

SERIES: Authentic Christian Community / 1 John, wk 2

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Many years ago, my grandmother passed away, which would have been my mom's mom. She lived in Swanville, Minnesota — a little town in Minnesota. Because of my dad's illness, we didn't really travel, so I hadn't been there much. So we went back for the funeral, and we were kind of waiting around in the lobby, waiting for the service to start, and a rather elderly woman kind of shuffles up to me and just stares at me. She points her finger at me and she says, "You look like a Schrupp," and walked away. And I thought, "*Well, that was interesting; that must be a Minnesota thing.*" Well, over the course of the next fifteen to twenty minutes, two other elderly people came over, stared at me and said, "You're a Schrupp." I was thinking, "*What is with these people?*" So I asked my mom, "Why are they calling me a Schrupp?" "Well, that was your grandma's maiden name, and all they were saying is there is definitely a family resemblance." Well, you know...whatever. So look at this: this is a Schrupp. (Laughter)

John uses that same imagery to divide the world up into two categories of people. There are the children of God and there are the children of the devil, and he will make the case that both of them resemble their father. And he says, the difference is obvious. Well, that's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 John, Chapter 3. Of course, the best way to understand John's letter, and pretty much true of any book in the Bible, is not to get too locked up on the chapter divisions and the verse divisions, but just keep the train of thought going.

In this case, I want to pick it up in Chapter 2, Verse 29, and it's kind of a hinge verse into today's discussion:

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. (*NASB, I John 2:29)

So he is saying that if you're born of Him — if He's your parent — then you should look like Him; you should resemble Him, which then launches into the discussion in Chapter 3, Verse 1:

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; (I John 3:1a)

The NASB starts with the word **See**...which, in my opinion, is way too mild for the Greek word. A lot of the translations have *Behold*, which I think is much better. It's a very expressive word. He's quite in awe of this magnificent love of God. The phrase...**how great a love** is an interesting phrase. It literally means *from what country — from what country does this come from*. And then it took on kind of the meaning of "*Where does this come from?*" One of the ways to kind of capture how expressive this phrase is, is to go back into the Gospels and remember a story, when Jesus was out in a boat with his disciples, and the wind and the sea came up, and they thought they were going to perish. Keep in mind these were professional fishermen,

believing that the storm was to a point where they were going to perish. So they wake up Jesus and they say, “Master, don’t you care that we’re perishing?” And Jesus stands up in the boat and commands the wind and the sea, and the waves and the wind suddenly become calm.

Now just imagine that in your mind. You’re a professional fisherman; this is a storm so great you think you’re going to die on the water, and Jesus stands up, and, with a spoken word, suddenly the wind and the waves are quiet. They look at one another and they say, “Who is this man that the wind and the waves obey Him?” That’s our phrase: “Who is this man?” It’s the exact same phrase as in 1 John 3:1. “*Where does this guy come from? What country is he from?*” Probably more, “*What planet is he from that the wind and the waves obey him?*” That’s kind of the level of expression that John is using. He’s in awe that this love of the Father is so great. “*Where does this guy come from that He would invite us to be His children?*”

Now think of it. At one time, every single one of us was at war with God; we were rebelling against God; we were aligned with the enemy. We were offending God in every way possible, and yet God’s love was so great, that God reached down and didn’t just offer us a ticket to a place, but actually invited us to be His child, with all of the rights and privileges of what it means to be a child of God. John is saying, “*What planet is this guy from that he would do that for us?*” It’s almost as if John anticipates we’re going to say, “Wow, no way!” because he follows it with the statement **...and such we are**. It’s like we say, “No way,” and he says, “Yes, it’s absolutely true.”

... and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (Vs. 1b)

We accept the fact that the world around us does not see us as a child of God, does not understand what’s been radically done for us. Why? **...because it did not know Him**. I’m going to guess there isn’t a single person that, this week when you were walking through the halls of school, when you showed up for work, when you were sitting in the coffee shop, there wasn’t a single person that, at some point in time, somebody looked at you and gasped and said, “Whoa! I think that’s a child of God!” I’m guessing it didn’t happen. The world doesn’t see it that way. But how could they possibly know us, if they did not know Him?

Now it’s referring to when Jesus came to Earth, sure, there were those who believed, but *the world did not know Him*. They did not understand: this is the God of the universe in this manger; this is the Creator of all that is, who’s eating supper with you; this is the God of the universe that’s having a conversation with you. They didn’t know Him and so, if they don’t really know Him, they aren’t going to know us as His children. That’s what he’s saying.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

(Vs. 2)

Verse 2 is absolutely remarkable. What he just said is *the world does not see us as His children*. They don’t understand what’s happened to us. Now one of the problems with that is: because the world doesn’t see us that way, we sometimes fail to see ourselves that way. We lose sight of how magnificent it is that we have been called the **...children of God**. And so what he is saying is **...we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be**. Let’s remind ourselves for a moment what that means. The language that the New Testament uses for Salvation is radical language. It does not reflect someone who has received a ticket to a place,

but someone who has been radically changed — born of God. Remember, John is the one who uses the language in the Gospels, “*You’ve been born again*” — *a change so radical, the only way to describe it is you’ve actually been reborn! You’ve become a new creation. Old things are passed away; all things have become new.* Radical change!

Ephesians, Chapter 2, Verse 10, reminds us that because of what Jesus has done for us — not on the basis of our performance, but on the basis of His grace — God is making us into a *masterpiece*, an original piece of art. Now think about this: think about the Artist that painted the universe, with all that’s in it, that is so spectacular. This is the same Artist that is making you into a masterpiece that Paul says is so magnificent that, when He holds you up in the heavenlies, the angels will gasp at the wonder of what you’ve become. Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, “*No eye has seen and no ear has heard how absolutely magnificent you will be. In that moment, people will see the handiwork of God Himself, and you will be revealed for the magnificent child of God that you are.*” But he says, “*That hasn’t been revealed yet, but it will be.*” When will it be revealed? He tells us, “*When Jesus appears, when Jesus returns, when Jesus comes back and reveals Himself as He is, that will be the moment.*”

Now I think one of the struggles that we have is, we tend to lock Jesus into the Incarnation, and we forget that that was followed by the Glorification. In other words, we think of Jesus as He walked on Earth, and that’s always the way it’s going to be. But that’s not correct. What is correct, is that He went from His humiliation on Earth to Glorification — seated at the right hand of the Father in all of His glory. When He returns, He will return in all of His glory — a glory so magnificent that it will be beyond even what we can begin to imagine.

Read Revelation, Chapter 1, and see the picture of Jesus painted there, that is far beyond the picture of Jesus in his humility. Understand that the glory of Jesus is so magnificent, that when Moses asked, “Can I see Your glory?” God said, “If you saw My glory, you would die. I’m going to let you see just a little bit of my glory and you will glow for days.” It is a glory that is so unimaginable, so magnificent, that when He reveals Himself in all of His glory, “...every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is God — to the glory of God.”

Now just think about that. Think about the culture in which we live. For whatever reason, it is politically incorrect to make fun of any world religion except Christianity — and it is open season on Christianity. Jesus is the source of laughter; He’s the source of mockery; He’s the source of jokes; He’s the source of disdain; but there is coming a day when He will reveal Himself in all of His glory — a glory so magnificent that “...every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is God.”

We are frustrated today, because of the ongoing debates about: all roads lead to God and you can kind of make up your own journey. But this is not like one of these political debates where everybody spouts an opinion; there are no winners and everybody moves on. This is a debate that will finally be settled once and for all. There will be a conclusion, and the conclusion will be that Jesus is God. But the text says that *...when He reveals Himself as He is, we shall be like Him.* Don’t miss that part of the text. The more magnificent your view of the glorified Christ, the more magnificent the concept that, in that moment, we will be like Him. We will be revealed as the children of God—made more magnificent than words could describe. And in that moment, the world will know that we are the children of God.

If that's true, then Verse 3:

And everyone who has this hope (and remembering that anytime you see the word *hope* in the New Testament, it's not hope like, "Boy, I *hope* that's true;" it's always guaranteed, but it's yet future.)

So he says, **And everyone who has this hope** (this guarantee) **fixed on Him** (meaning Jesus) **purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

In other words, if this is true, then we should live like it, and it should be evident that we are children of God, which then sets up the next discussion. Verses 4 thru 10 are critical to understand, but this text also has high potential for misunderstanding. Most of the Bible, from cover to cover, you can, with basic Bible study principles, interpret the text out of the English text, and fully understand the intent of the writer. Some of the original language though fills in a little bit. But you can study your English Bible; it's a wonderful translation, and you can understand the intent of the writer, no problem...with the exception of a handful of texts...and this happens to be one of those texts. If we don't understand the nuances of the Greek language, it can be very misleading.

Verse 4 says:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Now when he's talking about sin and lawlessness, he's using a verb tense that's called the *durative present*. The best way to think of durative is like *duration*, and it basically is reflecting something that happens over a period of time — in other words, a lifestyle of sin — a way of life that is habitual sin. The verb tense is indicating that. So he's talking about **sin** and he's talking about **lawlessness**. Now those two terms are very similar in the original language, to the degree that they're often used interchangeably. But the false teachers, this early form of Gnosticism, had actually kind of redefined the terms and made them very distinct, and that's what John is referencing here. These false teachers had created a theology to fit their morality. And basically, their theology was that we are divided between the immaterial and the material — that which is spirit and that which is flesh, or body. The spirit part of me connects with God. The material part of me is completely disconnected from God. So whatever I do in the material part of me, in other words, whatever I do with my body, it is irrelevant to my relationship with God. Therefore, with this theology, they had created a way where they could live grossly immoral lives, and still believe they were fine with God. That's kind of the essence of their theology and that's what John is challenging.

They took the word **lawlessness** and they defined this as *rebellion against God*. Sometimes this word is used to describe Satan's rebellion — so to fight against God, to be at war against God, to rebel against God. And they're saying, "That's a bad thing; we would never do that. We're for God. That's why our spirits connect to God. We would never be guilty of that." But they deny the concept of **sin**. There is no sin concept. "Whatever I do with my body is irrelevant; it doesn't matter. It has nothing to do with my relationship to God."

Now you remember, we dealt with this in Chapter 1, when John said, "If you say that you have no sin, you're a liar." That's the same teaching he was dealing with. These false teachers were saying, "We have no sin. We don't buy into that concept." And so now they're saying, "You know, we would never rebel against God, but we don't buy into the sin thing." So John is responding to that when he says, "**Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness, because**

sin is lawlessness.” When I sin, it is a rebellion. When I sin, it is fighting against God. When I sin, I am aligning myself with the enemy. That’s what sin is; that’s its very essence. So he’s saying, “There’s no such distinction; that’s bogus theology. When I sin, I am at war with God.”

Verse 5:

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

He reminds the believers that the whole reason Jesus had to come — that God became flesh — is to take away sin. If sin is no big deal to God, then why did Jesus have to suffer God’s wrath on the cross? That’s what he is saying. Sin *is* a really big deal to God. Sin is completely incompatible with God. **Sin is at war with God.**

There is a big difference between watching a sporting event live and watching a replay later of the game, especially if you already know the outcome. So, imagine you're watching a replay of the Super Bowl; how you respond to turnovers and penalties and missed opportunities all changes, if you know who wins in the end. So let's imagine your team won the Super Bowl. You're watching a replay of the game. Even though bad things happen, how you respond is going to be different when you already know your team wins. Well, the Bible is clear, at the end of the story, Jesus wins, and so do His children; this is not unclear. This should change how we react and live our lives today, including taking sin seriously. We'll talk more about that tomorrow.