

“Children of God”

(1 John 2:28-3:10 ~ Part 2)

Introduction

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is unambiguously and unapologetically, exclusive. Contrary to popular religious sentiment, there is only one way to be saved – only one way that leads to God (as Redeemer and Father). In our culture, “inclusivity” and “tolerance” have become the new morality – although, when pressed, we quickly find out that this dogma is neither really inclusive nor tolerant. For example, those who promote inclusivity often exclude those who do not, and those who scream for tolerance are often intolerant of those who disagree (and those who state emphatically that there is no absolute truth, emphatically believe that is an objective truth). Both of these secular standards (inclusivity and tolerance) are nothing more a façade, an attempt to hide idolatry under the guise of (Christless) virtue and decency.
- Christianity is often accused of being exclusive and intolerant; and it is true. This does not mean that Christians are to practice bigotry or do things out of hatred. It means Christianity affirms the truth from God’s Word that only those who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be saved – that all roads do not lead to God and not every moral, religious, or spiritual person will be saved.
- Jesus often spoke in absolute terms, and with rigid requirements. His message was repeatedly and intentionally narrow, exclusive, and uncompromising. While always loving and gracious, His sermons were polarizing and provocative. He spoke in stark contrasts of life and death, good and evil, light and darkness, heaven and hell, truth and error, belief and unbelief, love and hate, salvation and condemnation, and that you are either child of God or a child of the Devil. In His teaching Jesus revealed that there are only two options with regard to God and His saving grace; no third option, no middle-road, no neutral ground. Jesus explicitly declared, “*Whoever is not with me is against me...*” (Matt.12:30).

At the end of His powerfully convicting “Sermon on the Mount” Jesus declared:

- ♦ The two gates/ways (vs.13-14) – The wide gate (which many find) leads to destruction, the narrow gate (which few find) leads to life.
 - ♦ The two animals/prophets (vs.15) – The sheep (innocent faithful prophets), and the wolves (ravenous false prophets)
 - ♦ The two trees/fruit (vs.16-20) – The good tree bears good fruit, and the bad tree bears bad fruit (and will be cut down and thrown into the fire).
 - ♦ The two builders/foundations (vs.24-27) – The wise man built his house upon the rock (the house stood strong), and the foolish man built his house on the sand (the house fell with a great crash).
- Jesus was not trying to be popular. He was not trying to amuse or pacify people with His teaching and preaching. Nor was He trying to build people’s self-esteem or unite all people under the banner of “coexist.” Why was Jesus so such unwaveringly blunt and authoritatively dogmatic – why such hard teaching? Because eternity is at stake – eternal salvation or condemnation (heaven or hell) hang in the balance. Why did Jesus speak as if there were only one way to heaven? Because there is only one way to heaven – and that “way” is not a what, but a who – salvation comes only through knowing, loving, and following Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

This is the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture. Here are just a precious few examples (see also Acts 4:12; Matt.7:13-14; 1Tim.2:5-6):

John 3:16, 18 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ... ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

John 3:36 ~ “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

John 14:6 ~ “Jesus said ... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

1 John 5:11-12 ~ “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

➤ This same exclusive message runs throughout all Scripture (both Old and New Testaments). The book of “1 John” is certainly no exception. As we saw last week, we find in Scripture the sobering truth that – in opposition to the false teaching of the “universal fatherhood of God” (or the “universal brotherhood of mankind”) – a person is either a child of God or a child of the devil.

To be sure, every human being is created by God but not every human being is a child of God. God is the Creator of all mankind, but not the Savior of all mankind. The description of ‘child of God’ can only rightly be used of those who are saved by God – the salvation that is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

The truth revealed in Scripture is that everyone is indeed a child – i.e., everyone has a spiritual father. A person is either a child of God (by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) or a child of the devil (by rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior). Furthermore, God’s Word is abundantly and unmistakably clear that everyone is a child of the devil unless/until they become a child of God – i.e., until they are truly saved.

John 1:12 ~ “... to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God”

1 John 3:10 ~ “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.”

1 John 5:19 ~ “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

➤ The passage before us this morning details the differences between those who are saved (children of God) and those who are unsaved (children of the devil).

1 John 2:28-3:10 ~ “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. ¹See 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. ²Beloved, 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. ³And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever 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. ⁹No 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. ¹⁰By 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.”

A. Children of God (2:28-3:3)

➤ To be a true child of God, one has not just to be born (physically) but “born again” (spiritually; see Jn.3:1-8). This spiritual rebirth comes only from the Father, through His Son and His Spirit, and not from any human merit, work, or ritual. A person is not saved by good works, but unto good works (see Eph.2:5, 8-10; Rom.3:20; Gal.2:16; Is.64:4). The only way to be saved is by God’s grace alone through faith alone Jesus Christ alone.

John 1:11-13 ~ “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. ¹²But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

➤ As we turn to 1 John 2:28-3:10, we find the apostle John (writing words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; 2Tim.3:16-17; 2Pet.1:21) identifying some of the differences between those who are children of God (those who are saved), and those who are children of the devil (those who are unsaved). Looking specifically at 1 John 2:28-3:3, we can identify five distinct characteristics of those who are truly children of God.

1. They unashamedly anticipate Christ’s Return (vs.28)

➤ One reason why Christians are to “abide” in Christ: “*so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming*” (vs.28). The word “confidence” (*parrēsia*) could also be translated as boldness, assurance, or speaking freely. While the “coming” of Christ (referring to His Second Coming) is a terrifying reality for all unbelievers – as Christ will come to judge the world – true believers will “*not shrink ... in shame at his coming*”, because they are saved in Christ from the judgment to come (Rom.8:1-5). Because of God’s sovereign love and saving grace, true Christians actually look forward to – long for – the coming of Christ.

2. They seek to live according to Christ’s righteousness (vs.29)

➤ A second mark of those who are truly children of God is that they seek to live according to Christ’s righteousness. We read this in verse twenty-nine: “*If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him*” (vs.29). The idea behind “*practi[ing]*” (*poieō*; to make or do) is to live a righteous life, by seeking to obey God’s commands. This, of course, does not mean that the Christian is perfect – or acts perfectly righteous – but that the righteousness of Christ is their sincere and passionate pursuit.

3. They have received God’s gracious and salvific love through Christ (vs.1a)

➤ Another mark of a child of God is that they have received God’s gracious and salvific love through Christ. “*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are*” (vs.1a). The gracious and salvific love of God is truly amazing, as it is utterly undeserved and profoundly awesome. In fact, in his unbridled enthusiasm, John used a Greek word (*potapos*; only 7x in New Testament), translated “*what kind*” [“what sort” (NET); “how great” (NAS); “what manner” (KJV)], which could more literally be translated “of what country” – as if out of this world – beyond human explanation.

➤ The love that God has “*given to us*”, to give us the right to “*be called children of God*” (vs.1), is truly not from this world! God has not saved us because we were so loveable (because we are not); nor has He saved us because we deserved His love (because we do not); nor has He saved us hoping that we would somehow repay Him (because we cannot). Here is the simple, yet sacred, truth: God saved us because He loved us!

4. They embrace, identify with, the sufferings of Christ (vs.1b)

- A fourth mark of children of God is that they embrace the sufferings of Christ. Implicit in verse one is the sharp distinction between those who are children of God (those who are saved) and those who are children of the devil (those who are unsaved), those who are not of this world and those who are of this world: *“The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him”* (vs.1b).
- To be a Christian in a non-Christian world, is to be an alien and a stranger in this world. Christians are not to be “at home” in this world. They are to recognize that this world is under the rule of the evil one (1Jn.5:19), and is therefore operating contrary to the will and Word of Christ. Consequently, if we faithfully abide in Christ, we will often be in conflict with the world.

5. They find their ultimate hope in Christ (vs.2-3)

- The apostle John reminds us of this great truth: *“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”* (vs.2). The Christian’s eternal reward is eternal life in heaven, and unmitigated fellowship with God. This refers to our spiritual and eternal glorification (Rom.8:28-30). This is the “promise” of God (1Jn.2:25), and the “living hope” (1Pet.1:3), for every Christian.
- How should we respond to such a promise in Christ? *“And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure”* (vs.3). As we have seen, a mark of a true Christian is seeking to live in the righteousness of Christ (1Jn.2:29). Knowing that Christ is coming again, and knowing that we will be glorified in Him, does not produce spiritual complacency nor immorality. Those who are truly children of God, by the righteousness of Christ, will reflect Christ’s righteousness in how they live. Righteous living does not merit salvation, but is the evidence of it.

B. Children of the devil (3:4-10)

- As we have seen, the description of “children of the devil” is true of everyone who has not received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. While this may sound harsh, or overstated, it is actually quite reasonable and rational. For all who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are “hostile to God” (Rom.8:7) and reject their only hope to be freed from sin and Satan’s rule – to be “delivered ... from the domain of darkness and transferred ... to the kingdom of [God’s] beloved son” (Col.1:13). The only way to become a true child of God is to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Consequently, all those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior remain children of the devil.

Eph 2:1-3 ~ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
(see Jn.3:36; Eph.5:6; Tit.3:3; Gal.1:4; Jms.4:4; Matt.13:36-43)

John 8:42-47 ~ “Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.’” (see Rev.2:9)

- The truth is, not every human being is a child of God. We are by nature children of wrath (Eph.2:3); through our sinful choices and attitudes we become children of disobedience (Eph.2:2); and those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are children of the devil (Jn.8:42-45; cf. Matt.13:24-30, 36-43).

Only those who truly put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior become, at that moment and for all eternity, children of God (Jn.1:12-13; Rom.8:14-17; Gal.3:27-29; 1Jn.3:1).

➤ Looking specifically at 1 John 3:4-10, we can identify five distinct characteristics of those who are truly children of the devil.

1. They live in unrepentant sin (vs.4)

➤ As we have seen, the word *“practice”* (*poieō*; vs.4^{2x}; cf. 2:17, 29; 3:7, 8, 9, 10); primarily “make” or “do”) here refers a continual or habitual way of life [by the way, contrary to the popular saying, practice does not make perfect; practice makes permanent]. Those who are truly children of God practice [“does”] *“the will of God”* (2:17), practice [“practices”] *“righteousness”* (2:29), and practice [“obey”] God’s commands (5:2).

Conversely, those who are children of the devil do not practice righteousness. Rather, they make *“a practice of sinning”* (vs.4). That is, they live a life of sin – without genuine confession and repentance. While Christians are not perfect (1:9; 2:1), they do not live a sinful life.

1 John 3:10 ~ “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.”

Isa 64:6 ~ “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

➤ Therefore, *“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness”* (vs.4). Those who continue to live a sinful life – without genuine confession and repentance – actually live a condition of spiritual *“lawlessness”* (*anomia*; lit. no law, without law) for *“sin is lawlessness”* (vs.4). It is to live in a state of spiritual rebellion to God and against God’s law. Those who live a life of unrepentant sin – no matter how moral, spiritual, or religious they pretend to be – show by their lawlessness that they are not true children of God.

Matt 7:21-23 ~ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness [*anomia*].’

➤ It is important to note (again) that a person is not saved by good works but saved unto good works. That is, no one merits salvation by living a righteous life, but those who truly have salvation (in Christ)

Eph 2:4-10 ~ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved ... ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (see Matt.3:8; 5:16; 7:17-19; Jn.15:1-8; 2Cor.9:8; Col.1:10)

2. They reject Jesus as Lord and Savior (vs.5-6)

➤ The reason why unbelievers continue in sin is because they reject Jesus as Lord and Savior. For without the saving and sanctifying work of Christ, every person is unable to live the righteous life that God requires. They have no defense against temptation and sin, and no ability to be freed from Satan’s evil control.

Rom 8:7-8 ~ “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

1 John 5:11-12 ~ “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

➤ This is one reason why the Son of God “*appeared*” (*phaneroō*) – i.e., came to earth to be born of a virgin (Matt.1:21-23; Lk.1:34-35) – “*in order to take away sins*” (vs.5). If we could continue to live in sin, or if we could be saved by our own rightness/goodness, then Jesus would not have had to come to be our Savior. But Jesus came to “*take away*” (*airō*; vs.5) our sins. This is clearly a reference to Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. For through Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus paid the full penalty for the sins of all who would ever believe (see Rom.3:23; 5:8; 6:23).

1 John 1:9 ~ “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 2:2 ~ “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

➤ This could only be accomplished by one who is both fully God and fully man (Col.1:19; 2:9), and by one who is absolutely without sin (for a sinner cannot be a savior, but needs a savior). This is why we are often reminded in Scripture that “*in [Jesus] there is no sin*” (vs.5) – the Righteous One dying for unrighteous ones, the sinless Savior dying for sinners.

2 Cor 5:21 ~ “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (see Heb.4:15; 7:26; 1Pet.1:19; 2:22)

1 Peter 3:18 ~ “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit”

➤ This is why “*No one who abides in him keeps on sinning*” (vs.6). For those who are truly saved from sin are those who abide in Him who has no sin. Jesus has saved them from their sins, not enabled them to continue to live in sin. Jesus will not allow those whom He has saved to live like they are unsaved. Furthermore, those who are truly God’s children cannot continue to live as children of the devil (nor do they truly want to). Furthermore still, those who are truly saved, have God’s “*anointing*” (2:27) in them – the indwelling power and presence of God’s Holy Spirit – and He will not tolerate unbridled sin and lawlessness.

Rom 6:1-4 ~ “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

➤ Therefore, the evidence is clear that those who live an unrepentant and sinful life have rejected Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, for “*no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him*” (vs.6).

3. They live in deception (vs.7)

➤ To be sure, people can be self-deceived (1Jn.1:8) and even deceived by false prophets/teachers (1Jn.2:26), but ultimately all deception comes by the devil who is called “*the deceiver of the whole world*” (Rev.12:9), and “*a liar and the father of lies*” (Jn.8:44), and who “*disguises himself as an angel of light*” (2Cor.11:14). This is one reason why those who are children of the devil (those who are unsaved) live in deception, for they live under the power and influence of the devil.

Acts 5:3 ~ “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?’”

Acts 13:8-10 ~ “But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰and said, ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?’”

2 Thess 2:9-10 ~ “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” (see 2Tim.3:12-13)

Matt 24:5, 11, 24 ~ “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ... ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ... ²⁴For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”

➤ As Christians, we need not be surprised when we see how willing non-Christians reject the truth and how readily they embrace lies. For until they receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, they are powerless against the wiles of the devil. Unbelievers are deceived into thinking there is no God, or that there are many ways to God, or that they have no need of a Savior, or that they are many saviors, etc.

Interestingly, the devil can deceive Christians and non-Christians in different ways. He often deceives non-Christians by convincing them that they are good enough apart from Christ; that they are saved by their good works, by their church attendance/membership; by their religious background, by their parents’ faith, or by their sincerity or moral intentions.

But the devil can try to deceive Christians in just the opposite way: rather than trying to convince them that they are saved, he tries to convince them that they are unsaved; he draws their attention not to their good works but to the mistakes and weaknesses. The devil tries to convince believers that God’s grace in Christ is not sufficient for salvation, to persuade them that God’s promises are not true, to deceive them into thinking that God’s saving love is not for them, to lure them into thinking that they have sinned too much, or too big, for them to be truly saved.

The devil will often deceive those who are unsaved by trying to convince them they are saved, and deceive those who are saved by trying to convince them that they are unsaved.

➤ The Christian, however, is exhorted to not be deceived: *“Little children, let no one deceive you”* (vs.7; *“deceive”* [*planaō*; led astray] see 1Jn.2:26). The way to defeat the deceptions of the devil is to know the truth of God, which comes from knowing God’s Word. The apostle John reemphasizes this affirming this truth: *“Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous”* (vs.7; see 1Jn.2:26).

4. They live under the power and influence of the devil (vs.8)

➤ The basic truth is this: those who are truly children of God will live according to God’s will, and those who are truly children of the devil will live according to the devil’s will (Jn.8:39-44). *“Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning”* (vs.8). This does not mean that all unbelievers are as sinful as they could possibly be, or that everything they do is demonic. The phrase *“is of the devil”* (vs.8) refers to the basis of the unbeliever’s lifestyle, which is under the power and influence of the devil. Since the unbeliever has not been redeemed, they are still ultimately enslaved to their sinful/carnal desires, thoughts, and pleasures.

Titus 3:3 ~ “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.” (Eph.2:1-3)

➤ The *“beginning”* likely refers here to the time before the creation of humankind (i.e., Adam and Eve), when Satan pridefully rebelled against God and was consequently banished from heaven (see Lk.10:18; Is.14:12; Rev.12:9). The opposition between Christ and Satan was foretold as early as Gen. 3:15, *“I*

will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

➤ It is therefore impossible for a true believer, who has been saved by the work of Christ, to continue (persistently, habitually) in the works of the devil. Obviously, a person cannot be doing the works of the devil and doing the works of Christ at the same time; nor can a person be both a child of the devil and a child of God. For the devil is diametrically opposed to God, and “[t]he reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (vs.8).

✓ **Illust:** “The phrase *the works of the devil* encompasses various satanic activities such as instigating sin and rebellion, tempting believers, inspiring unbiblical ideologies and false religions, persecuting and accusing believers, instigating the work of false teachers, and wielding the power of death (e.g., Lk.8:12; Jn.8:44; Acts 5:3; 1Cor.7:5; 2Cor.4:4; 10:3-5; Eph.6:11-12; 1Thess.2:18; Heb.2:14; Rev.12:10). None of those *works* can ultimately defeat the saints, who have been delivered from his Kingdom (Col.1:13)” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*; 1 John 3:5-8).

➤ Jesus came to “*destroy*” (*lyō*) everything that the devil is doing, for everything the devil does is contrary to the will of God. Jesus is victorious over the devil. On the cross, Christ completely and eternally destroyed any hold that the devil would have over those who would be children of God (see Jn.12:31; 16:11; Rom.16:20; Rev.20:2-3, 10). Through His substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus freed us from penalty of sin (justification) and the power of sin (sanctification) – and one day, the very presence of sin (glorification). Those who continue to live in (habitual, unrepentant) sin show that they have not truly been freed/saved by Jesus Christ.

Heb 2:14-15 ~ “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

1 Cor 15:56-57 ~ “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rom 6:16-18 ~ “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”

5. They do not possess the Holy Spirit of God (vs.9-10)

➤ In verse nine, we find a fifth description of those are children of the devil: “*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*” (vs.9). As we have seen, every true believer has the power and presence of God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within them (see 2:27; Jn.3:3-8). The Spirit of God regenerates, baptizes, seals, gifts, and indwells all believers at conversion, progressively sanctifying, and securing them in Christ forever. He fills, leads, comforts, and intercedes for believers, empowering them for godly living and service.

This is what it means to have “*God’s seed [abiding] in*” the true believer; the child of God. And this is (yet another reason) why the true believer “*cannot keep on sinning*” (vs.9).

✓ **Illust:** “Some take this to be the Word of God that brings about the new birth (cf. Jms.1:18, 22; 1Pet.1:23, 25). Others see it as a way of speaking of the Holy Spirit in his regenerating and transforming presence within the believer. Since the Holy Spirit works through the Word in regeneration, both of these ideas are likely intended here. In other words, because the Word is present in the believer’s heart through the work of the Spirit, the believer cannot keep on sinning. Thus the hearts of genuine Christians (those who are truly children of God) have been so transformed that they

cannot live in a pattern of continual sin – though this does not mean that Christians are ever completely free from sin in this life (see 1Jn.1:8-10)” (ESV Study Bible notes; 1Jn.3:9-10).

➤ Simply put, the indwelling Spirit of God will not sit idly by why the believer lives a life of sin. The Spirit of God is not going to share space with the devil; the spirit of the antichrist. The Spirit of God works, with the Word of God, to lead the Christian in their new life in Christ. At true conversion, the believer is fundamentally and radically changed – a new nature, new purpose, new desires, new perspective, new affections, and a new destiny. This regenerating and sanctifying work is by the Holy Spirit of God, which indwells all true believers.

2 Cor 5:17 ~ “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Rom 6:4 ~ “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

➤ The apostle John, writing words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God (2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:21), summarized his teaching: *“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”* (vs.10).

➤ The final phrase of this passage (*“love his brother”*, vs.10) offers a specific application: children of God love others, especially those who are children of God (Jn.13:34-35; Gal.6:1). This also introduces the topic of Christian *“love”* (*agapaō*), which is discussed at length in the subsequent verses.

Conclusion

➤ There is a great distinction between those who are children of God, and those who are children of the devil. As Christians, we must be discerning, loving, and gracious not foolish, hateful, or judgmental. For we know that we were once children of the devil – *“by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”* (Eph.2:3; cf. Tit.3:3). We are called to love one another and to love even our enemies, even those who are enemies of Christ (Matt.5:44; Phil.3:18). We are called to earnestly evangelize the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, knowing that God is sovereign over.

Matt 13:24-30, 36-43 ~ “He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ ³⁷He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.’”