

OUR POSITION AS SONS OF GOD

TEXT: I JOHN 3:1-3

INTRODUCTION:

1. Verse 1 says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." According to the Bible, a person is either a child of God or a child of the devil (3:10).
2. This statement sounds startling to people who have grown up being taught "we are all God's children." Just a couple of weeks ago, a lady asked me about this after our Sunday morning service.
3. It is important that we understand what the Bible teaches.
4. Our Lord said to the Pharisees in 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."
5. And in Matthew 23:15, our Lord said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."
6. It would be wrong to limit this designation to the scribes and Pharisees because in Matthew 23:15 our Lord was referring not only to the scribes and Pharisees but to their followers.
7. In these Scriptures, and throughout the Bible, we see a solemn and even awful contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil.
8. In John 1:12 and 13 we read, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."
9. If we became the sons of God when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what were we before our conversion?
10. The apostle Paul answers that question in Ephesians 2. He says in Ephesians 2:3 that we "were by nature the children of wrath."
11. But now we are regarded as children of God, and it is important to understand what this means.

I. THE PRIVILEGES OF BEING A SON OF GOD (3:1)

1. Verse 1 says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us..." God loves the world (John 3:16). But this is a special love.

2. For example, I love all the young people in our church but I have a special love for my children. We are the children of God (3:1, 2).
3. When the Bible refers to us as "sons of God," it literally means "children of God," and it is often translated that way.
4. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."
5. The Greek word translated "sons" in John 1:12 and I John 3:1, 2 is *teknon*, and is usually translated "children" (cf. I John 3:10).
6. We become children of God by regeneration, the impartation of the divine nature by the Holy Spirit (I John 2:29; cf. John 3).
7. Every born again believer becomes a child of God the moment he trusts Christ as his Saviour. Christians are made sons the moment they receive Christ (cf. John 1:12).
8. This is regeneration. John 1:13 says we are born of God. John 3:3 says we are born again. John 3:8 says we are born of the Spirit.
9. Six times in the epistle of I John we read that we are born of God.
10. This is regeneration. Regeneration is a change of nature. According to I John 3:2, there are present as well as future implications. Twice John says, "when he shall appear" (I John 2:28; 3:2).
11. One of the great privileges of being a child of God is the confidence we have that our prayers are answered (cf. I John 5:14, 15).
12. Our Lord said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9).
13. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11; cf. I John 3:22).

II. THE MARKS OF BEING A SON OF GOD

1. Many marks of sonship are given in this epistle (cf. 2:29; 3:6, 10, etc.).
2. The practice of righteousness ("doeth righteousness" -- 2:29) is the mark of the new birth (2:29). The doctrine of the new birth is prominent in this epistle (cf. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).
3. Our Lord told Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).
4. First Peter 1:23 says we are born again "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
5. We will look at some of the other marks of being a son of God later on in our study. Other marks of the new birth in this epistle include love for the brethren (4:7), and faith that Jesus is the Christ (5:1).

6. Unsaved people cannot understand the new birth. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (3:1). We can expect to be misunderstood and even hated by the world (cf. John 15:18-20).
7. Worldly people do "not know us," and are utterly unable to gain a true understanding of the believers' new nature.
8. D. Edmond Hiebert said, "To the world the mystery of the new birth is incomprehensible (John 3:9-12); it can only regard as deluded those who testify that they have received a new nature. Believers understand the world's failure 'because it did not know Him.' The aorist tense, 'did not know' records the historical failure of the world to understand divine reality."
9. Our new life in Christ is not static, but dynamic. If a person is genuinely born again, he will grow spiritually, and the goal of spiritual growth is maturity in the likeness of Christ Himself (3:2).
10. Members of God's family are assured that whenever Christ returns "we shall be like Him" (3:2). "God's purpose to develop Christlikeness in all the members of His family will be fulfilled when Christ returns and all the children are 'conformed to the image of His Son' (Rom. 8:29). The indwelling Holy Spirit is already at work in the lives of believers, inwardly transforming them into the moral image of the Lord of glory (II Cor. 3:18); that transformation will be completed at the return of the glorified Christ, who will also change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body (Phil. 3:21)" (Hiebert).

III. THE DEMANDS OF BEING A SON OF GOD (3:3)

1. The demand is purity (3:3). Purity is one of the requirements of sonship.
2. We have an incentive -- "And every man that hath this hope in him" (the return of Christ --3:2). Everyone that possesses this hope is fixed on seeing our Lord, and being like Him hereafter is a great incentive for purity and holiness.
3. The Bible gives us our standard of purity. It is nothing less than the purity of Christ Himself, "even as he is pure" (3:3).
4. Likewise, God's standard of holiness is the holiness of Christ Himself. Hebrews 7:26 says Christ is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."
5. First Peter 1:16 says, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

6. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
7. The thought that our Lord will soon return, and that we are to be like him forever, is to be our constant consideration day by day, and moment by moment.

CONCLUSION:

1. Ira Sankey told how the song "Moment by Moment" was written.
2. Henry Varley, a preacher from London, said to Major Daniel Whittle, "I do not like the hymn 'I Need Thee Every Hour, very well, because I need Him every moment of the day. Soon after Major Whittle wrote this hymn:

*Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;
Moment by moment I've life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine. -- Daniel W. Whittle*