

Topic: **“Living Deeply in Christ”**

October 14, 2007

Text: 1 John 2:28-3:10

Type: Textual

Introduction

I’m sure that you have heard someone or even yourself, at some stage of your life, say this: “It really doesn’t matter what religion we believe in or practice. After all, **we are all God’s children.**” Permit me to set the record straight from the very outset of this message and say that this is neither true, let alone scriptural. As a matter of fact, in the passage of scripture before us today, John carefully explains to us who the children of God are, and what characteristics are common among them. Children of God are those who have received the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and live a life of fellowship and trust in him. John 1:12 reminds us “***But as many as received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God...***”

John even goes a little further and distinguishes between children of God and children of the devil—a distinction that Jesus himself also makes in John 8:41-45 (“...you belong to your father the devil.”v.44). This fact alone clearly tells us that we are not all God’s children. **We are, of course, all God’s creation, but not all of his creatures are his children.** You may say Pastor Colin how do we know the difference? I’m glad you asked. John tells us that one of the visible proofs of being a child of God is right Godly behaviour. Understand that many people do good deeds but don’t necessarily have faith in Jesus Christ. Others claim to have faith but rarely produce good deeds. A deficit in either faith or right behaviour will be a cause for shame when Christ returns. Because true faith always results in good deeds.

Children of God clearly distinguish themselves from any other persons by living Godly lives, free from the corruption of sin. Children of God have a family resemblance to their Father in heaven. And because He is righteous, so those who are born of Him also practice righteousness. Children of God remain in relationship with Christ. They look forward to Christ coming even though they do not know what they will be like when He returns.

We act this way because we are reminded in Romans 8:16 that “***God’s Spirit touches our spirit and confirms who we really are.***” (The Message) And because we are children of God then we are also heirs—heirs of God and co-

heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory.” In short children of God **live deeply in Christ** and demonstrate strong family traits.

But what does it mean to live deeply in Christ? Let’s consider the opposite lifestyle first as it might give us some clues. Have you ever heard of people who say “What difference does it make? As long as we make it to heaven right?” Not really. How narrow is the distance between “barely saved” and “almost saved”? When one asks, “how little can I do and still make it to heaven? Or “how far can I go in the world and still be a Christian? understand that those are dangerous questions to ask! That’s shallow living. Instead God wants us to live deeply in Christ.

So what does it mean to live “deeply in Christ”? (Illus.) Peter’s fishing experience. “Put out into deep water...” Lk.5:4. It means that as we grow to resemble God we experience (1) victory over sin (3:4-9); (2) love for others (3:10-18) and (3) confidence before God (3:19-24).

Here in chapter 3:1-3 John is obviously awe struck as he exclaims “***What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we’re called His children! And we really are!***” Wow! God goes so far in lavishing his love on us that He even calls us his children! We can picture someone helping or saving another person, but not going as far as to make them a part of the family—but this is what God has done for us!! Folks understand that the Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ. (Rom.8:29) Therefore being born again is more than just a fresh start; it’s a rebirth. It’s receiving a new family name based on Christ’s love for us.

We then begin to grow and become strong in the Lord. As children of God this is what He expects of us. Psalm 84 paints a beautiful picture for us of what the Christian life is all about. It speaks of an exciting pilgrimage for those who have set their hearts on God. The Psalmist says that as these pilgrims make their yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship, they experience various trials and testings along the mountains and valleys. But none of these discourage or deter them from their goal. Because of their determined attitude to life they turn every negative experience into a positive outcome. Consequently, “***they go from strength to strength***. Till each appears before God in Zion.” (v.7) That’s how children of God live.

So what then are some of the characteristics of Christians who intentional choose to live deeply in Christ? First of all let me submit to you that they

Keep themselves pure

The Message renders this truth this way: “*All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready with the glistening purity of Jesus’ life as a model for own.*” Other versions say: “*They purify themselves*” or “*They keep themselves pure.*” Folks understand that the Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ. And this process will not be complete until we see Christ face to face. So in the meanwhile, in the in-between time, we keep ourselves pure by living morally straight lives, free from the corruption of sin. Knowing our eternal destiny motivates us to purify ourselves right now. The Word reminds us that all who indulge in a sinful life are dangerously lawless, for sin is a major disruption of God’s order.

Our hope is not so much heaven as it is Christ. What have you set your hopes on? A relationship, on success, on investments, on your health, possessions? All of these things, legitimate as they are, still constitute a dead hope. Our only real hope is in Christ, and those who chose to live deeply in Him, place their trust in Him. Those who live deeply in Christ ...

Choose not to go on sinning

Since sin is lawlessness and a disregard for God, and since Jesus came to take away our sins, and since in Jesus there is no sin, then to live deeply in Christ means to not sin. But let me hasten to say it’s very important for us to understand what John means here when he says: “*No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.*” (v.6) From his past teachings it is obvious that John is not speaking here of the possibility of sinless perfection. Not at all! He has already told us in 1 John1:8 “*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*” So what does he mean?

According to the verb tense John uses, “*does not sin*” means **does not live a life style of habitual sin**. The present tense in the Greek verb implies a habit, continuity, unbroken sequence. Consequently, accurate translations will use phrases such as “*keeps on sinning*” “*continues to sin*” or “*cannot go on sinning.*” A style of habitual sin is inconsistent with a life that’s lived deep in Christ. Those who choose to live deeply in Christ...

Do what is right, obey God's commands, and demonstrate a genuine love for their brother and sister.

In verse 10, John gives what's called the acid test in order for us to be able to tell the difference between God's children and the devil's children. The difference between those who live deeply in Christ and those who fake it is simply this: ***"Anyone who does not obey God's commands and does not love other Christians does not belong to God."*** (v.10 NLT)

Or as the NIV states it: ***"Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God nor is anyone who does not love his brother."***

If you think that John may be a little harsh in making this distinction between these folks, remember that Jesus himself referred to people as children of the devil. (John 8:41-45) The point that Jesus makes here is simply this: spiritually speaking, parentage is what determines our nature and our destiny. If we are born, and have God as our Father, it will show in our nature and destiny. But if our father is satan it will also show in our nature and destiny. Therefore the two essentials that distinguish a Christian from someone who isn't are righteous conduct and love for each other. Jesus perfectly displayed both in his nature, and you can't have one without the other.

Righteousness without love make one a religious Pharisee, and love without righteousness makes one a partner in evil.

Conclusion

Are you living deeply in Christ? How deep is your life in Christ? (Song) Or are you contented with just doing enough to make it into heaven? Let's together strive to be Christians who live so deeply in Christ that we become known for our Christlike conduct and love for each other.