

1. Introduction:

- a. Light sabers and magic wands.

2. Text

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.

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. 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.

3. Observations

- a. 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.
 - i. After establishing the work of God in our lives last chapter, John steps back a bit and evaluates all that has happened. God anointed us, gave us His Spirit, took our shame and all we need to do in response is to remain or, abide in Jesus. So John evaluates all of this and calls it what it is: Love. God has loved us so much that He has done all of these things. He encourages the church, 'see!' with the same kind of imperative as the imperative to "abide". "See God loves us!".
 - ii. John then turns from this to point out an interesting reality, when he says "the world doesn't know us because the world does not know God". John again is reiterating a teaching from the Upper Room **John 16:3 "And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me."** Doing the logic math of this verse then works out to John saying, "The world does not know the children of God". But isn't everyone a child of God?

4. Excursion into Children of God

- a. Why address people as children of God if everyone is a child of God anyway? A question you might have or may have wondered: Isn't every human a child of God? Aren't we all his children?
- b. In one sense the answer to whether or not everyone is a child of God is yes. The Bible states that Adam was made in the image of God with God's likeness (that's Genesis 1:26) and then Adam had sons they were all in his likeness. That's what Genesis 5's genealogy is pointing out.
 - i. **Genesis 5:1 "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. 3 When Adam had lived 130 years,**

he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.” What this says is that Adam was made in the likeness of God, and all his line of descendants shared in that likeness. So in a sense, everyone born of Adam and Eve are a son of God because we all in the likeness of Adam who images God. Luke 3 follows the genealogy of Jesus backwards to Adam and confirms this when it says **Luke 3:38 “the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”** Jesus and everyone born of Adam is a “son of God”.

- c. However! In another sense, the answer to whether or not everyone is a child of God is “absolutely not”.
 - i. Consider how Jesus puts it in **John 8:42 “If God were your Father, you would love me”**.. then in **John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil...”** – Clearly there is a distinction here because humans who are children of God and humans who aren’t.
 - ii. Consider also **Luke 8:21 “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”** – If Jesus is God’s Son, and we are His brothers, then we have the same Father as Jesus.
 - iii. Consider also **Hebrews 2:11 “That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers”** – Jesus calls us His brothers because we have the same Father.
- d. So who is a child of God, and what does it mean to be a child of God? The clear explanation is found here from John again!
 - i. **John 1:11-13 “He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”**. God makes us children of God. Those without faith then, are not fully the children of God in the sense that the children of God were meant to always be.
 - ii. Repeating again the verse that we just read: **1 John 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.”** John is saying “we” who have faith are children of God and the world does not even know God because they, the world, do not have faith.
- e. The difference between a child of God in the generic human sense and a real child of God in the special way is that we are tied to God directly with His Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes everything in the story of humanity. The earth has truly been changed because of The Spirit.
 - i. Yes, it is true that in the OT Israel was said to be "God's son" - That's Exodus 4:23 and Hosea 11:1. And David was said to be "like a son" in 2 Samuel 7:14. God was indeed fashioning His children, and moving the story of humanity ever closer to His presence. He always has been. But there fuller sense that was coming of being the Children of God that was only possible through the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. We are born again - John 3:3
 - iii. Born of God. - John 1:11-13
 - iv. We born of the Spirit. – John 3:5
 - v. We are born of love - 1 John 4:7
 - vi. Unlike Israel we are born in the image of the one who has resurrected.

- vii. Children of God are made in the image of The Son of God who was raised to new life after death. This is a first in history. In Christ, we are tied to a literal death and resurrection. This has never happened before.

5. Excursion into Children of the devil

- a. From this passage here's a focal point of John, for us to know who really are not part of the church. From this passage he creates nice clear contrasting list.

Children of God (v10)	Children of the Devil (v10)
Know God (v1)	Do Not know God, but they know the world (v1)
We hope in the coming Jesus (v3)	They do not hope in anything, are not purifying themselves (v3)
Does not keep on sinning (v9)	Keeps on sinning without any repentance (v4)
Abide (says yes to what Jesus has done in their lives always) (v6)	Does not abide in a holy, and sinless Jesus because they say "yes" to sin (v6)
We see and know Jesus (v6)	They have not seen nor know Jesus. (v6)
Practices Righteousness (v7)	Does not practice righteousness (v10)
Is born of God (v9)	Is born of the devil (v10)
Does the kind of work that destroys the devils work (v8)	Does the works of the devil (v8)
Loves his brother (v10)	Hates his brother (v10)

6. Why the extremist language?

- a. John is creating polar opposite views for us so that we might grow in maturity. Sometimes when we encounter these polar opposite extremes with language that avoids nuance and the grey middle, we can be tempted to think that this is some sort of simplistic or fundamentalist or even legalistic way to view the world. Rather, by creating polar opposites John is drawing the boundary markers of where righteousness begins, and where sin begins. It's a teaching method meant to encourage the training of our will. Polar opposites help us figure out which direction we're going – toward which pole? With enough "no to these" and "yes to those" we grow in maturity as Christians. Hebrews puts it like this: "**Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.**"
- b. If you were to read the "wisdom literature" of the OT, you would see very similar language. Simple, clear cut "this is good" and "this is bad" language. This is lady wisdom, and this is harlot folly. By constantly identifying these things in our very lives we grow in maturity of being more like Jesus.
- c. How does this work? John says simply observe the fruit of the lives that are being lived. There isn't going to be a temple to indicate who loves God pretty soon, and if we can't judge by the outside appearances (because of that Holy Spirit anointing that we talked about last week), then what do we have left? We have the practices of individuals which we can look at and make

judgements. Without Judaism we will have circumcision of the heart that we can observe instead of physical circumcision.

d. What good is being instructed like this? 2 Reasons:

- i. First reason John wants us to mature so that we might know ahead of time that these kinds of teachings are wrong. John specifically says that this is his intention in verse 7 “**1 John 3:7 Little children (teknia), let no one deceive you**”. The reason why John is pointing all of this out is because he expects us to grow in the same way that Jesus expected His disciples to grow. If we adopt deceptive teachings we can’t mature, and if we don’t mature, then we don’t produce fruit.
- ii. The second reason is because we’re at war. Look at v8 again “**1 John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.**” – Jesus appeared so that He might destroy the works of the devil. But you, my sweet, dear, little children, are at war with the works of the devil because you are the church. Not just the pastor, not just the elder.
 1. Let us look at the phrase Jesus Himself uses in Matthew 16 when talking about the church. **Matthew 16:16 “Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.””**
 2. Take note at how consistent this sounds with the message of the 1 John.
 3. First - Peter’s confession that Jesus is BOTH God and Christ goes directly against the teaching of the antichrists that we talked about last week. If you remember, the antichrists deny BOTH that Jesus is from God and the Messiah.
 4. Second – Flesh and blood did not reveal this to Peter. It wasn’t his Jewishness that opened his eyes to this reality. It was of God. That’s exactly what we said earlier about the true children of God. The True children of God are born of Spirit and not according to flesh and blood.
 5. Third – Jesus will build his gathered assembly, His church, and hell will not prevail against the church. If you read it like this it might sound like the church is on the defensive, but its not. Gates aren’t offensive units in battle, they are defensive units in battle. Jesus is saying that hell will not be able to withstand the advancement of the church. This is an offensive message. We just read that Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil (v8) – if that’s the case then Jesus destroys the satan, sin and death through the cross and resurrection then we the church, carry that mission out until His appearing by advancing the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven.
 6. Fourth, Take note of the word for “loosen” here in v19. It is the word “luo”. It is the same word as 1 John 3:8 for “destroy”. There are 2 different senses of this word being used. One to loosen and another to destroy, but they accomplish the same goal.

- a. Binding and loosing from Matthew 16 tends to be things that churches do in authority. In the church we say things like “yes, your sins are forgiven”. “Yes, you can be baptized”, “yes, you can take communion”.
 - b. All of these things we loosen confirm the “destroying”/loosening of 1 John 3:9. The works of satan, sin and death in the world. What we’re “loosing” as a church based off of what Jesus is destroyed.
 - c. As Jesus destroys the works of satan, sin and death, we come along and destroy or loosen the effects of satan’s work, the effects of sin run rampant in the world, and the effects of the death we see everywhere.
 - d. We’re not destroying those things, Jesus already did that. What we do instead is come along side to what Jesus is doing here on earth and remove the ramifications of the rampant influence of satan, sin, and death.
 - e. We declare the gospel and when people believe they are freed from satan/sin/death. We perform baptisms so people can see what that looks like and join the true children of God. We perform communion so that we can be nourished from Jesus and take Jesus out into the world.
- 7. This ties in well with what Jesus said to His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse. **John 16:2 “Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering a service to God”.**
- 8. We conclude that what we’re at war is, is the deception that the devil is constantly throwing at the churches.
- 7. In light of this truth, How Then Shall We Live?
 - a. First, **“Know it is a spiritual battle”** let me say that simply knowing that we are in a spiritual battle is very important. Knowing that we might be hated, and knowing that we might live in a strange world is an important part in living this out. In a race war, the other war is the problem. In a class war, the other class is the problem. In a political war, the other politicians are the problem. Knowing it’s a spiritual battle, means we better know who our enemies are. It helps us to know that the problem since the garden has always been deception, and God chose to act in love to those who were deceived.
 - b. **Spend time growing in discernment.** Think of things in these polar ways and consider which direction your life is going based off of the behaviors described by the children of God. Pause and reflect on every piece of advice that you get. Pause and reflect on what “experts say”. Pause and reflect on what that piece of media you are interacting is saying. Is it growing you to be a real child of God? These questions when prompted by the Spirit offer us such an opportunity to grow in Jesus. Another reason we want to grow in discernment, is simply because we get to.
 - c. **Lose your neutrality.** Let us let go of the idea that we can go to work and be neutral. John goes out of his way here to destroy the myth of neutrality. The ongoing acts of the devil are opposed to the ongoing acts of God, and we only have one of two camps to be in. The enemy certainly isn’t neutral and doesn’t seem to be taking breaks in attacking the church. Let us lose the idea that we can be neutral students, neutral employees, neutral bosses. Assuming neutrality is the first step in being deceived.
 - d. **Lose your pessimism.** John tells his readers that they have hope in the appearing of Jesus. Jesus in the upper room discourse tells his disciples (right after telling them that people were going to

try and kill them) – Jesus tells them **John 16:33 “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”**.

- i. When we realize that we’re constantly in a spiritual battle we might get the sense that this battle is a losing battle.
- ii. Jesus assures us that just because it’s a long battle, we will still have peace, and we will still win because has overcome the world.
- iii. The command “take heart” or “have courage” is the most popular command in the bible. It is given ever only to God’s real children, special and dear children. So take heart little children of God. Lose the pessimism the Lord is with us now.