



PART 10: CHILD OF GOD

1 John 2:28 - 3:10

The child of God is known by four marks.

I. Introduction – Context

Adam did a great job last week, and he commented on John's intensity in this letter - especially when he calls these false teachers "antichrists." We may find it ironic that the one known as the "apostle of love" uses such fierce and condemning language.

John is trying to protect them from the lies of these false teachers, who were denying the truth about Jesus Christ and misleading them. John says he is writing to give them a proper assurance or confidence that they really do belong to God (1 John 5:13).

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." 1 John 5:13

Note: Who are you going to trust to speak for God? John, the eyewitness, or a professor of philosophy or religion?

He addresses them as children for two reasons. First, he is their spiritual father in the Lord. Second, they are the adopted children of God through Jesus Christ.

Q: How does one know if they are a child of God?

The child of God is known by four marks.

II. The Four Marks of the Child of God

A. Sincerely Profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

John's entire letter is a defense of Jesus of Nazareth as God's eternal Son and Messiah. The true child of God, unlike the false teachers, professes Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus is Lord because He is God's Son, co-equal with God from eternity (1 John 1:1-4). Jesus is Savior because His death made forgiveness of our sins possible (1 John 1:7-2:2, 22-23, 5:1, 11-13).

John tells them to “continue in Him,” referring to Jesus Christ (1 John 2:28).

“And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.” 1 John 2:28

B. Given a New Birth

Notice John’s language “born of Him” (1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18).

“If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.” 1 John 2:29

This is John’s way of describing the new birth Jesus said is necessary to see and enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” John 3:3

This is the spiritual reality by which Paul said we are “made alive” in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5, Colossians 2:13, Titus 3:4-7). It is only those “born of Him” who are children of God (John 1:12-13).

“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” John 1:12-13

“Conversion is coming to faith in Christ, trusting Him for forgiveness through His death and resurrection, repenting of your sinfulness and sins, and humbly asking for forgiveness, while believing that He hears you, and receives you. This trusting in Christ leads to a change of inclination towards following Jesus, and a teachability in the person’s posture. You become like a child in that sense, and desire to learn how God wants you to live and seek to follow, albeit imperfectly.

This is all precipitated by an inward change of desire that causes you to want to be forgiven. So the new birth, as Jesus describes it, is the impartation of new life – the dynamic, ultimately irrepressible seed of spiritual life – and this continually draws the believer to Christ, in pursuit of holiness, and ever on to fulfill Christ’s commission on the earth. This dynamic new life will finally bring the believer home to Christ in eternity.” Lex Loizides, quoted by Adrian Warnock, "Raised With Christ," p. 133.

This means that a person is not a child of God simply because they were born into a Christian family, attend church, give mental assent to Jesus, or live as a moral, religious, or spiritual person.

C. Given a New Identity

With our spiritual birth, we are given a new identity as God’s adopted sons and daughters.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” 1 John 3:1

We do not earn this new identity any more than a child earns their identity with their parents. It is given to us from the pure motivation of the Father’s love. It is God’s radical grace in Jesus Christ.

Ex. Adoption this week ...

"Jesus, the beloved Son, does not hoard this experience for Himself. He invites and calls us to share the same intimate and liberating relationship."
Brennan Manning, "Abba's Child"

This new identity gives us the motivation to live a radically different life.

Ex. Les Mes movie clip (I give you back to God).

D. Given a New Power for a New Lifestyle

"No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." 1 John 3:6-8a

Holiness is a mark of truly being born again by the Spirit of God. John is addressing the lies of the false teachers, who appear to have been saying either: (1) one can achieve the state of sinless perfection, or (2) sin is irrelevant.

Our new birth, however, gives us a new power for a new lifestyle of holiness.

John's bold statements have led to numerous questions by Christians. Is John, in fact, saying that a Christian will no longer sin? The short answer is no for two reasons: (1) John has already indicated the Christian will struggle with sin, but ongoing forgiveness and cleansing are available through Jesus (1 John 1:8-2:2); and (2) John's verb tenses indicate that he is referring to ongoing, habitual sin in a Christian's life.

The true child of God cannot and will not claim the freedom to sin. Instead, we will be empowered and motivated by God's Spirit and love for a life of holiness.

"A person's righteousness is this the evidence of his new birth, not the cause or condition of it." John Stott

"Regeneration is a subject that lies at the very basis of our salvation, and we should be very diligent to take heed that we really are 'born again,' for there are many who fancy they are, who are not. ...it is a change which is known and felt: known by works of holiness, and felt by a gracious experience. This great work is supernatural. It is not an operation which man performs for himself; a new principle infused, which works in the heart, renews the soul, and affects the entire man. It is not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. To wash and dress a corpse is a far different thing from making it alive: man can do the one, God alone can do the other. ...May the Lord enable us to be assured on this vital point, for to be unregenerate is to be unsaved, unpardoned, without God, and without hope." Charles Spurgeon

III. Conclusion – Our Only Foundation

The only foundation and reason for our salvation in Jesus Christ is the Father's great love for us given to us through Jesus Christ. We are not loved and adopted by God because we have loved God or acted righteously. Rather, we are loved and adopted by God because He has determined to set His love on us (1 John 4:10-19, Romans 5:5-8, Ephesians 1:3-8).

"Lord Jesus Christ, I'm sorry for the things I've done wrong in my life. Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong. Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen. (from Alpha)

Pray for the witness of the Spirit (Romans 5:5-8, 8:14-16; Galatians 4:6-7).