

TITLE: THE MOTIVATION TO LIVE AS CHILDREN OF GOD

TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:29–3:3

INTRO: In chapters 1 & 2 John talked about walking/living in the light, and how to do so. In chapters 3-5, he talks about living as children of God (“born of God,” “of God,” “of the truth,” “dwell in Him & He in us,” etc.). These descriptions John uses (children of God, in God, God in us, in the light, knowing Him, abiding in Him) are all the same. It’s about being a child of God, in the family of God, loving God & loving one another, and John tells us things we must do as “children of God” etc. He begins this section by speaking of the motivation of being called children of God.

I. THE BLESSING OF BEING CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD (2:29–3:2):

A. The Present Blessing (2:29–3:1)

(v. 29) *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

1. Here he introduces the idea of being born (begotten spiritually) of God.
2. We *do* know He is righteous (this isn’t in question), so we know that those who **do** righteousness are born of Him. We know this – it makes sense that only those who look (act) like Him are the ones who are born/begotten of Him (His children)! This is the present blessing we have – being called God’s children. And it’s the motivation to live as such.
3. But the requirement to have this blessing is to “do righteousness” (present tense, continuous action)! You can’t just claim to be a child of God; you must show it by doing righteousness. Many people are called “righteous” or “good,” but being righteous is not some quality subjectively assigned to you based on yours or someone else’s standard of what’s right. It’s something we are to “DO” – God tells us what He wants & then we do it! True, faithful Christianity is visibly evidenced by our works (**Jam 2:14f; Acts 10:35** – “*In every nation he that feareth him & worketh righteousness is accepted of him*”).

(v. 1) *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

1. John reminds us of the extreme significance, importance, & blessing of being called “children of God” – Behold (perceive, understand) *what manner* (expresses amazement–**Mt 8:27**–“*what manner of man is this...*”) of love...*that we should be called the sons of God*. Because of the great love God showed in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (**4:9-10**), we’re no longer servants (**Gal 4:1-7**), so the promise of the inheritance is for us! Who can relate to this more than a poor, homeless orphan adopted by a wealthy, loving, Christian family! Knowing how sinful we were, it truly is amazing that God considers us His children, and He our Father. This is a great motivation to love Him (by obeying Him–**2:3**)!
2. The world (particularly the Jews) didn’t recognize Jesus for who He was, even though they should’ve. So why should the world acknowledge us as His followers? They don’t, because they aren’t His children.
3. We have this reminder that when we were adopted by God and became His children, we left the world (cf. **2:15-17**).

B. The Future Blessing (3:2)

(v. 2) *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

1. Now (in this life, not just a future promise) we’re children of God (Christians) – if we do righteousness (**2:29**). Notice the similarity between this continuous requirement of doing righteousness and the continuous requirement of walking in the light as He is in the light (**1:7**) in order to have fellowship with Him & with His faithful children.
2. It hasn’t yet been revealed what we shall be. He’s speaking of our future existence – when Christ returns. Paul discussed the resurrection in **1 Cor 15**, explaining that when we’re raised we’ll have a new, *spiritual* body. But we don’t know exactly what this will be like (& we don’t need to know)!
3. We do know however that when He returns, we’ll be like Him (spirit, not physical, just as Paul said in **1 Cor 15:44**), for (because) we’ll see Him as He is (as spirit, which means we’ll be spirit). This is a very exciting thought. As much as I would’ve loved to see Jesus while on earth, this will be much better! Many who saw Him on earth will not be saved, but John’s point here is an encouragement to us to continue doing righteousness so we can be with Jesus for eternity.

II. THE RESPONSE TO BEING CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD (3:3):

(v. 3) *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

- A. “*This hope*” is to be like Jesus...(v. 2). This is speaking of our final salvation – that which we hope for (**Rom 8:24-25**).
- B. Hope is desire plus expectation. Someone may *desire* salvation, but in order to have a true, *biblical* expectation of it (i.e., hope), you **must** be pure (walk in the light as He is in the light–**1:7**); purify yourself even as He is pure). You can’t have this hope and not be pure! You can’t be impure (i.e., have sin) and have this hope! So this shows that purifying yourself is a continuous action (just as the present tense indicates here). Every man that has this hope *has purified* his soul already in obeying the truth (**1 Pet 1:22**), & must continue to purify himself when he sins (since Christians do sin–**1:8-10**).
- C. “Purifies himself” – does God do all the work, as Calvinism’s false doctrine of election claims? If so, how can John say this? This shows that, although it is God that justifies (**Rom 8:33**), we have the responsibility, as the Scripture says, to purify our souls in obeying the truth (**1 Pet 1:22**) & to “*keep yourselves in the love of God*” (**Jude 21**).
- D. This is the key verse of our text this morning. If you have this hope (of being like Him when He comes– i.e., saved), you must continue to purify yourself. How? By removing that which defiles you & makes you impure (sin)! He’s already said in **1:7-10**– walk in the light; but when you fail, acknowledge it & confess it. He’s saying the same thing in this verse that he did in ch. 1. To live as children of God, we must continue to keep ourselves pure (**1 Tim 5:22**), *as he is pure – sinless!*

CONCLUSION: John really calls us to a very high & difficult standard – the Christian standard! But when we live according to it, we have a great blessing & hope! Today do you have this hope in you? Do you have the expectation that when Jesus returns you’ll be like Him, see Him as He is, and live with Him in Heaven? Are you pure? Have you been cleansed from your sins? If not, why not do it today?