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Published by North Star Baptist
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April 15, 2020
Week Three

SALVATION - YOUR SONSHIP
(I John 3)

LESSON AIM - I want my students to:

Know: That Christians cannot habitually live in sin.

Feel: A sensitivity about their relationship to God.

Do: To walk in the footsteps of their Father.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON:

The concluding two verses of the previous chapter act as a transition between the two chapters. The believers were admonished to do righteousness, since the Lord is righteous. They must take care how they live, lest they be put to shame at the rapture of the church. John shifts his emphasis from sharing the life of God to the next logical truth, being a son of God. For those who claim to be a son of God, John sets forth the test of living like God's son.

LESSON OUTLINE AND COMMENTS:

I. The truth of sonship (I John 3:1-3)

One of the great salvation truths is the sonship which every believer has with the Father. Having a birth from above provides a parent-child relationship. Since children take on the characteristics of

their parents, spiritual children will have a characteristic likeness to the Father.

A. A past birth (3:1)

Every genuine believer must realize that God has shown great love to all believers. This love package involved believers being called sons of God. They become children by birth. Their being members of God's family is of no interest to the unsaved because they have not come to know this truth. Since they do not know Christ, the world has no interest in the genuine Christian. However, the believer knows that he himself is a child of God. Yet, since it is a spiritual birth, the birth is unobservable to the world.

B. A future destiny (3:2)

Though being a child of God is certain at conversion, the Christian's future reality is not fully revealed. This truth suggests that no earthly manifestation of life has ever completely described the future state of the believer. The Christian's future is certain and his future life will begin with the return of Christ to call the believers to heaven. Believers will be like Christ and this likeness appears to be a moral likeness (v. 3). This Christ-likeness will never make the believer God, but every believer will be in His presence because he has the same moral likeness.

C. A present responsibility (3:3)

In light of the believer's past birth and future destiny, each Christian must live carefully. Without exception, all who have their confidence in God are purifying ("setting themselves apart for God") themselves. The present life of the believer is to be "pure, chaste, and decent." This is the continuing activity of the believer. Since the Lord is pure, the believer must strive to become pure. Obedience to this truth provides assurance to the believer of his son relationship to the Father.

II. The life of sonship (I John 3:4-24)

All born into the world are spiritual children of the Devil and as such habitually practice sin. Those who become children of God have a changed life and are different from the wicked. Being God's children involves correct and habitual actions toward God (vv. 4-10) and to other children of God (vv. 11-24).

A. The life of righteousness (3:4-10)

To be a child of God brings the responsibility of living righteously before God (2:28-29; 3:3) during the present life. John indicates four reasons why Christians will live righteously and will not habitually sin. He does not argue that they will never sin but that their natural course of life, as a Christian, is opposition to sin.

1. Sin is contrary to God's law (v. 4)

John writes that those who sin habitually ("fail to do what God expects") transgress the law. Literally, the Greek says

that such a person "also is doing lawlessness." Lawlessness in this context refers to "the breaking of God's standards." Lawlessness and sin cover both aspects of sin. Sin fails to please God because it does not achieve God's standards. The professing Christian, who habitually disregards God's Word (law) is living contrary to being a son of God. Sin is always rebellion against God. Therefore, no one habitually sinning is a child of God.

2. Sin is contrary to Christ's incarnation (v. 5)
The reason why Christ came to earth and died was the sin problem. He came for the purpose of taking away the effect of sin. No sin has ever been in Christ. Therefore, to go on habitually sinning is to deny that Christ came to take away sin and its consequence. Since He did come because of the sin problem, every Christian ought to view sin as He does. Sin is to be removed.
3. Sin is contrary to the believer's union with Christ (v. 6).
A believer, being united to Christ, does not habitually sin. That is, Christians cannot continually fail to keep God's standard. Habitual sinners are not sons of God. They have never seen God nor have they known God. This verse gives Christians the call to live without sin.
4. Sin is contrary to the believer's spiritual birth (vv. 7-10).
John writes that one's conduct reveals his birth. Those who are habitually righteous are of God (righteous). Their standard is the righteousness of God. To ignore this truth is to be deceived (v. 7). Those who are habitually sinful in conduct are of the Devil. Sin is Satan's characteristic manner of life. The purpose of Christ's coming was to destroy Satan's works. Therefore, Christians will never pattern their living according to the Devil's plan (v. 8).

One's character reflects one's birth. The reason why a Christian does not habitually sin is the change which came at his conversion. Spiritual birth is accomplished by means of a spiritual seed which is placed within the Christian. This seed is the Holy Spirit, who indwells the believer and makes habitual sin impossible. Thus, becoming a child of God changes former characteristics (v. 9). By viewing one's characteristic manner of life, his parent becomes obvious. Those who fail to practice righteousness habitually are not of God but of the Devil. Their parentage is also revealed by their lack of love for Christians (v. 10).