

how much God loves us. They are rather intended to set forth the

2. Eternal life, here tested as divine sonship, results from the same _____.
3. Not just Calvary, but the entire _____ brought God's love to bear upon our need.
4. The contemporary countrymen of Jesus rejected Him because they could not accept a _____ as God's Son.
5. The gnostic could accept the humanity of Jesus without rejecting His _____.
6. How does the modern "pseudo-intellectual" rejection of the deity of Jesus follow the same pattern as the Jews and the gnostics?
7. What is John's constant reaction to the awareness that he is a son of God?
8. How is this amazement contrasted to the modern philosophy of the "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man?"
9. Brotherhood results from common _____.
10. To become a child of God one must _____ (John 1:12)
11. When does eternal life begin?
12. When do we begin to be the sons of God?
13. What light does I Cor. 15:35-ff throw on I John 3:2?
14. How does the awareness of present sonship and future glory affect the lives of the children of God?
15. Is one a child of God because he is righteous, or is righteousness the result of divine sonship?

CHAPTER IX

FURTHER APPLICATION OF THE FIRST TEST

I John 3:4-10

A. The Text

"Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. (5) And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin. (6) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him. (7) My little children,

let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: (8) he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. (10) 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."

B. *Try to Discover*

1. If we are not under law, how is sin considered lawlessness?
2. Is it impossible for a child of God to sin?
3. How does the "seed" of God remain in the child of God?
4. Who are the children of the devil?
5. What is the basic moral contrast between the life of sin and the life of Divine Sonship?

C. *Paraphrase*

"Whosoever is committing sin Lawlessness he is also committing, and sin is lawlessness; (5) And ye know that He was made manifest—In order that our sins He should take away, And sin in Him is there none. (6) Whosoever in Him doth abide Is not sinning: Whosoever is sinning Hath not seen Him and doth not understand Him. (7) Dear children! let no one lead you astray! He that is doing righteousness is righteous, Just as He is righteous: (8) He that is committing sin is of the adversary, Because from the beginning the adversary is sinning. To this end was the Son of God made manifest, In order that He might undo the works of the adversary. (9) Whosoever hath been born of God is not committing sin, Because a seed of Him within him abideth; And he cannot be committing sin, Because of God hath he been born. (10) Herein are manifest the children of God and the children of the adversary: Whosoever is not doing righteousness is not of God, Nor yet he that is not loving his brother."

D. *Translation and Comments*

1. Divine Sonship contrary to sin on the basis of God's authority . . . v.4

(4) "Everyone doing sin is also doing lawlessness."

All sin is contrary to the authority of God. It may be in open rebellion against that authority expressed in law or it may be completely without regard to the law. In either case sin is fundamentally "I want" rather than "Thy will be done."

God's original plan for man was that man should be "holy and without blemish." (Eph. 1:4) To be holy (Greek: *hagios*) is to be committed, dedicated or set apart to God. To be without blemish is to be morally pure as a result of this holiness.

Lawlessness is the opposite of holiness. It is disregard for the will and authority of God. It always results in immoral behavior, which is the opposite of being without blemish.

God's plan was that man, being completely committed to Himself and consequently pure, should be His children. (Eph. 1:5) This sonship was to be by adoption rather than by right of natural birth.

There is an element of choice in adoption that is lacking in natural birth. This choice is the choice of love. Consequently Divine Sonship results from God's love rather than from necessity.

Here, as Barclay so aptly points out, is the difference between paternity and fatherhood. Paternity indicates a father's responsibility for a child's physical existence. Fatherhood indicates a relationship based on love and circumscribed by parental authority.

Since sin is lawlessness, it is opposed to the fundamental idea of holiness upon which the adoption to Divine Sonship depends. Therefore, anyone claiming to be a child of God is morally obligated to avoid sin.

2. The purpose of Jesus' mission, as well as His character forbids sin in the life of a child of God . . . v. 5-7

a. The purpose for which the Word was manifested . . . v. 5

(5) "And you know that that One revealed in order that He might take away sins, and sin is not in Him."

The purpose for which "the Word was manifested" (I John 1:2) was in order that He might take away sins.

When man chose to place his will at the center of his behavior, either in direct disobedience to God's authority or without regard for it; he was no longer "without blemish." With his holiness and purity destroyed man was no longer qualified for the adoption to Divine Sonship. The entire purpose of God in man stood in jeopardy.

God's plan, made in eternity "before the foundation of the world,"

was made "in Him." (Eph. 1:4) The eternal Christ was responsible for the accomplishment of God's purpose.

When sin entered the human stream and became a road-block in the way of accomplishment for the Divine purpose, the Christ must remove it. This is the meaning of Calvary. This is the purpose of His coming, "that He might take away sin."

In order to accomplish this purpose, He must Himself remain unstained by sin. Thus, the character of the only begotten Son became a clear demonstration that sin is incompatible with Divine Sonship.

b. The secret of sinless life . . . v.6

(6) "Everyone remaining in Him does not go on sinning. Everyone going on sinning has not seen Him nor known Him."

The secret of Jesus' sinless life is revealed in His prayer in Gethsemane, "Not my will, thine be done." This is genuine holiness, and always issues in a pure life.

The secret of sinless living for the children of God is *remaining in Him*. This is John's term for total commitment. So long as our actions are governed by this commitment we do not sin. The moment we forget His presence and begin to seek our own will in the slightest matter we do sin.

Since Divine Sonship depends upon commitment to God's will, one who is His child can not have sin as a habit of his life. John does not deny either the possibility or the fact of occasional sins. He has already said that the denial of such is not according to truth. (Cf. I John 1:8, 10) What he does intend is that sin cannot be the manner of life for a child of God.

Anyone whose life is characterized by habitual sin, who regularly disregards the will and authority of God in his life, has neither seen nor known Jesus.

John *had* seen and known Jesus, and so is able to appeal to experiential knowledge. The gnostics claimed to know Him, but their position in regards to sin was contrary to what John knew from personal experience.

As A. T. Robertson has it, "The habit of sin is proof that one has not the vision or the knowledge of Christ."

c. Righteousness is not theory but practice . . . v.7

(7) "Little children, let no one keep on leading you astray; the one doing righteousness is righteous just as that One is righteous."

Righteousness to John is not theory but practice. Whoever does righteousness is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous.

This ought not be taken as meaning that anyone has attained that standard of moral perfection exemplified by Jesus. Remember, righteousness is concerned with commitment to the standard revealed by God. It is possible to be as committed as was He. It is doubtful that we will ever attain the perfect here, as He attained it.

The important point of this verse is that anyone, who says righteousness consists of anything less than righteous actions, is deceitful. John is concerned that we not be led astray by any philosophy which divorces righteousness from the deeds of our everyday living.

3. Contrast of origins between sin and Divine Sonship . . . v. 8-9

a. The origin of sin . . . v.8

(8) "the one who keeps on sinning is of the devil, because from the beginning the devil is sinning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, in order that He might loose the works of the devil."

Sin originates in the devil. This is not an original thought expressed by John; it is as old as the experience of Adam and Eve, perhaps older. John makes no attempt to prove this, he simply reiterates it.

Insight into this truth may be gained by reading Jesus' statement to the Jews; "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do . . ." (John 8:44) In that context it was the Jews who were refusing to accept Jesus for who He is while making the claim to be the people of God. The basis upon which Jesus calls them the sons of the devil is that they were willing to do the desires of the devil. As with God, so with the devil, sonship is circumscribed by parental authority. Those who do the will of the devil are the devil's children just as those who do the will of God are the children of God. The Bible knows no neutral ground between these two opposites.

The devil sins as a matter of principle, or as John has it, "from the beginning." No one can claim to be a child of God while acting like the devil!

Once more John comes back to the purpose of the incarnation. He has just said that Jesus' purpose was to "take away sin." (v.5) Now he says it was "to loose the works of the devil." These are two sides of the same coin. That which is sin is lawlessness (i.e.) contrary to the will and authority of God. The devil is the epitome of such contrary self will. All sin originates in the devil. So to take away sin is to loose the works of the devil. It is the removal of all which stands in the way of God's eternal purpose to have a holy, blemishless family in Christ. Divine

Sonship, then, is clearly seen as opposed to sin in light of the origin of sin.

b. The origin of Divine Sonship . . . v.9

(9) "Everyone having been begotten of God is not doing sin, because His seed is remaining in him and to go on sinning is not possible to him, because he has been begotten of God."

Just as sin originates in the devil and so is the manner of life for the devil's children, so righteousness originates in God and is the manner of life for God's children. Those who have been begotten of God do not have sin as a manner of life.

Once again we must remember that John does not say it is impossible for a child of God to commit a sin. Rather he does say that sin cannot be the habit of life for one whose actions find their source in God as Father. This is clearly seen in the use of the present tense here by John.

Just as James said, "Doth the same fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter?" (James 3:11) So the life which takes its source in the divine begetting cannot issue in actions based on disregard for the authority of God.

4. Contrast between lives of sin and righteousness reveal children of God and the devil . . . v. 10

(10) "In this is revealed the children of God and the children of the devil. Everyone not doing righteousness is not of God; also everyone not loving his brother."

"By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:16) This lesson taught by Jesus was well-learned by His friend, John. Any individual whose life shows disregard for God's will and authority as a matter of basic principle, is not of God. High and lofty claims such as those made by the gnostic are not the test. A man's everyday life reveals him to be either a child of God or a child of the devil.

This is not a very popular doctrine in an age which is trying desperately to remove all distinction between the Christian life and the life of the world. It is still true, nevertheless.

Since righteousness is fundamentally the doing of God's will, the keeping of His commandments, it is not strange to find John including love of one's brothers as a matter of moral righteousness. He has already established love as the supreme commandment of God. (I John 2:7-11) Failure to love one's Christian brother is as unrighteous and

immoral as adultery, murder, or the overt infraction of any of God's other commandments!

E. *Questions for Review*

1. All sin is contrary to God's authority. It may be either _____ or without _____.
2. God's original plan was to have a family of children who were _____ and without _____. (Eph. 1:4)
3. The word holy as used in the N.T. means _____.
4. To be without blemish is to be _____ as a result of holiness.
5. The opposite of holiness is _____.
6. Lawlessness always results in _____ behavior.
7. What is the difference between paternity and fatherhood?
8. The purpose for which Christ came is stated two ways in this passage. What are they?
9. Who was originally responsible for the accomplishment of God's purpose in man?
10. How does the character of Jesus demonstrate the need for righteousness in the lives of God's children?
11. What is the secret of Jesus' sinless life?
12. Total commitment always issues in a _____ life.
13. What does John mean by "remaining in Him?"
14. Righteousness to John is not theory but _____.
15. What is the origin of all sin?
16. Does the Bible attempt to prove there is a devil?
17. What is the basis upon which Jesus said some are children of the devil? (John 8:44)
18. What is the origin of righteousness?