

Introduction

Jesus's Debate: In John 8, Jesus had a heated argument with a crowd that included some who openly opposed Him (John 8:37, 40) and some who professed faith (John 8:31), but Jesus knew their profession was false (cf. John 2:23-25). The major debate was, “Who is your father?” Jesus said that He was the Son of God (John 8:38). But the crowd implied, referring to Mary’s pregnancy before marriage, that Jesus didn’t know His father because He was born out of sexual immorality (John 8:41).

On the other side of the debate, the Jews first claimed they were Abraham’s children (John 8:33). Then they claimed they were God’s children (John 8:41). But Jesus said they refused to believe truth and they wanted Him dead. He said their actions proved they were actually children of Satan (John 8:44).

Can a person profess faith, continue living in rebellion against God, and rightly be called a child of God? It is quite common in churches today for someone to **profess faith** in Jesus and **justify their sinful lifestyle**.

1 John 2:28-3:10 explains that **Those who know God share God’s view of sin**. That is, no one who has a relationship with God will continue in **unrepentant sin**.

This passage makes four points about **our relationship with God and with sin**.

God’s Righteousness

First, God is righteous. 1 John 2:28–29 “28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”

God is righteous

What is righteousness? Righteousness describes one’s **relationship to sin**. For example, God described **Job’s** righteousness as “turning away from evil” (Job 1:1). God is not righteous like Job. **God’s righteousness is perfect.** He **hates sin** and never participates in it.

A right view of Christian living begins with a right view of God. Verse 29 says that God’s righteousness should be **reflected** in those who are “born of him.” Those who know God, who have been made new by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus, “practice righteousness.” The point is that **if you do not share God’s view of sin, you do not know God.**

Jesus is coming

Why do we need to know that God is righteous? Verse 28 explains that **Jesus will return** and **not everyone will be able to stand before Him**. The letter of 2 Peter addresses false teachers who claimed that Jesus would not return ... because He had not yet returned (2 Pet 3:1-4). *We may not profess this belief, but do we live it? Do we live as if Jesus will not return?* **Jesus will return.**

Not everyone will be able to stand before Him. Verse 28 explains that some will **shrink back** (hide in shame) when He comes and some will **have confidence**. *How can we have confidence when Jesus returns?* **My confidence at Jesus's return does not rest in me.** I am an unholy man who must face a holy God (cf. Isa 6:1-5). **My righteousness is a work of God.** 2 Corinthians 5:21 “21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God.**” Listen to Hebrews 10:19 “... we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,” **My confidence before God is solely in Jesus's blood.**

Summary

God is righteous. When Jesus (who is the eternal God) returns for judgment and salvation, we will face a righteous God. Our confidence in judgment is based solely on Jesus's blood. But verse 28 must be read with verse 29. If I profess faith in Jesus and continue to live in rebellion against God, **I have no reason for confidence.** I have reason to fear and hide in shame. *Those who know God share God's view of sin.*

God's Children

Second, God's children are like Him. 1 John 3:1-3 “1 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 is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, 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, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

Adoption

How does a person become a child of God? **No one is born** a child of God. It does not matter if you were born a Jew or a Gentile. It does not matter if your parents are atheists or Christians. **You become a child of God by being re-born by the Holy Spirit.** John 3:3 “... unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:6 “6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” When we are born again, we have spiritual (eternal) life.

How does new birth happen? **Faith in Jesus is the basis of new birth.** John 1:12-13 “12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” **The only way to know God is through faith in Jesus** (John 14:6).

Notice that **verse 1 connects our adoption by God with God's love.** 1 John 3:1 "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God ..." **God's love, not our merit, is the basis of our relationship with God.** Ephesians 1:4-5 "In **love** 5 he predestined us for **adoption** to himself as **sons** through Jesus Christ ..." God did not adopt me because I am good, smart, come from a Christian family, or any other personal trait. **God adopts me because He loves me. It is God's character, not mine, that saves me.**

Like Him

Verse 2 says "we shall be like Him." **This does *not* mean that we will become gods.** LDS (Latter-Day Saints, i.e., Mormons) teaches that those who are faithful will become gods. Former LDS President **Lorenzo Snow** said, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." Thus, LDS teaches that God was once a human, like we are now, and if we are faithful, we may become a god like Him one day.

This is false teaching. **Scripture declares that there is only one God** (Deut 6:4); the Triune God of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Cor 8:4-6; Matt 28:19; Eph 4:4-6). Isaiah 44:6 "6 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is **no god.**" Isaiah 45:5 "5 I am the Lord, and there is **no other**, besides me there is **no God** ..." Isaiah 45:18 "18 For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the Lord, and there is **no other.**"

What does it mean to be like God? The context explains that being like God **refers to our relationship with sin.** 1 John 2:29 "29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him." 1 John 3:3 "3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." **In Christ, we are free from sin.** This does not mean we are sinless. We are free from the condemnation of sin and we are made righteous in Christ. We are not free for the purpose of pursuing sin; **we are free to pursue holy living.**

Children now

Notice that verse 2 says "we are God's children **now.**" We are awaiting Christ's return and our eternal salvation in Him (Rom 8:23). But we have eternal salvation, freedom from condemnation, and eternal adoption **now** (Rom 8:15).

How does our relationship with God affect our life now? First, it **changes our relationship with the world.** 1 John 2:15-17 explains that **our relationship with God changes how we view the world.** 1 John 3:1 explains that **our relationship with God changes how the world views us.**

Here are two current examples of that. God opposes killing innocent people, **including unborn children**. If you know God, you **share His view of murder**. But that view drives a wedge between Christians and the world. Likewise, God ordained marriage between a man and a woman for life, **excluding divorce, homosexuality, and adultery**. If you know God, you **share His view of marriage**. That view drives a wedge between Christians and the world.

Before I continue, let me clarify something about those examples. **Those who know God share God's view of sin**. It is **not unloving to stand against sin**. We must also remember that **those who know God share God's view of forgiveness**. There is no sin that God will not forgive through Christ. If a mother has an **abortion**, then repents and accepts God's view of life, we too should forgive her. If a man **cheats on his spouse**, then repents and accepts God's view of marriage, we too should forgive him.

Second, **our relationship with God also changes our relationship with sin**. 1 John 3:3 “3 And everyone who thus hopes in him **purifies** himself as he is pure.” This does not mean that we are sinless; nor does this mean that we atone for our own sins. This means that **those who know God repent of sin and rely on Jesus's atonement for our sins** (1 John 1:5-2:2).

Conclusion

God is righteous (1 John 2:28-29). **God's children are like Him** (1 John 3:1-3). God's righteousness and our adoption are the basis for our view of sin.

Repenting of Sin

Third, God's children repent of sin. 1 John 3:4-7 “4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.”

To take away sins

1 John 3:4-7 explains that our **relationship with Jesus** is the basis for our **ongoing repentance** of sin. **First, Jesus came to take away sins** (1 John 3:5). Jesus became a human so that He might die as a substitute for our guilt. Romans 8:3 “3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,” Jesus became a human to suffer temptation (Heb 2:18), live a sinless life (Heb 4:15), and die to bear the guilt of sin, (2 Cor 5:21), so that we might be forgiven by faith in Him (Rom 3:23-25). **How can we who know Jesus continue in the thing for which He died (cf. Rom 6:1-2)? Jesus came to take away sins.**

Christ had no sin

Second, Jesus did not sin (1 John 3:5). Jesus suffered temptation. Yet, Jesus did not sin. Hebrews 4:15 “15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been **tempted** as we are, yet **without sin**.”

According to verse 6, **our view of sin reflects our relationship with Christ**. 1 John 3:6 “6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.” **Those who know God share God's view of sin**. A person cannot say he abides in Christ **and** continue in unrepentant sin. **John Owen**'s said, “Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.”

It is important to acknowledge that repentance of sin is more than a spiritual discipline. **Repentance is a gift of God**; it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Jesus said in John 15:4–5 “4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” **Repentance is the result of abiding in Christ**. And repentance is evidence whether a person truly abides in Christ.

Conclusion

God is righteous (1 John 2:28-29). **God's children are like Him** (1 John 3:1-3). **God's children repent of sin** (1 John 3:4-7).

Children of Satan

Fourth, those who continue in sin are children of Satan, not children of God. 1 John 3:8–10 “8 Whoever 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. 9 No 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. 10 By 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.”

Satan's nature

Who is the devil? The Bible introduces us to Satan (the devil) in Gen 3, where he convinces Eve to reject God for her own exaltation. In John 8, when Jesus accused the Jews of being children of Satan, He says that they share Satan's character which was shown in Gen 3. John 8:44 “44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own **character**, for he is a **liar** and the father of lies.” Satan is a real spiritual being. He is created and limited. And he opposes God and God's people.

Jesus's appearing

Jesus came to earth to overthrow Satan's work. 1 John 3:8 "... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." The "works of the devil" are the eternal **death and separation** from God that come from sin. Satan came to deceive and to kill. But **Jesus came to set us from from sin and death.** Hebrews 2:14–15 "14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." **Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.**

Like father, like son

How we respond to sin shows whose child we are. 1 John 3:9–10 "9 No 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. 10 By 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." Anyone who is **comfortable** continuing in sin is **following Satan** (just like Eve), not God.

Can a child of God continue in sin? The view that a **confession of faith** and an **unchanged life** saves us completely misunderstands the gospel. 1 Peter 2:16 "16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God." **Christ does not set us free from sin so that we can continue living in sin.** Through faith in Jesus, we are forgiven of sin, reconciled to God, and made as new creations in Christ.

Salvation is not a change of **destination**. We are not saved so that we can go to heaven instead of hell. **Salvation is a change of relationship.** Jesus died to atone for our sins so that we could know God. **Knowing God is far better than going to heaven.** John 17:3 "3 And this is eternal life, that they **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Matthew 7:23 "23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never **knew** you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" **Salvation is a change of relationship.**

This is why Scripture describes salvation as **new birth and adoption**. Through faith in Jesus, we are freed from sin and belong to God. But in Christ, we are more than slaves, we are sons. Galatians 4:4–7 "4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to **redeem** those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption** as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a **slave**, but a **son** ..."

How are those who profess faith without repentance children of Satan? **Satan is the epitome of believing with your head, but refusing to submit to God.** James 2:19 "19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" **Satan believes the truth about God, he just refuses to follow God.** If your profess faith in Jesus, but do not live in repentance, you are living like Satan.

Conclusion

God is righteous (1 John 2:28-29). God's children are like Him (1 John 3:1-3). God's children repent of sin (1 John 3:4-7). Those who continue in sin are children of Satan, not children of God (1 John 3:8-10).

Response

How do we live like children of God? **First, we must have faith in Jesus.** No one becomes a **child of God** by living like a child of God. No one becomes **righteous** by trying to live righteously. We come to know God through **faith in Jesus, not godly living.** The essence of faith is acknowledging our inability to be righteous (Rom 3:10, 23) and our complete dependance on Jesus's righteousness in our place (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 3:18). **We must have faith in Jesus.**

Second, we must confess that sin is sin. The Bible warns against calling evil good and calling good evil (Isa 5:20). It is quite common in our culture for people to make their feelings, desires, or opinions the **standard of truth.** As much as we may try to justify sin, it is **unjustifiable.** God, not people, sets the standard for what is good and evil. **We must confess that sin is sin.**

Third, we must continually repent of sin. This passage does not imply perfection. In fact, 1 John 1:8-10 explicitly denies Christian perfection. However, this passage does teach that God's people should **continually repent of sin.**

Main Idea

Charles Spurgeon said, “Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Savior. He who has stood before his God, convicted and condemned, with the rope about his neck, is the man to weep for joy when he is pardoned and to hate the evil which has been forgiven him.”

Your view of sin reflects your view of God. **Those who love God, hate sin. And those who love sin, hate God.** You cannot love both God and sin (Matt 6:24). The message of 1 John 2:28-3:10 is that **Those who know God share God's view of sin.**