

Confidence We are God's Children

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Date: 14 August 2022

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[0 : 00] Can we start with a game? Let's start with a game. Can you guess by looking on the screen, please?

Can you guess on the screen which one of these kids is mine? Can you guess just by looking? It's a trick question.

They're all mine, aren't they? And Rachel's. It's not that we have nine... Sorry. It's not that we have nine children.

Rachel and I are grateful. It's three children times three equals nine. Couldn't you tell that they're mine by how sweet they look? Wasn't the cuteness a dead giveaway that they're Vijay and Rachel's kids?

You see, it's not hard, is it, to find little kids cute? But eventually they'll grow up to have this nose. And this receding hairline. This short temper.

[1 : 00] And then they'll need your prayers. Perhaps... What about you? What feature was passed down in your family? Was it something good like your mother's eyes?

Or your dad's height? Maybe it was a sense of humour or a strong work ethic. Sometimes we are passed down things that aren't so good. So, did you inherit your mother's hips?

Her stubbornness? Perhaps you inherited your dad's early baldness or his quick fuse and short temper. Our verses today, they're full of family language.

But in particular, they're about sharing the family likeness. On the screen, verse 10 says, This is how we know who the children of God are and who are the children of the devil.

Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother or sister. It's very strong, isn't it? But it's very clear. There are children of God. They do what is right, just like their dad.

[2 : 01] There are children of the devil. They don't do what is right, just like their dad. It's the same idea as the game we played with my kids. You can tell whose child someone is. You just need to look at who their parents are.

You can take that down now. Thank you. Throughout 1 John, this letter, there's a series of tests. They're tests to show whose family we belong to. You see, in 1 John's time, the Christians had begun doubting their place with God.

They'd been led astray by false teaching that was spreading lies. And so John says, all right then, here are some tests to show whose family traits you resemble so you can have confidence.

Very broadly, there are three tests. There's the sin test, the love test, and the belief test. Sin, love, belief. The false teachers, the lies, they claim to know God but deny that they are sinners.

They fail the sin test. They claim to be in the light, all the while hating brothers and sisters in Christ. They claim to have the Father but deny that his son is the Christ.

[3 : 09] They fail the belief test. Sin, love, belief. These tests are designed to expose who is who, whose family a person belongs to. For false teachers, these tests are a worry.

But for us, they're here for our confidence. Today, we'll circle back to the sin test. I'm saying test, but really, it's more like evidence.

And so, if you were on trial for being a Christian, what evidence could the prosecution present to convict you? They might present your record of church attendance.

Maybe they'll get your baptism certificate. Perhaps they get their hands on your bank statements and they can see direct debits going to Holy Trinity. Maybe they get a hold of our YouTube live stream and once a month they can see you up the front in church, you know, doing a reading or doing a Bible, doing the prayers.

John thinks the best evidence that you're God's child is verse 29. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

[4 : 16] Righteousness here, it's just the opposite of sin. It's pretty simple. In 1 John, righteousness is about loving your brother and sister. In other words, behaving just like Jesus.

Are you your father's child? You must be. I can see your big ears and your pointy chin. Are you God's child? You must be. I can tell by your righteous behavior.

You always try to do what is right. And bearing God's family resemblance is really important because one day there will be a great family reunion.

Look at verse 28. And now, dear children, continue in him so that when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

You see, the end of the world is the return of your big brother, Jesus. We can be confident, unashamed before him because we made a lifelong habit of practicing righteousness just like him.

[5 : 18] If you're bearing the family likeness, it's evidence of whose child you are. You can be confident that you're in God's family. The world, it might not think we're that special.

Christians don't look that impressive. And that's okay. They didn't think Jesus was that impressive either. Look at verse 2. Chapter 3, verse 2. This verse talks about a now and a not yet.

Now, we are the children of God. The Holy Spirit is like a seed within us planting a little Jesus tree. But when Christ appears, that's all it will take for a fully mature tree to spring forth.

And then we will be like him. You see, the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, he speaks about God's family in terms of adoption. He says, we're fellow heirs with Jesus, legally inheriting everything Jesus owns.

But John goes much further than adoption. Because he says, we won't just be with Jesus, alongside Jesus. We will be like Jesus.

[6 : 40] Our Old Testament reading, that was the classic from Genesis 1. That we're made in the image of God. But did you know that the Spirit is gradually turning us into the image of God?

Do you know that the Spirit is gradually making us into the image of the Son? And the reason why is so people like us can take our place in the family. Born of the Father, transformed by the Spirit into the likeness of the Son.

It's so kind, isn't it, of God? To take sinful people like us, to take his enemies, to forgive them and wash them up, and bring them into his family.

Chapter 3 says, see what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are. It's a statement of confidence.

You see, there are all sorts of family traits passed down to all of us, by all our ancestors. They're different in each family. But in Genesis, the one family trait passed down, by our greatest grandfather Adam, was that we sin, and then we die.

[7 : 48] But when Christ appears, we will finally shed off everything that is sinful and dying, and we will be like him, and wrapped up in the family reunion.

And if that sounds exciting to you, then verse 3, you will purify yourself now, just as he is pure. The logic is very simple. You look forward to future things, by preparing for them today.

Purity, righteousness, it's the same idea. We show our excitement now, of Christ's future appearing, by practicing to be like him today.

It's very simple. Years ago, when I was growing up, it was all the rage for young Christians, to wear these red rubber straps. And on the strap, it would say, WWJD.

You know what that stands for? What would Jesus do? The idea is for the young Christian, who gets in a bit of a pickle, he's not sure what to do, he looks down, ah, what would Jesus do?

[8 : 51] And then, that helps with their decision making. The more our mindset, is what would Jesus do, the more evidence, the more confidence, of whose family we belong to.

The false teachers, they deny that Jesus is the Christ. Well, they will be humiliated. One day, when he comes again in glory, to judge the living and the dead, they will be cosmically excluded, because it's Jesus' kingdom, that will have no end, but not us.

Because every day, now, until he arrives, we try to be like him. Less like Vijay, more like Jesus. That way, verse 28, we will be confident, and unashamed before him, at his coming.

Here's the test. Are you exhausted, by your own sin? Do you work hard, at loving brothers and sisters in Christ? If you saw Jesus, would you run towards him, or shrink away from him?

Does heaven with Jesus, sound exciting, or dull? Your answers to these questions, are evidence, of whose family you belong to. They give you confidence, that you bear the likeness, and it really matters, because the final event, in God's diary, is a huge family reunion, where your big brother, Jesus, will come, to collect you, and only one family, is hoping, for this reunion.

[10:21] The devil dreads it, the world denies it, the false teachers disregard it, but we hope for it. And the rest of the verses today, just hammer in the idea, of how important it is, that we bear the likeness.

So verse 4 to 6, verse 8 to 9, they're a repeated sort of flow. I put them on your handout, as a table, but they're on the screen, please, Paul, thank you.

Again, these verses are, very strong in their language, very black and white. Look at the, the bit in white at the top, I hope you can read that, I hope the font is large enough.

In white, if you're a sinner, you're a criminal, that's what it says, you break the law. On the other side, the one who does what is sinful, is of the devil, it's very strong.

Watch more, what's more, in the orange, no one who lives in Jesus, keeps on sinning. Wow. The other one in verse 9, in orange, no one who's born of God, will continue to sin.

[11:27] And then in the yellow, on the bottom right, they cannot go on sinning. It's very strong. These, this table here, it seems to evaporate, all the confidence we had, about two seconds ago, because I know myself, and I know, in the orange, that I will keep on sinning.

And I know, in the yellow, on the bottom right, that I will go on sinning. These verses are very strong, but I think what John is doing, is exaggerating.

He's using hyperbole, you know, overstating things, to emphasize his points. He doesn't mean, that Christians will never sin, or that it's impossible to sin, but rather, how out of place it is, for those who are born of God.

You cannot sin, you won't keep on sinning, it's just not what this family is about. It's, um, exaggeration, like hyperbole, just to get the point across.

What's more, can you see in the green there, the green verses, Jesus appeared the first time, so that he, that he might take away our sins. Um, he appeared the first time, to destroy, the devil's work.

[12:39] To have a casual approach to sin, like the rest of Melbourne, doesn't just fly in the face, of the family likeness, it undermines the family business, of taking away sin, destroying sin.

That's why Jesus came. Um, here are some illustrations, to help you think about it. When my mother used to take, my brothers and I out, in public, my mum was very, um, big, that we would behave well in public.

You know, is that probably the same for you? Um, obviously my brothers and I, misbehaved in public, obviously. Um, it's not that it was impossible, but it's just that my mum was so strict about it, uh, because it's what, uh, her family was about.

Rachel and I, we have a similar thing, um, with our kids, when it comes to telling the truth. Uh, we say to our kids, we say, look, I don't, I don't mind what you've done, just tell me the truth.

And, you know, I hope that, I hope that that's true, we really don't mind what they do. But as long as you tell the truth, obviously our kids will tell a fib, from time to time. And when they do, they get a smack.

[13:45] Um, because it's just not what our family is about. Did you have non-negotiables in your family growing up? I'm sure you must have. Um, that's what this passage is getting at.

Let me illustrate this in another way. Uh, around churches, all churches, there are no smoking signs. I don't know why, because in a hundred years, has anyone ever lit up a cigarette in a church? It's not that it's physically impossible. See, see, it's not impossible to smoke in church, is it? So I can take a match here like this.

I can take my cigarette here, like this. And I can just, you talk amongst yourselves. Don't mind me. Just a bit of smoking here. How's your weekend? It's actually burning. I better, there you go. It's in my drink of water.

[14:46] I really hope that doesn't set off the smoke alarms. Um, good. You see, if I did that, imagine if someone actually did that from the pulpit.

Amazing. Um, if I did that, it's not merely that it's breaking the laws, uh, you know, going against those signs. It's that smoking in church, it's just not done, is it?

It's so outrageous. Same goes with sin. And being a Christian, it just flies in the face of everything we are. And that leads us to talking about repentance.

There's a lot of confusion about what repentance is and is not. Repentance is just for the record. It is 180 degree turn away from what is sinful.

That sin I'm turning away over here. Repentance is the attitude that says, I will never, ever again do that again. Of course, it's possible to physically do it.

[15:42] Of course we might do it. Um, but repentance says, I've strayed so far beyond the boundaries of what's expected of God's children that I never want to be in that position ever again.

You see, a lot of people think repentance is like remorse. And the trouble is, even non-believers feel remorse the next day. Remorse is a legitimate human emotion, but it will never go as far or be as decisive to say, I'll never do that again.

And so here's the test. After we sin, are we taking real action to minimize the chance that it happens again? Are we putting in actual practical steps, maybe involving others in our process?

Um, are we asking God to change us so that we don't step out like that ever again? When we confess our sins, are our minds saying, I never want to go there again, or are they already starting to think about the next day when we can indulge in whatever behavior that was?

Verse six says, no one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who's born of God will continue to sin. In fact, they cannot go on sinning.

[16:57] It's not impossible. It's not that we won't be forgiven, but it's more like, come on, wake up. You know what God is like. You know what he expects of his children. Um, it's just not who we are in this family.

Um, that is the sin test. You see, for years now, when I stand here, I've been saying the battle with sin, uh, keep us in the battle with sin, praying for the battle with sin. How are you going in the battle?

But Christians, you have a casual approach to sin are showing that they're not clear what God's family is all about. Uh, in the middle of the table, well, actually in the middle of the verses of the table is verse seven.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just like Jesus. Just as he is righteous. You see, it's quite common to be led astray when it comes to sin. There are lots of lies and false teaching out there. The devil, he's been at it from the beginning. Did God really say you cannot eat of the fruit? You will not surely die.

[18:00] He's been at it from the beginning. A lot of false teaching out there and lies tries to redefine what the Bible says is quite clearly sin. Sin. It says things like we're all God's children and that God loves you just as you are.

But when people hear that, they think, wow, if he loves me as I am, I don't need to repent and amend my life. He already loved me.

He chose me after all, which is sort of like a nugget of truth. But therefore, I don't need to amend who I am because all of this is good enough for God. Do not let anyone lead you astray.

Here's the truth. God does not want us as we are. He wants his son. The reason we need to purify ourselves and practice righteousness, the reason the spirit is transforming us is so we can be less like ourselves and more like Jesus.

Of course, we're going to sin. And in the meantime, Jesus appeared to take away our sin. But a casual approach to sinning should be like something that we never want to be a part of.

[19:10] It goes against everything God's family is about. We're going to finish looking at verse 10. Verse 10 over the page. 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 or sister. These verses are very strong, aren't they? In case you're wondering if lovely, cuddly Jesus would ever agree to this, remember in John's gospel, he says to the Pharisees, that they are children of the devil.

This verse, it's quite a strong one. It seems to give us license to go on a witch hunt around the church. Child of God, child of God, child of the devil, child of God, no, child of the devil.

And we hand out badges, in and out, in and out, you're in, you're out, that sort of stuff. But actually, this verse, verse 10, is more like a, which would you rather? In big, broad terms, which would you rather?

