

Your Moral Resemblance to Christ

I John 2:29 to 3:9 in context. Biblical text (NASB) is in bold. Jay's comments in parentheses.

²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, (that God is righteous is a given throughout Scripture) **you know that every one also who practices righteousness is born of Him.** (Born of who? Born of God. I know you are born of God because I see the righteous resemblance between the two of you. It is a family resemblance because God is your Father. Is this statement too strong? Keep that thought in mind as we continue into chapter 3.)

^{3:1} See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. (John continues the family theme by calling us "children of God".) **For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him.** (Our resemblance is to God, not the world, so the world does not recognize us because it did not recognize God when He came in the flesh.) **² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him,** (Our resemblance is a little fuzzy now but will one day will be made completely clear. We may not be the complete package yet in our actions and attitudes, but we are clearly something different than what we were.) **because we shall see Him just as He is.** **³ And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.** (We have a new purity as God's child. Our display of that purity and resemblance to God grows as we mature.)

⁴ Every one who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. (Of the several nuanced words for sin, lawlessness is the most emphatic and descriptive. It represents an open rebellion to God's rule. And everyone who practices sin identifies themselves in the lawless camp. This practice of lawlessness is typical of those outside the family of God.)

⁵ And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. (Our sins have been taken away by the Sinless One.) **⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.** (Fellowship with the Sinless One [abiding, knowing, seeing] and indulgence in sin is a contradiction.)

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you; (Let no one tell you otherwise.) the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. (The one who practices righteousness is practicing the character of Christ.) **⁸ The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.** (Sin is the character of the devil. He has been sinning, rebelling against God, from the beginning.) **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.** (Christ appeared to destroy the works of the devil. The primary of Satan's works is sin itself.)

⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (When we entered into Christ's family, literally "born of God", the devil's work of sin in our lives was destroyed. As a result, according to John, our practice of sin ended. Why? Because God's seed now lives in us and God's seed cannot practice sin.)

Now, to clear up any confusion, let's focus on two points. First, the order of events is critical for our understanding. Membership in God's family is brought about by grace, God's favor, totally apart from our righteous works. No righteous acts on our part usher us into the family of God. Our salvation, our rescue, is totally unmerited. Membership in God's family is *recognized* by family likeness, *not merited* by family likeness. In our lost state, we did not somehow become good enough to be accepted in God's family. We came with nothing but the "empty hands of faith." But after we came, we were given a new birth and with it a new nature, a new countenance, a new look that quite frankly resembles Christ.

On our second point, is John saying that it is impossible for believers to commit sin? The short answer is no. Elsewhere in I John (specifically 2:1-2), John talks about the Advocate we have in Jesus when we sin. So what is the apostle John saying to us? I believe it is this. Once we embrace the gospel message of Jesus Christ and enter into God's family, sin is not our natural way of life. Sin is no longer our regular practice. We no longer have a propensity toward sin. Sin is not our default mode. We no longer revel in sin. It no longer is our habit. Do you see the picture?

We now have a moral resemblance to Jesus Christ. Not by our doing, but by His doing. By what Jesus did FOR us (died as our substitute and took the penalty of our sin) and what Jesus did TO us by making us a new creation with a new Spirit, and new nature, and new self, and a new power over sin. May we walk in that Spirit, nature, self, and power today.