

## 1 John 3:1-10 – Children of God

Jesus is returning. John said that Jesus' return should motivate us to live godly lives so that we will not be ashamed when he comes. Chapter 2 closed with "everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him." Being born of God is a term John liked to use. He used it in John 1:12-13. Jesus talked about "born from above" in John 3:3-8. Being "born from above" and being "born of the Spirit" is the same as being born of God. Chapter 3 begins with John talking about the "children of God". Some people say that "we are all God's children". We were created in the image of God but does that make us "children of God"? We will answer this question from the Bible.

### Read 1 John 3:1-3.

Note that John preferred the term "children of God" instead of "sons of God". This may be because, for John, there is only one "Son of God", Jesus Christ. John proclaimed that we are not only called children of God, but that we are in fact children of God. Based on the beginning of verse 1, why are we called children of God? Why doesn't the world know or understand us? (3:1) See John 15:18-19.

Verse 2 says that right now we are the children of God. What does John mean by "what we will be has not yet appeared"?

What will happen when Jesus appears? What does it mean that "we shall see him as he is"? There is a hint at the end of verse 3. (3:2)

What happens when we have the hope of Christ's return in us? (3:3)

### Read 1 John 3:4-6.

We need to note that John used the word "doing / practicing" combined with a virtue a number of times in his writings. See 1 John 1:6, 2:29, 3:7, 3:10. See also John 3:21, 5:29 and Revelation 22:11. The same word, "doing / practicing", is also combined with "sin". See 1 John 3:4, 8, 9. Also see John 8:34. In 1 John 3:4-10, verse 6 is the only verse that does not use "doing / practicing" combined with sin. It uses the verb "to sin" by itself. Hopefully, the importance of this note will become apparent in verses 4-10.

In verse 4, what is true of someone who practices sin (makes a practice of sinning, ESV)? Is there a difference between someone who commits a sin and someone who practices sin? Sin is a violation of God's law and therefore is lawlessness.

From verse 5, what do we learn about what Jesus did? What do we learn about Jesus' nature / character?

According to verse 6, what is true of everyone who abides in Jesus? What is true of the person who sins (keeps on sinning, ESV)? At a glance, this appears to contradict what John said in 1 John 1:6-10. John did not forget what he wrote in chapter 1 by the time he got to chapter 3. From 1:8 and 10, if we say we don't have sin or have not sinned then we are liars and self-deceived. 1 John 3:6 seems to indicate that if we sin then we don't know God. How can these statements be reconciled?

**Read 1 John 3:7-10.**

Verse 7 is in contrast with verse 6. What is true of the one who practices righteousness? What does it mean to "practice righteousness"?

What is true of the one who practices sin? What is true of the devil? Why did Jesus come? (3:8)

What is true of someone who is born of God? Why is this true? What does it mean that someone born of God is "not able to sin"? ESV has "cannot keep on sinning". NASB has "cannot sin *continually*". NIV has "cannot go on sinning". (3:9)

Based on verse 10, how can we tell who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil?

This is a good passage to remind us that it is important to observe precisely what is said and not to jump to conclusions. There is a big difference between someone who sins and someone who practices sin. In the book of James, it is essential to note the use of the term "faith without works". Paul agreed. True faith will manifest itself in good works.