

In these verses John covers another reason we can know we belong to God: we exhibit a family resemblance. Those that belong to the devil will commit sin (vs. 6b, 8) but those who are born of God will have a desire to avoid it (vs. 3, 6a, 7, 9, 10) that they may be more like their Father (v. 3).

John opens this thought in the last verse of the previous chapter: **1 John 2:29** “*If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*” This verse leads into John’s next premise that we are the children of God through the new birth and thus our actions will reflect our Father’s nature.

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<sup>1</sup> Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

**“Behold, what manner of love [agape – selfless love] the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [offspring; children] of God”** - John wants us to consider and be amazed at the selfless love that God has shown us in order to claim us as His children. There was no inherent benefit in us that would cause Him desire to call us His children - only His love for us. **“therefore the world knoweth [understand; have knowledge of] us not, because it knew him not”** - John gives us the next evidence that we belong to God: because we are children of God, we have the family resemblance of the world not knowing us. The world does not understand God and therefore as His children, the world does not “get” us either. They don’t understand “what makes us tick.”

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<sup>2</sup> Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

**“Beloved, now are we the sons of God”** - We don’t have to wait until we get to heaven to be a child of God because it is a current reality. The moment we get saved the Holy Spirit begins His work of transforming us into the image of Christ.

**“and it doth not yet appear [to make known or visible] what we shall be”** - Because we are still in our sinful human bodies we have not yet arrived at the end result that God intends for us. We are hindered by the sin nature of our flesh as well as its temporal nature. We do not yet have our glorified bodies that will be like Christ’s resurrected body. **Phil. 3:20-21** “<sup>20</sup> For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>21</sup> Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

**“but we know that, when he shall appear [to make known or visible], we shall be like [similar; resembling] him; for we shall see him as he is”** - When Christ returns in all His glory, John declares that we will at last be like Christ. The reason John knows that we will be like Him is because we shall see Christ “as he is.” Our natural flesh cannot see God except in a filtered form. Recall Moses’ encounters with God on Mt. Sinai (glowing face [Ex. 34:29-35]; Moses asking to see the glory of God and Him hiding Moses in the clift of the rock [Ex. 33:18-23]). But the day Christ returns we will be able to see Him in all His glory because we will have glorified bodies like His.

**“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”** - Knowing that we will one day see God in all His glory should make us want to purify ourselves in order to be like our Father Who is pure from all sin.

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<sup>4</sup> Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. <sup>5</sup> And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

**“Whosoever committeth [practices] sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law”** - The Greek word for “committeth” has the idea of an ongoing practice. Christians do sin and must confess and repent (see 1 John 1:8-10), but it is not a way of life for them. John gives us various reasons why Christians do not practice sin and the first is because it transgresses the law of God, Whom we love.

**“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins”** - Another reason we do not practice sin is because Christ came in order to take away our sin. We do not want our Lord’s death on the cross to be in vain. Christ died on the cross in order to cleanse us from our sin, so why would we want to continue to commit the sins that our loving Lord died to remove from us?

**“and in him is no sin”** - Another reason Christians do not practice sin: Christ has no sin and we are to be like Him.

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<sup>6</sup> Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

**“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not”** - Because there is no sin in Christ, we have another evidence that we belong to Him: If we belong to Him then sin will not be a habitual part of our life. We may sin from time to time, but we cannot get away with it without confessing it and repenting of it.

**“whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him”** - If we are able to sin continually without remorse or repentance then that is a sign that we do not know Christ. Sin is contrary to the internal nature of a Christian and although Christians do sin because of their unredeemed flesh, they cannot do so without remorse or conviction from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will always lead the Christian to repentance of their sin but this is not true of the non-Christian.

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<sup>7</sup> Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

**“Little children, let no man deceive you”** - The false teachers were teaching that a Christian could sin and still be right with God. The teaching that eventually became part of the Gnostic teachings said that all matter was evil and therefore it didn't matter if we sinned in our mortal bodies. Such sin did not affect our immortal soul and thus had no consequences. Teachers of such doctrine made little or no attempt to live a godly life and so John is warning his readers to not be deceived by these false teachers and their doctrines.

**“he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous”** - John's point is that those who are righteous in Christ will do righteousness just like Christ, who is righteous. He is not saying that doing righteousness makes us righteous for Christ is not righteous because of the righteousness that that He does. Christ does righteousness because He is righteous, and we who belong to Him are also righteous and will therefore do righteousness.

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<sup>8</sup> He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

**“He that committeth [practices] sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning”** - In contrast to those who belong to Christ described in v. 8, John describes those who do not belong to Christ as belonging to the devil. The Greek grammar indicates that John is speaking of sin as a habitual way of life for non-Christians. They make little or no attempt to live for Christ because their behavior reflects their true nature. They act like the devil, whose nature is to sin, for they are “of” their father. **John 8:44** “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*”

**“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”** - The false teachers were teaching that sin in our mortal flesh was of no consequence but John proves otherwise by pointing out that the very reason that Christ came into this world was so that He could “destroy the works of the devil” (sin). If sin was of no consequence then Christ came into this world and died on the cross for nothing. On the contrary, Christ died on the cross to set us free from sin and its consequences.

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<sup>9</sup> Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

**“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed [something sown] remaineth in him”** - The Greek word for “seed” is “sperma” (literally “sperm”) which can refer to a seed planted in the ground or to a man's sperm. The word indicates the origin of offspring, whether plant or animal. When we experience the new birth, the Holy Spirit gives birth to our spirit, giving it new life (John 3:3-7). John is saying that anyone who has been born of God is not able to habitually sin because the life which comes from God is perpetually within him/her.

**“and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”** - The Christian has a new nature that comes from God and it's impossible for this new nature to be the source of sin in the Christian's life. **2 Cor. 5:17** “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” If a Christian sins, the source of that sin is the flesh, which has not yet been redeemed (Rom. 7:16-18, 20; 8:23). He/she cannot continually sin because his/her new nature does not want to sin. See Paul's struggle against his flesh's desire for the sins that he did not want to commit in Rom. 7:14-25.

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<sup>10</sup> In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

**“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil”** - Based on the truths he has just described, John is about to share with us how to tell the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil.

**“whosoever doeth [practices] not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother”** - Two telltale signs that a person does not belong to God is: (1) he/she does not practice the righteousness of God; (2) he/she does not exhibit love for his/her brother. This person will show a family resemblance to the one he/she belongs to, either Christ or Satan. Those who belong to the devil will do as he does and not practice righteousness as well as not showing love to others.

Love is the next characteristic that John describes as belonging to those who know Christ. The remainder of the chapter deals with love being an evidence of salvation because love comes from God and those who belong to Him will love other Christians just as He does.