

22. How does the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit make the denial of Christ less likely?
23. Who has most reason to be afraid and ashamed in the presence of Jesus? . . . v. 28

## HEREBY WE KNOW

## PART III

I John 2:29—4:6

Fellowship With God Considered  
As Divine Sonship  
Tested by The Outward Demonstration In Us  
Of God's Attitude Toward:

1. The Guiltless Life
2. Love For His Children
3. His Son

## CHAPTER VII

## DIVINE SONSHIP INTRODUCED

I John 2:29

A. *The Text*

"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him."

B. *Try to Discover*

1. The meaning of righteous and righteousness.
2. The relationship of divine sonship to personal righteousness in terms of cause and effect.
3. How righteousness is an unavoidable test of truth for the claim to be a son of God.

C. *Paraphrase*

"If ye know that he is righteous Ye perceive that—Whosoever doeth righteousness he hath been born."

D. *Comments*

## 1. Preliminary Remarks

The fellowship which John has tested as walking in the light, he now tests as divine sonship. The three-fold test is to be the same. Just as one's attitude toward his own sin, his brothers and Jesus as the Christ affirm or deny that he is walking in the light, so the practical outworking of these attitudes in personal living will affirm or deny the claim that one is begotten of God.

As with the former, so with the latter, John is answering a specific claim of the gnostics. They claimed to have special enlightenment from God, and John has challenged their claim with truth as it is revealed in Christ. If we walk in this light, then we have fellowship.

They claimed to have been begotten of God. John will turn this favorite gnostic phrase also against its users. If they are indeed begotten of God, what they do about personal righteousness, what they do in deed and truth toward their brothers, and what they confess about Jesus will prove it.

The last verse of chapter two is a preface to the first test of sonship, and at the same time serves as the springboard by which the idea of sonship is introduced for the first time.

It is well to remember John's statement in the prologue concerning the purpose of his writing, (i.e.) that his readers may "have fellowship with us . . . and with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:3) This fellowship is eternal life. John considers it first as conformity of personal attitude to revealed truth, and secondly, as conformity of personal behavior to the same truth.

## 2. Translation and Comments

(2:29) "If you have come to know that He is righteous, you know also that everyone doing righteousness has been begotten of Him."

Briefly stated, the tests set forth in Part II correspond to those set forth in Part III in the following ways:

In the first cycle, presented in Part II, the author tests fellowship as walking in the light. Here the second cycle of the same tests considers fellowship as divine sonship.

Fellowship, considered as walking in the light is tested by our *attitudes*. In testing fellowship as divine sonship, the proof lies in our *actions*. The outward test of righteous behavior corresponds to our inward attitude toward sin. The outward test of loving behavior toward our brothers corresponds to our inward attitude of love for them. Our open confession of Jesus as the Christ corresponds to our inward faith in Him.

This is a direct denial of the separation of spirit from matter. The abstract spiritual attitudes of the heart are proven by the outward action of the body. *Together* they give evidence of life.

John's symphonic play on the two synonymns for possession of information is beautiful in this verse! The first used (if you know) is *oida*. It means to possess knowledge by reflection, intuition or acquired information. The second is our old friend *ginosko* (see above on 2:4), the knowledge of experience.

The gnostics' major premise was a neatly packaged and absolute dualism which placed an irreconcilable gulf between what they considered "spiritual" and what they saw as "material."

According to the gnostic, all spirit was good, all matter was evil. Since God is spirit, they arrived by deduction at the knowledge that God is also righteous.

John's challenge is in effect, "If God is righteous, and you are begotten of Him, then you know by experience, even in this world of matter, that the sons of God are also righteous." This strikes at the heart of the gnostic's conclusion that the physical behavior of the individual was unrelated to his spiritual relationship to God.

For the sake of testing our own claim to Divine Sonship, we must give special attention to the word *dikaios*, righteous. It is conformity to the Divine Standard of right.

No man by his own strength ever succeeded in conforming to the perfect morality prescribed in the law. ". . . for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not." (Rom. 7:18) This is the lot of all men. (Cf. Rom. 3:23) It is only by being begotten of God that any person measures up to the divine standard of righteousness. Righteous behavior proves that one has been begotten of the Righteous God.

The "new morality" of our day does not accept the moral absolutes established by God and taught in the ten commandments. Its standard of right is rather a tolerant and considerate attitude toward others in any given set of circumstances. John's language in this verse will not allow one who is begotten of God to forfeit the divine standard for his own.

The contrast between the divine standard of morality and the subjective existentialism of the new morality is seen in the contrast of two Greek synonyms for moral goodness, *Dikaios*, is righteousness measured by divine standard, *agathos*, is goodness regarded as perfect in its own kind, so as to produce pleasure and satisfaction for the advantage of the person coming in contact with it.

The "new morality" is not new at all. It is the "walk of the Gentiles," (Eph. 2:2) determined by what is popular. The behavior of one begotten of God is determined rather by the awareness that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10)

### E. *Questions for Review*

1. In the first cycle of tests presented in I John, the author tests fellowship with God as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In the present cycle of tests, introduced in Chapter two, verse 29, he tests fellowship with God as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In testing fellowship as walking in the light, the proof lies in our \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In testing fellowship as divine sonship, the proof lies in our outward \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The outward test of personal righteousness corresponds to our attitude toward \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The outward test of behavior toward our brothers corresponds to our inward attitude of \_\_\_\_\_ for them.
7. Our open confession of Jesus as the Christ corresponds to our inward \_\_\_\_\_.
8. In chapter two, verse 29, the idea of \_\_\_\_\_ is introduced for the first time in I John.
9. The fellowship with which John is concerned in this book is another word for \_\_\_\_\_.
10. What is the proof presented in Chapter two, verse 29 as the natural result of having been begotten of God?
11. What is the meaning of righteousness as used in this verse?
12. What is the difference between the righteousness practiced by the sons of God and the subjective "goodness" of the "new morality?"