

The Last Eyewitness, VI

Flaw Less (1 John 2:28-3:10)

November 9, 2003

ASHAMED TO DIE

Before the NT was compiled, there were a lot of bizarre beliefs floating around about Jesus. Remember from last week ...

- The Docetists were anti-humanity, or anti-Jesus.
- The Ebionites were anti-divinity, or anti-Christ.

Then there were the Cerinthians! They believed the Christ-deity descended on the human-Jesus when He was baptized, empowered Him to do miracles and teach, and abandoned Him at the crucifixion. They denied the *union* of the dual natures of Jesus Christ.

And the bulk of these cultists taught that knowledge was key and conduct was inconsequential; you could indulge the flesh without harming the spirit. Many in the church today live by this destructive doctrine: party on Saturday night; pray on Sunday morning.

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.
- 1 John 2:28-29 NIV

In other words: Don't let these guys pull the wool over your eyes! John wants his *little children* to be confident and unashamed when they face the Lord.

- Eventually, we all face the question: Am I afraid to die?
- John wants us to ask a new question: Am I ashamed to die?

Q: Do you know how to guarantee this confidence?

A: Continue in him (some Bibles say: Abide in Him).

- This is the point of John's teaching today.

But, before we can *continue* in Him, we must first realize our *position* in Him.

THREE WAYS IN

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! – 1 John 3:1a NIV

There're 3 ways into a family: we can be Born into one; Adopted into one; or Married into one.

When Jesus explained salvation to Nicodemus, He said:

... the Spirit gives birth to spirit. – John 3:5 NIV

When Paul described it to the believers in Rome, he said:

... you have received the spirit of adoption ... - Romans 8:15 NIV

When John the Baptist expressed it to his disciples, he said:

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. – John 3:29 NIV

When we give our heart to God, we are recipients of His lavish protective paternal love – by rebirth, adoption, and matrimony. The Lord wants to make *triplly* sure we comprehend it!

AS HE IS

However, the same love that sought us also separates us:

The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, **now** we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. - 1 John 3:1-2 NIV

Do you know anyone who's waiting until after they die to discover whether or not they'll get into Heaven? What a dismal view! John says: **NOW** we are children of God.

- We should anticipate our veiled future.
- We should learn from our polluted past.

But it is in each swiftly passing moment of "now" that we must choose to separate from a world of sin, and imitate our Father.

- Ours is a present tense purification

But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him **as he is**. – 1 John 3:2b NIV

John was one of the few who saw Jesus “as he is”.

... Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There [Jesus] was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. – Matthew 17:1-2 NIV

... his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. – Luke 9:28-29 NIV

... whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. – Mark 9:3 NIV

- John saw Jesus “as He is” – in His indescribable purity.

... we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. – 1 John 3:3 NIV

John knows, you can't glimpse the Lord's radiance – His cleanness and purity – and not want to experience it. This ongoing, present-tense purification, is what it means to *continue* in (abide in) Christ. It's a two-fold process:

1. First, it's about Removing the stains

Like two people comparing laundry. One says, “How'd you get your whites so bright?” “I use bold! I boldly approach His throne of grace through confession and repentance.”

Boldly approach His throne of grace for forgiveness & cleansing and you'll *confidently* approach His throne of judgment.

2. Removing ourselves from that which soils, spots, and shames

Remember all the stains you'd get on your clothes as a kid? As an adult there's less stains (hopefully) because there's less desire to do the things that stain (like sliding on our knees in the grass) and we're more aware of the things that stain (like leaning against wet paint).

Honestly attempt to avoid the things that stain, and you'll have nothing to be ashamed of when you see Him face to face.

LAWLESSNESS VS FLAWLESSNESS

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. – 1 John 3:4-6 NIV

Okay ... sin is lawlessness; but it sounds like John's solution to lawlessness is flawlessness!

Stand up for a quick test. Now, I want only those who have not reached sinless perfection to sit down. We all have hard to conquer habits and incomplete victories in different areas. Look at what John previously said about sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. - 1 John 1:8 NIV

There's a difference between committing sin and being committed to sin. That's why John uses the modifying phrases: keeps on and continues to sin. He's referring to habitual, ongoing, unrepented sin. John knows firsthand that:

- To *see* Him and to *know* Him is to love Him.
- And to love Him is to want to be like Him.

That's why the one who doesn't find the soiling stains of sin unattractive and repulsive has neither seen Him nor *known* Him.

Picture the little boy, dressed in a wedding tuxedo - trying to stay clean - he comes in crying, because he got distracted and muddied his shirt.

- It's the attempt that our Father values.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. - 1 John 3:7-8a NIV

- If our belief don't behave, our "salvation" don't save

The Nile is the only major river that flows from South to North. Except in this one spot where it turns and temporarily flows in the opposite direction. But this doesn't change the fact that the Nile flows from South to North.

If the flow of your life is toward obedience and purity, you may have an occasional stretch of misdirected behavior that interrupts your trend toward Christ-likeness.

But if we've seen Jesus - if we know Him and love Him - that temporary turn will only serve to intensify our revulsion to the stains of our sin.