

1 JOHN 2:28 – 3:10 “ARE WE THERE YET?”

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THE LINK (2:28-29)

Nigel's last talk – “Keeping going”, last phrase of previous passage (v27) is “abide/continue/remain in him”

Why? V28-29 “...abide in him **so that...**” – there's a reason why this is important

“...**when** he appears...” not “if”! Jesus is coming back – our hope! My earliest passion – no-one had told me!

You will see him, either in heaven, or when he returns physically to planet earth. How do you feel about the prospect of facing Jesus. How do you think you will you feel?

- Disappointed, ashamed, afraid, worried ...?
- John says we should “have confidence and not shrink from him in shame”.
- How is this possible? By abiding in him, staying faithful, being persistent, KOKO (Keep On Keeping On)

I. FROM HERE TO WHERE? (3:1-2)

The first coming of Jesus was a turning point of history, everything changed. His return is the next turning point of history, everything will change again.

- Rev 21:1-4

How about us – will we change too? These verses say yes (good news?!)

A. Where are we now? (v1)

What do people call you? [Ask someone to give three words to describe someone else. Probably nice! How did it feel? Nice to have people say nice things about you!! But is it true???!]

God has done something truly amazing for us. “See what love the Father has lavished upon us...” – extravagant, undeserved – what?

“... that we should be **called children of God.**” Amazing!

- John 1:9-13 – he gave the right to become children of God
- Romans 8:14-17 – received the spirit of sonship
- Galatians 4:4-7 – receive adoption as sons

[Note, all of these are gifts we receive from God, his grace]

“**See** what love the Father has lavished upon us...”

Who calls us “children of God”? He does, but do others? Should be something evident, visible, obvious, not hidden, private, obscure.

In Hebrew the phrase “children of” (or “sons of”) describes character, bearing the family likeness. (Sons of thunder, son of encouragement, son of perdition... Jesus is son of God and son of man.) You could see whose son someone was by their character – it showed on the outside.

- What is God like? And what are we like??!
- Can people see that we are children of God, are we like our Father, bearing the family likeness, demonstrating his character?

Something even more amazing than being called God’s children – “... **and so we are!**” Not just called it, but we are it!! It’s true!!

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 – a new creation, the old has passed away – behold, the new has come. (something else to “see/behold”!)

Do you believe it?! Do you act as if this is true? Low self-esteem is a major problem for many in today’s society – you’re rubbish, no good, you won’t amount to anything, useless...

NOT TRUE! Look in the mirror each morning this week and say “I am God’s child” – then act like it!

This explains why we often don’t fit with the world’s values and behaviour – we’re like our Father, and they don’t get it. “The reason why the world does not know/understand us is that it did not know him.” (back to John 1:10)

B. Where are we going? (v2)

OK, so we know what we are – “Dear friends, **now** we are children of God...” – got that?

Is that it? No – there’s more. We have a future destiny which is not yet clear – “... and **what we will be** has not yet been made known.” We are a work in progress, unfinished business.

“Please be patient with me, God hasn’t finished with me yet.”

Any clues to where we might be going?

“... but we know that when he appears **we shall be like him** for we shall see him as he is.” Wow! Something to look forward to! Will need quite a transformation!!!

How will that happen? “...**when he appears** we shall be like him for **we shall see him as he is.**” The return of Jesus changes everything, including us.

II. THE IMPLICATIONS (v 3-10)

So what?

You can't just give this mental assent, nod and agree, and carry on as before!

"Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."

The transforming event is to "see him".

- Jesus said "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."
Matthew 5:8
- Hebrews 12:14 "Strive for peace with all men and for the holiness without which no-one will see God."
- Partly true already now – 2 Corinthians 3:18 "We all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (*metamorphosis*) – the change has begun!
- Isaiah 6:1-8, Isaiah said (v5) "Woe is me for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips ... for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts". Then the angel touched his mouth with the burning coal and said (v7) "Behold ... your guilt is taken away and your sins forgiven."
- Luke 5:8 Peter – "Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord"

Seeing him and sinning are incompatible, can't do both.

So when he comes, if you want to be transformed, you can't be sinning.

Uh-oh! Here we go again ...!!! Remember 1 John 2:1-2? "I am writing this to you so that you may not sin..."

[Why did I get this topic a second time?!

Fortunately John explains it again really clearly. It's about **habits**.

V6 "No-one who abides in him **keeps on sinning**. No-one who **continues to sin** has either seen him or known him."

V9 "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".

Habitual sin and abiding in Jesus are mutually incompatible – they cannot co-exist.

III. PRACTICALITIES

Does this mean we have to try really hard not to sin, to be righteous and holy? Well we could try that... but remember the arrows and the target – we don't always hit the target.

There is a better way. Two strategies:

1. Be right with God

First, if two things are mutually incompatible, then if you always have one you won't get the other. We've seen that habitual sin and abiding in Jesus are mutually incompatible – they cannot co-exist. So -

- Concentrate on abiding in Jesus, then you won't keep on sinning, instead you will be fruitful (John 15:4-5)
- Live close to him, spend time with him, talk to him, listen to him, learn from him, keep him involved in every aspect of your life – and it will be really hard to sin
- May occasionally fail, but won't be your habit
- “thought-deed-habit-character-destiny” – get good habits!!

2. Act right

Secondly, it's all about **behaviour**. Belief is important, but Christianity is not a head exercise in right thinking. John says this is a deception (v7) – wrong thinking that we believe is right.

“Little children, let no-one deceive you. **He who does right is righteous**, just as he (Jesus) is righteous.”

Remember John wrote this letter to counter the heresy of the Gnostics. Stuart dealt with this in his first talk in this series. Gnostics taught:

- Secret knowledge – what you know is important, true knowledge is only for the enlightened few
- Dualism – spirit=good, material=bad. The body is evil and will die, it does not matter what evil you have committed in the physical realm as your spirit is divine and can live forever.

But John says different. “He who does right is righteous”, or as Forrest Gump might have said “Righteous is as righteous does.” You can't claim to be righteous and then sin. Behaviour matters.

If we are God's children, we'll act like him, the test of family likeness is to be like our Father:

- V10 “This is how we know who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: Anyone who does not **do what is right** is not a child of God, nor is anyone who does not **love his brother**.”
- God is characterised by always doing the right thing, and always loving others. We must be the same.

[link into next passage, about loving one another]

CONCLUSION

This passage starts with an amazing truth – we are called children of God because that's what we are! Now!

Then another equally amazing truth – it gets better, we will be like him, transformed when he returns and we see him.

How should we act in the middle of these two amazing truths? We should be like our Father, do right and love one another. Show ourselves to be his children by our outward actions – righteous is as righteous does.