

## WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 67

### 1 John Chapter 3

#### **Open:**

Whose coming will motivate you to clean your house? What will be your motive for the extra effort to make yourself and house presentable?

#### **Introduction**

We've seen over the last few weeks, how John's letter admonishes the Christians who are under pressure in a world opposed to God, to be different. John stresses the need to know the truth and then to put it into practice. The heartbeat of 1 John is found in chapter 5 v 13: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you might know that you have eternal life." He wants his readers to be sure they are Christians. And to that end he gives us three tests throughout his letter of the mark of authentic Christianity. How do you know you are a Christian? Well, because you believe certain truths about God Son Jesus Christ. Second you love those in your church fellowship. And third you live a certain way, God's way, the way of holiness. And all this was against a backdrop of false teaching.

The false teachers, led by a man called Cerinthus, failed on each of those tests. They didn't believe the truth about Jesus. They didn't love one another and those in need. And they failed dismally when it came to holiness. In fact some of them were saying that they weren't even sinful. They were perfect. And others of them were saying that sin didn't matter anyway! So you can live how you want.

These are the issues we will discuss in this study in which John urges his readers to take sin seriously. He reminds us of the fact that if we claim to be children of God, if we claim to be Christians, then we must live a certain way. And yes it will be hard. Yes it will feel like you are swimming against the tide. But we can do it. We can make progress. And we can grow in holiness, becoming more like Christ.

## Read 1 John 3:1-10

### Discussion Questions

1. What implications would John have us draw from 3:1 about God?  
\_\_\_\_\_ About our self image? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Because of the love of the Father to us, what is our inherited position? (3:1)  
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3. If we are children of God, what are we in relation to Christ? (Rom 8:16 & 17)  
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4. Why are we not known as "Children of God" by the world? (3:1)  
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5. We know some things and are ignorant of others. What are they (3:2; Rom. 8:16)?  
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6. What is the destiny of God's children and how should it affect the way we live? (1 John 3:2b,3) \_\_\_\_\_

### Comment

John points out that we are not merely **called** the children of God; we *are* the children of God. By **nature** we are God's creatures, but it is by God's grace through Christ Jesus that we **become** the children of God and when Christ returns we shall be like him. There is a story of Michelangelo, the great artist, when a servant brought him a great lump of marble and the servant said nonplussed: 'What do you see in that?', and he said, 'I see the statue of David'. He says: 'You see what?', 'The statue of David, because I'm not seeing what you see, I'm seeing what it shall be'. That's what John's trying to get across: God is not finished with us yet, "what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, ..." I love that little chorus: 'He's still working on me, to make me what I ought to be'. "What we are does not now appear to the world; what we shall be does not yet appear to us." (Stott) Ultimately, our hope is not in heaven or in our own glory in heaven.

Our hope is in Him. We must never set our hope on other things; not on a relationship, on success, on our bank account, on our health, on our possessions, or simply just on our self. Our only real hope is in Him.

7. In verses 4-6, Does John mean that a Christian cannot sin? either absolutely, or habitually, or deliberately? \_\_\_\_\_ Is John condemning such sinners or is he providing a gauge to evaluate false teaching about sin? \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

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### Note

It is very important to understand what the Bible is saying about “keeps on sinning.”. According to the verb tense John uses, it means does not live a life style of habitual sin. John has already told us in 1 John 1:8 that “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” In 1 John 1:8, the grammar indicates John is speaking about occasional acts of sin. The grammar of 1 John 3:6 indicates that John is speaking of a settled, continued lifestyle of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection.

“The present tense in the Greek verb implied habit, continuity, unbroken sequence” (Stott); the NIV has the right idea when it translates these verbs with phrases such as keeps on sinning, continues to sin, and he cannot go on sinning.

8a. From verses 4-8. What are we told about :  
what sin is? \_\_\_\_\_

8b. Where does sin come from and how is it conquered? (1 John 3:8; Matt. 12: 25-29)

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9. Why does the Christian refrain from continually sinning as a pattern of life? (1 John 3:9; Matt 7:18; Rom 6:2; )

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**Note:** Sin is to obey oneself rather than God and it brings to the fore the very thing that Jesus came to the world to abolish; It comes from the failure to abide in Christ and it is only in Jesus that victory over it is assured. Christ has broken the power of the evil, and by his help that same victory can be ours. We are saved only by grace.

It is a free gift which we cannot earn. However, the New Testament has this consistent theme that there is a cold, steely way to know if we have accepted the gift, and that is to look at and seriously evaluate our lives. (See e.g., Hebrews 10:26; James 2: 14-26.)

10 What is the implication of having God's seed in us? (v. 9)

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11. As you get older, do you find it harder or easier to resist sinful desires? Why? When you blew it, what have you found helpful in making it right and getting back on track?\_\_\_\_\_

12. What simple tests are suggested by John to show our relationship to God and does this negate salvation by grace?

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**Comment:**

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**Concluding Remarks.**

Look again at what our relationship to Jesus Christ does for us: Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the penalty of our sin. This is immediately accomplished when one comes by faith to Jesus. Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the power of sin away. This is an ongoing work in the lives of those who walk after Jesus. Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the presence of sin away. This is a work that will be completed when we pass into eternity and are glorified with Jesus.

The message of 1 John 3 can be summarised in verse 10: "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 a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother." John's question is this. Are you displaying the family marks? Does sin disgust you? Do you long to be like Christ? Well John has given us ample incentive to be holy. He's told us to remember who we are- children of God. To remember where we're heading, heaven our true home. To remember what we've been saved from, a life of lawlessness, and what we are saved for- a life of holiness. For you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.