has given to us.

That we should be called. Children of God. And so are we. It's not because you've done anything. It's not because you've rendered any service.

[12:29] It's not because of any faithfulness. Inherent to you. It's because God has shown love. To you when you were loveless. That's why John exclaimed here.

Behold. See. Look. What kind of love the father has given. To you. To us. He include himself there. He says that we.

Should be called children of God. For by grace you've been saved through faith. It is not of your own doing. It is the gift of God. It's been given to you.

It's a gift of matchless love. And you've got no room for boasting. You've got no room for boasting. So you can rejoice at this love.

It's almost like the language that John is using here. It's like. See what kind of love. The language there says. What country is this kind of love? It's unknown.

[13:26] It's unimaginable. We've never seen such love before. And you have been saved. If you're a child of God.

You've received the gift. And you're part of his family. Yes. Your past may have been ugly. You may have been a scoundrel.

You may have been a degenerate. You may have deserved. And still deserve God's wrath. Deserve judgment.

But. John says to us. You've been shown mercy. That's why you're a child of God. You've been shown mercy. You've been given grace.

For God so loved. God so loved you. That he sent his only begotten son. Into our world. To deliver you from death.

[14:22] Into life. Loveless though you may be. Loveless though you may feel that you are. John says here.

He's fashioned you. Into a lovely specimen. He is fashioning you. Into a lovely specimen. For his glory. You are a child of God.

Pause and marvel. And rejoice at that very fact. Now how do you know. How do you know. This. That you are a child of God. Well we said it. You bear family traits. Just like in an earthly relationship. You start to bear family traits. People will be able to know. Oh yes. That's your dad. Yeah yeah. That's your mom. You must be from that family. Same thing in the family of God. You start to bear family traits. And what are those traits?

[15:17] What are those family traits? You start to practice righteousness. In opposition to those who practice lawlessness. Look at those two divergent things that John is showing us here.

There are two kinds of people. John makes this. And then John goes on to make a series of assertions. He contrasts those who are children of God. Against those who are not. Again. Remember that John has only two categories. Ultimately. Those who are children of God. They practice righteousness. And those who are children of the devil. They practice sinning. Now. As you read this through those passages. If you listen as they were read. If you're like me. Those passages are hard to read. Because our English translation is attempted to help us. By stressing that John is not talking about. Sinless perfection. Right. We know that John is not talking about. Sinless perfection. [16:18] Here. After all. We have to remember what John says. Earlier in his letter. In John chapter 1 verse 8. If we claim that we have not sinned.

We deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us. So. It's not just that you have to be. Sinless and perfect. That John is talking about here. That's not what he has in mind. It is those who practice sinning. That's what he has in mind. What he means by that. Is those who engage in ongoing sin. But. But even in that reading. That's not. Much of a comfort. At least it's not much of a comfort to me. Ongoing sin. Habitual sin. We have to be honest with ourselves. We have. All of us. To one varying degree or the other. Are still. Saved. Sinners. So. [17:16] So. So. How much of a comfort is it to say. Those who practice sin. Are children of the devil. What is John.

What is John getting at here. I want us to see that John is using a different word. Here. To describe those. Those who. He describes as. Those who are of the devil. It is not just a sin. That they commit. That he has in mind. You know. We all. Still sin. We all. Still. All of us. Without exception. Fall short. Of God's standards. But that's not what John has in mind here. He's not talking about people who commit sin. Who fall short. Short of God's standards. Who stumble. Rather. What he has in mind is. The disposition of our heart. The disposition of our heart. That rejects God's law. All together. The word John uses. [18:13] For lawlessness. And he uses it to describe. Those who are of the devil. And he uses it to describe the devil himself. The word there in the Greek is. Onomia. It means. Lawless.

Without law. Here's an example that might help us. Imagine. A child. Who struggles. With stealing the cookie. From the cookie jar. Now this child. Has a gut. Has got a terrible sweet tooth. And he's constantly putting his finger. In. And taking the cookie. When he shouldn't. And he knows he shouldn't. And he hates. That he can't stop. Because he knows. He knows. That it's against his dad and mom's. Wishes. It's against his dad and mom's rules. And so he's struggling. But sometimes he still finds himself. Dipping his finger in there. And taking the cookie. He's pursuing righteousness. [19:10] This child. Because in his sorrow. He sorrows over his sin. He has. He's sorrow. Over. He's sorrow. He's sorrowful over breaking.

His parents. Rules. He desires to be free. From his addiction to the cookies. And he's seeking mercy. And he's persistently. Falling on the mercy of his parents. Asking for forgiveness. Confessing his sins. That's one child. Now contracts that child. With this. With his brother. Who doesn't have a sweet tooth. And has no problem. With stealing the cookie from the cookie jar. It's not a temptation to him. But he doesn't think. His parents should have any right. To tell him what he can or can't do. Who do these parents think they are. To set up rules. About what I can do. [20:09] And when I can eat. Or when I cannot eat. Or what I can eat. Or what I cannot eat. He doesn't recognize. The law. Or the authority.

Of his parents at all. He will do as he please. In fact. Anytime he wants. Even though he doesn't really have an addiction. To the cookie. It's not much of a temptation. But in fact. Anytime he wants a cookie. He goes in and takes it. Although he's not really tempted. But he has. He reserves the right to do that. And he has no remorse.

Or sorrow. At going against. His parents wishes. Now. John wants us to see. That this other child. The second child. Who rarely.

Goes in the cookie jar to take. But doesn't. Doesn't. Doesn't. By any means. Think his parents. Have any authority over him. This other child. Is the lawless one.

[21:04] He's the one. Who practices lawlessness. Whereas the first child. Is the child of God. He's sorrows over sin. He's convicted. He's striving.

He's pursuing righteousness. Even though he stumbles. And falls. Whereas the second child. In his rejection of God's law.

He is of the devil. John says. And. Why is he of the devil? Because the devil. Right from the beginning. Has rebelled against God's rule. He also lives.

As if God doesn't exist. As if God doesn't have authority. So this is the difference. This is the difference. Between the two camps.

This is the difference. Between those who are practicing righteousness. And I love the way. It does use that word. Practicing righteousness. Pursuing righteousness. And pursuing God. And those who are of the devil.

[22:01] Will rebel. In their lawlessness. John then tells us. Don't be deceived. Again. The deception comes. Right. From those who claim to be in fellowship.

With God. But reject his rule. They say. Oh yeah. We know God. We love God. We follow God. But the plout is law. They reject outright. His revealed will. John tells us.

Such peoples are not Christians. Christians. Because the true child of God. Hears the father's voice. Yearns to listen to the father's voice. Longs to obey.

Sorrows over his disobedience. And then comes. And falls in the mercy of his father. Knowing that he's forgiven. That's a true child. Of God.

[23:00] And there is comfort. I hope that what you're hearing. From John's. From these verses. Is confidence. And assurance.

For you. Dear saints. Because there is comfort. For the children of God. In this fallen world. There is comfort for you. Even as you struggle with sin.

John says to us. In verse 5. You know that he appeared. Who is he that appeared? Jesus Christ. He appeared. To do what? To take away sins.

And in him. There is no sin. And again he says in verse 8. The reason the son of God appeared. Was to destroy. The works of the devil.

John wants us to know. That Christ. Our elder brother. The beloved of God. Through whom. We are loved. He has appeared.

[23:58] It. And he has conquered sin and death. He wants us to know that. He wants us to know that. He appeared for this very purpose. So if you are a child of God.

While you may still struggle. With sin. John will have you know. That in Christ. You've been set free. From the penalty of that sin. Because he's borne it all upon himself.

Now this isn't a license to sin as you please. Because in fact. You've been freed. Not only from the penalty of sin. But John would have you know. That you've also been freed.

From the power of sin. So that. Sin has no more power over you. So that in the power of the Holy Spirit. You can now pursue righteousness.

So. As you struggle with that habitual sin. That besetting sin. Hear the assurance. From God's word. You have been freed from it.

[24:59] You're no longer a slave to it. In the power of the Spirit. You have the means. To conquer. And to walk. In victory.

So abide. That's why he says to you. Abide in Christ. That's how you walk in victory. And here's the wonder. Of it.

Here's the wonder. Ultimately. That even as you abide. And you continue to pursue righteousness. John tells us. He is at work.

On you. And in you. He's not done with you. Look there in verse 2 of chapter 3. Beloved. We are God's children now.

That's what he says. We are God's children now. And what we will be. Has not yet appeared. But we know that when he appears. We shall be like him.

[25:58] Because we shall see him. As he is. That's the wondrous news. The wondrous news. It's not just that God. It's not just that God's love. Has delivered you from death.

And sin. And brought you to new life. With God. The wondrous news. Is that as you bear the family trait. As you pursue. And practice righteousness.

In the power of the Holy Spirit. As the word of God. Sanctifies you. As you walk in Christ. In freedom from the bondage of sin.

As all of that happens. You are no longer marked by sin. You are marked by Christ.

You are marked by your position in Christ. And you are marked by. With the hope. Of what will happen. To open the future expectation.

[26 : 59] What will be. As not yet appeared. John tells us. But we know. That when he appears.

We shall be like him. Do you know that? Brothers and sisters. You will be like him. That's our hope. That's.

What you are destined for. If you are in Christ. If you are a child of God. And what cannot describe. The beauty. And the perfection.

That is our destiny. As children of God. We will be like him. But here is the promise of God. At his coming.

When we see him first to face. As he presents us. Before his father. He will present us. Holy. And blameless. Covered in his righteousness. Freed from this.

[27 : 55] Falling. Carnal body of sin. Instead. We will have. Resurrection bodies. That's what he means. To be like him. To be.

Have. The resurrection body. That he has. To be freed from this. Mortal coil. To be given. Spiritual bodies.

And this is how you know. You are a child of God. As a child of God. You display the family traits. And you look forward. To that day.

When God will. Indeed glorify you. And finish the work. He has already started. And continuing in you. And I want us to bring us back to verse one. Bring us back to what John says.

Here. See what kind of love the father has given to us. That we should be called children of God. And so we are. The reason why the world does not know us.

[28 : 56] Is that it did not know him. Remember. Remember. That likeness. Is proof. Of relationship. As you bear the likeness.

Of your father in heaven. You are proving that you are. Hoving. And in him. And the world didn't accept him. The world didn't. The world rejects him. So you should expect.

That the world will not know you. Not that they don't know you. But they will reject you. They will refuse. To acknowledge you. But we are often tempted.

This is. This is. This is. This is. The thing that happens to all of us. We are often tempted to measure. God's love. By the good things in our lives. You might say.

My life is good. My kids are good. I am healthy. So God must be pleased with me. And we think that when those things are not present.

[29 : 51] When my life is not so good. When I am not so healthy. When my kids are not so healthy. When there is trouble. That must mean then that God is.

Not happy. With me. That God does not love me. Look there in verse 1. What John points us to. Is not the things in our life.

He wants us to see who we are. That is how we know God's love for us. Because we have been called into his family. We are his children.

The Bible tells us. The measure by which you know the love of God. Is not by. When all things are smooth. And the way is paved.

There is no trouble. In your life. We measure the love of the Father. The Bible wants us to know. John wants us to know.

[30 : 49] In the face of Jesus Christ. It is him who loved us. And gave himself up for us. As a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. We measure God's love for us.

By looking at the cross of Jesus Christ. There. He accomplished. The work. Of salvation.

He atoned for your sin. He conquered sin and death. There. Sin has been conquered. Death has been defeated. And you have been given new life.

So if you ever wonder. Even when you are facing hardship. When you are doubting. Does God love me? Look. In the face of Jesus Christ. Look to the cross.

That is the perfect. Perfect. Semblance of God's love for you. So I hope that when you doubt. The Father's love for you.

[31 : 46] That you will look to the cross. That you will recognize that there. Your sin has been conquered. And you may have troubles in this world. You will have troubles in this world.

There will be sickness. There will be loss. There will be even persecution. But I hope that John's words here.

Will ring true in your ears. And in your hearts. That you will cling to Christ. Because in him. You have all that you need. Because in him.

You have been assured. That when he appears. You will be made like him. So out of love. And gratitude. Out of an overflowing awareness.

That you are Christ's holy forever. And you are no longer of this world. But. When you do struggle. Because you are a child of God. And you know that Christ loved you. When you do struggle with sin.

[32 : 44] Or when trouble comes. Or persecution comes. When there is sickness. When there is turmoil. Where do you go? You go to your father. You ask him for help. When there is struggle.

With the flesh. You ask him for help. To bear the family resemblance. More fully. You ask. In the power of the Holy Spirit.

Knowing. That you are destined. For glorious expectation. Your destiny is that day. When he will appear.

When you will be like him. Amen.