

PRACTICING RIGHTEOUSNESS: 1 JOHN 3

1 John 2:28–29 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. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

- Confidence. It's what you want to have when you pass. If you're here on earth when the trumpet blows - I pray that if you fall to your knees, it won't be because you're ashamed to look at Jesus, but because you're thanking God for what He's about to do for you. Fall to your knees before you meet Him in the air.

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.

- This is about our motivation. Do you see the Father's love?
- They don't recognize us like they didn't Jesus (John 1:10-11). I don't have a problem with that. They don't acknowledge us.
- We shouldn't seek to "blend in". It's not that the world wasn't aware of their presence, but they chose to ignore them. Same today. If you want to be known by the world, then act like the world. But if you're okay with being ignored by the world, then you'll proudly walk as one of God's children.

2-3 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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

- However, this Jesus who many denied coming in the flesh, will one day return and we will be like Him. The world may choose to ignore Jesus and His followers, but they will acknowledge the Lord and His people one day.
- Such a promise and hope continues to motivate us today. Think about it - we discipline our bodies (food, exercise) in order to get into shape. We'll put a lot of time and effort into getting ourselves in physical shape, won't we? How much more should we correct our steps so that one day we will be glorified with the Lord?

4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

- Again, we're talking about practicing sin.
- Sin isn't something we inherit. It's something we do. It's breaking God's law.
- Why break what God has given us for our good? Haven't we seen that when we break it, it didn't work out for our good? Don't we need God?

5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

- And Jesus came to take forgive us our sins. And we found no such behavior in Jesus!

6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

- So, how could we think we're sons of God and a brother to Jesus - that we abide in them and they in us, when we are habitual sinners?
- I'm a pretty cheesy guy. So, I like cheesy music from time to time. Every now and then, when I'm gettin' ready for the day, I'll hit the shuffle button on my phone and the music begins to play. There's a couple of songs that get to me every now and then. Butterly Kisses as I imagine my girls walking down the isle one day as I give some future son-in-law the stare of death . . . and a song by Kenny Loggins: "For The First Time."
 - *"Are those your eyes? Is that your smile? I've been lookin' at you forever, but I never saw you before. Are these your hands holdin' mine? Now I wonder how I could have been so blind? For the first time I am looking in your eyes. For the first time I'm seein' who you are. I can't believe how much I see when you're lookin' back at me. Now I understand what love is, love is . . . for the first time."*
- I believe this catches the idea: you can't say you're in a relationship with God - that you've "seen" Him while you're spiritually cheating on Him. I can't imagine telling Jordan that "I see her" if I were cheating on her. And brethren, we can't say we "see" the Lord, like we've got single vision, when our eyes are on the world and we're an adulterous people. It's such a blessing to see and only recognize the Lord. We can't be married to the Lord and the Devil.

7-10 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 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. 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. 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.

- Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. This makes me think of not only the sin I gave into, but the effects of sin in my life. Jesus came to save me from death, but from slavery to sin.
 - Read John 8:31-47. I don't know about you, but I don't like being a son of Satan. I don't like being owned by him . . . and he's owned me. Don't like what that produced in my life. Don't like running from the truth - do you?
- 1 Peter 1:13, 22-23 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;
- So, we have a decision to make: who will our Father be? Whose word will we listen to? Who's counsel will become a part of us? We can only follow one counsel! What affect will that have in my life? One's seed produces selfishness - the other brotherly love.

11-13 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

- You remember this early account. Abel and his sacrifice were acceptable to God. Cain and his sacrifice were not. So, Cain was angry. He deceived his brother, "Let us go out to the field" some translations add. And when there, he rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.
- If we say to ourselves, "I should be validated." "I'm the one who should be acknowledged." "I should be accepted." "I'm worthy of your praise." "I'm better." "Give me the glory." Brethren, that's not your voice. It wasn't Cain's. That's your fathers. That's Satan's voice disguised through you. That certainly doesn't sound like Jesus, does it? We're terrified to think about demon possession - evil speaking directly through individuals. Yet, it's just as terrifying to think about the prince of demons practical effect in our lives - found in what we think, say and do.
- So, when we don't act like the world, the world hates us. Why?
 - Because our righteous behavior implies that we judge the world.
 - Because you're not of the same family. You have a different father. You serve the Prince of peace, not the prince of this world.

14-15 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

- So, our loving our brethren is proof that the life of Jesus is present in our lives. That life is evident by the light that comes forth in our lives: love for our brethren. The life given by Jesus is animated in what we do for our brethren. But, no life is evident - we act as dead as we are spiritually. It's very fitting that spiritually dead people act physically dead. I don't know about you, but I don't receive help from dead people. "What about the death of Jesus!?!?" You may scream! Brethren . . . he's not dead anymore. He was raised from the grave on the third day!
- But, you are right the His death for us was proof of His love!

16-18 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

- Brethren, when you think of John 3:16, please think of 1 John 3:16.
- Listen, I know that JESUS' love resulted in offering salvation for ME AND THE WORLD, but what does MY LOVE for JESUS result in? What's the sincere RESULT of LOVE?
- Let the fools scream, "LIP SERVICE!" And the the child of God not only scream, "SERVICE!" . . . let him SERVE!

- I heard a true story of a teacher who challenged bible students to write a paper on the good Samaritan. After the class was completed, the passed by (one even jumped over) a man pretending to be homeless and possibly hurt as they left the class. The next time they went to class the teacher told them before having a chance to turn in the paper, "You all failed!"
- Come on - you know what's he's talking about. You know those who have discouraged you by word only and those who have changed your life by deed.
- Come on - you know when you've failed by talk and when you rocked someone's world for the better by deed. And brethren, if the word of God is false, then all these "deeds" of Jesus are all talk, but brethren, if the word of God is true, then Jesus is all action . . . and those actions changed all our lives for eternity!

19-20 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

- We typically interpret this to mean that our conscience can be sensitive at times, but we can take courage that God is greater than our hearts and doesn't condemn us. In other words, it's a comforting passage. There's no doubt that we can be too judgmental towards ourselves and forget we serve under a system of grace, not works.
- However, one of the oldest interpretations of this passage (and I'm not sure I disagree) is that it's a warning. It may be saying that your heart is justly condemning you because you know you're not loving the brethren (have a habitual practice of not loving brethren). Therefore, the warning is: God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. In other words - if we know we're not loving others then we must remember God certainly knows what we're doing and judges us as well.
- I wouldn't be dogmatic either way. I tend to lean towards the latter, but both explanations hold true biblical principles. It's trying to understand which one John is stating in this passage. Is he in the process of comforting or warning the reader?

21-22 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

- We can have confidence when we're loving our brethren.
- Very important: this is not about promoting a works based faith. It's about promoting genuine love. It's about promoting the goodness of God.
- Wouldn't it make sense for God to answer your prayers, when in a very real way, you've been an answer to the prayers of your brethren who are in need?

23-24 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

- This sums up what we've discussed today. So the question is: what are we practicing and what does that say about us?