

## Obviously Children

1 John 2:28-3:10

By [Rev. William F. Joseph](#)

If you have your Bible, turn with me to 1 John chapter 2 and then let me confess very quickly that one of my favorite times of year is BibleSchool. Now I know that if you ask some of your children what Mr. Joseph does during Bible School you'll get everything from, "He plays this part and that part; he's a puppet here and a puppet there," but there's one thing that I really love to do, and that is to watch the children parade out the door after Bible School. You've got these gumball structures that they're carrying, you've got all kind of crafts and handiwork that the teachers have planned and planned, and of course half of them are eating candy as they come out there. It's amazing. But one of the most fascinating things is to see the ones who are walking out the door without mamma or daddy, boldly and confidently, parading out the door. They know everything; they know where to go, they know what to do, and usually they're the older ones, there's no doubt, but every now and then you get one who's a young one and they parade out the door. Confidence, boldness.

Let's look at our passage together. John chapter 2 beginning at verse 28 and we'll read through verse 10 of chapter 3. Hear the Word of God. Before we read let's pray.

*Father, we thank You for the opportunity to open Your Word, to hear it read, to open it up together and to look at it and to examine it. We pray, Father, that as we do so tonight that Your Spirit might work in our hearts that we might indeed know that we belong to You, that we are Your children. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.*

Hear the Word of God:

"And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away the sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil; whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."

If you were with us Wednesday night we looked at the passage that precedes this where it talks about the anti-Christ, those who are members of the church, those who come to the church, those who are involved in the church but have gone out from us and have proven, because they have left the church — not First Presbyterian Church necessarily, not left the PCA necessarily, but they've left the church — no longer are they involved with believers, and John calls them the anti-Christ. You read that passage and you get discouraged but then John comes along to give us a passage to encourage us in Christ. It's a passage which begins with of course him talking to his readers as John always tends to do, "little children." It's interesting, if you think about the life span of John the Baptist — John the Baptist, how did he get in there?! — of John, the apostle, if you think of his life span he lived to be very old. It means that when Jesus and he ministered together that John was very young. He was probably the youngest of the disciples. He was a cousin of Jesus, and yet as the youngest you know he got ribbed, you know he was the blunt of jokes at times. And so it's interesting that he turns around and he's the one that's always talking to his readers as little children. Maybe that's because he identifies with them so easily.

But notice how he begins. "Little children, abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming." His goal in writing these words is for his readers, little children, to have confidence and boldness right now. Notice how he says it, verse 28 — "And now" — he wants you, as a child of God, to be both confident and bold. Let's look at what he talks about in this passage about children that may give us a hint of how or why a child would have confidence and boldness when he enters into the presence of his father. One of my favorite scenes or pictures of something that I have no involvement with at all — my dad was a Republican and this president was a Democrat so he wasn't talked about a whole lot in our family, but one of my favorite pictures from his administration, John F. Kennedy, was the picture of John-John hiding under his desk. Do y'all remember that? Okay, maybe I'm — some of you probably do. What boldness, what confidence, to enter into the Oval Office and use the furniture as a cave! That's the picture that John paints here.

Notice the first thing that he says. "Little children, abide in Him." The confidence that we have, the boldness that we have as children, children of God, comes from abiding in God - abiding, living, dwelling with God. It's a favorite topic of John's. It's important

because it's his word that he uses to paint the picture that you and I live every moment of every day of every ounce of energy that we have, we live in the presence of our Father. We are members of God's family and if we are we're going to abide with Him, we're going to live with Him. Now you all know what it means to live in someone's home. You've all been children, you've all been there where you abided, you dwelt in, you remained at home. And what were some of the characteristics that all of us have in common? Some of us had to make up our beds before we did certain things. There were these rules that were made and we had to keep the rules, so if you abide in the house you have to keep the rules. And almost all of us, not everybody, but almost all of us had brothers or sisters and we had to get along with them. So when it talks here about these little children that are abiding in Christ, it's not just that they are in Christ, but *together* we are in Christ.

But notice a second thing down in verse 29 of chapter 2. It says, "If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him." Two things there. If you and I are children of God we've been born of God. Now I know that none of you, before you were born, asked to have — I didn't; I didn't ask to be bald. As a matter of fact, I didn't even ask to have a cowlick but I had a cowlick when I was younger and had hair. You don't put in orders before to become what you think you ought to be. No, you're born at the grace and mercy of your parents. You even got your genes from them. You didn't get to order anything ahead of time. You've been born, we've been born, born of the Spirit of God, changed by God, and so this passage relates to us.

But notice what else it says. "Everyone who practices righteousness" — now I love this translation because it really sets it out for you. It's not that you are righteous; it's you are practicing righteousness. You guys remember learning to walk? I can tell you all remember how to do it. Isn't it interesting that when you have a stroke or when you have an injury, a knee replacement, that they have to teach you how to walk again? You don't remember learning to walk and isn't it fortunate, if you've watched any children learning to walk, what do they do on a regular basis? They fall on their face or their bun or wherever and they'll hit anything in the way. It's not talking about perfection. It's talking about if you and I are practicing righteousness, the nature of practice is you work at it over and over and over. You're striving for it. Why?

There was a doorpost in our house growing up, it was white, except in the middle. With three boys learning to play basketball we would run down the stairs, down across the hallway, up into the air, slap the top of the thing just to see how — we were practicing our dunking ability. And since we were in the days where you couldn't dunk as a guard or player of any kind I don't know why we were doing it but that was what we were doing. It got dirtier and dirtier. We practiced over and over. We'd miss it some; we'd hit it. But practice — you start over. And why? Not because you love to practice but because you love something else. You love what you're practicing. You're here because God has given us birth, because God has given us life. we are practicing righteousness.

But look what else develops this confidence. Verse 3, "See what kind of love the Father

has given to us that we should be called children of God, and so we are.” God loves us! And He loves us so much He doesn't call us His slaves, He doesn't call us His neighbors — aren't you glad? He calls us His children. He calls us His sons. He calls us His daughters. He calls you that trust in Him, He calls you His child. Now growing up the son of a politician, the son of a churchman, my daddy still can't understand how I know everybody but it's all his fault. If I hung around him and I went with him places I would meet this preacher and that preacher, I would meet this elder and that elder, and so when I became a preacher I knew their names already. I went with him; I stuck with him. And so what happened? I got to know them. And he said it was always funny when I moved from being Bill's son to him being Billy's dad, that that was an odd thing for him. And it was odd for me when I quit being Will's dad and became — well, I can't get it straight but you get the picture. You get lost sometimes up here!

What else gives us confidence? This next point doesn't really give us a great deal of confidence. As a matter of fact it may scare some of us, but if it scares you maybe you need to start checking out your lineage. Verse 3 says the reason why the world does not know us - verse 1 of chapter 3, verse 1 of chapter 3 - the reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Now that's kind of scary because we live and operate and move in this world. You have to go to work in this world. You have to drive in this world. You have to take your kids to school in this world. Everything we do is in this world and the world doesn't recognize us. It paints the picture of us going to visit, as children, a new Sunday School class. Have y'all ever had that experience? You go to a new town, you're on vacation, and your folks take you to Sunday School and you walk into this strange Sunday School and you don't know nobody and nobody knows you. Why do they not know you? Well, it's because they don't know your daddy; they don't know your mama; they don't know your family. You don't live there. But if you abided there, if you lived there, you would know them, they would know you. But the world we live in does not recognize us, does not know us.

Look at verse 2 of chapter 3. It says, “Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.” You know what that means? No matter how old you are, we're not yet arrived. We're still growing. We lost Maude Carroll this week. We lose people who go to be with the Lord. And when they arrive, even our most elderly people, when they arrive at the throne of the King they are mere infants in light of eternity. They are still growing. We're not where we're gonna be in ten weeks, we're not where we're gonna be in ten years, we're not godly like we think we ought to be, we're not where we ought to be in our spiritual growth, but what? We are God's children now! What confidence that should give us. What boldness that should give us.

But then notice the next thing, verse 3. “And everyone who thus hopes in Him, purifies himself as He is pure.” Now you folks who have girls, you don't understand this at all — sorry. But now you folks that have boys, and any of you that come in to the Day School after a class has been out on the playground, what do you know? You can smell children a mile off! They've got to take baths! They've got to take baths, yes, because mama and daddy make them, but isn't it the most marvelous thing when you child

moves from taking a bath because they've got to, to where you can't get them out of the tub almost? Where they want — now it usually involves a female or a male, you know, outside of the household, but suddenly they start getting concerned about being clean. It's a sign of maturing; it's a sign of growing. And you and I who desire to follow after the Lord and purify ourselves, get rid of our sin, fight our sin, struggle with our sin, what are we doing? We're purifying ourselves! Why? Because our God, who was pure for us, and adopted us into His family, we want to please Him!

Look at verse 6 of chapter 3. "No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him." Look at that. No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. Now some of us have struggled with a particular sin for years and year and years, but just think, you don't do it every day like you used to. We keep working, we keep — we avoid sin, we try to do everything we can to keep from it. We're constantly practicing righteousness and there's something about it. You even don't want to sin. We fall into sin, we struggle with sin, but the minute that we see it, what do we do? "I can't believe I did that again!" And we run back to our Savior, we run back to our Father, and we look to Him and we remember that He was crucified for that sin, that He was put to death when I should have been put to death, and now I am perfect and righteous in His sight.

It talks about it again, look at verse 9. "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning." And why does he not make it a practice? For God's seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. Y'all, the picture there is the seed — you've heard it in 1 Peter chapter 1, "Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable seed, through the living and abiding Word of God." The more you hang on, the more you think about, the more you meditate on, the more you read it, the more you absorb it, the more you're even under the preaching of it, the Word of God, the more you get of it, the greater your confidence and the greater your boldness. Why? It's a great illustration but you remember getting allowances? You remember getting allowances I'm sure. When you were disobedient to your parents did you run in and say, "Hey dad, I need my allowance"? No, but when you were obeying and doing everything, it didn't bother you one iota to go in and say, "Dad..." Why? Because you were already abiding in his word.

But then notice the last characteristic of a child of God, verse 10, and it's a negative, it's included as a negative but if you think of the positive it's not real hard to figure out. "Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God nor is the one who does not love His brother." In other words, you don't have confidence, you don't have boldness to enter into God's presence just because of your relationship with God, just because you're His child, just because you are struggling with sin, just because you are trying to practice righteousness, just because you're trying to be pure, but because you have company and the company is all of us who are struggling and straining for the same thing. When you have those things, when you have all of these things that John's talking about, you can enter into God's presence with boldness and with confidence.

And you can do it now. Sure, this passage also talks about us doing it later. It's the

reality for you and I as Christians. We live in the “now” and then the “then.” Now we're struggling with sin but we want to fight sin because our Savior bought us, but one day we're going to see Him as He is and we'll be like Him. And we won't be like the world. Oh, and look at all the passage that talk about the world. The world doesn't know Him. What else? Verse 4, “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness, sin is lawlessness.” Practicing sin, planning for it, scheming for it, figuring out how you're going to do it. Now I know some of you struggle with that, I struggle with that, we all struggle with sin, but I'm not talking about struggling. I'm talking about when your whole life and your goal and your orientation is around a particular sin. Verse 6 of chapter 3 says, “No one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.” They don't care about Him. But we who are His children, because we know what He has done for us and because we are in His Word abiding in Him and we're loving one another, we have confidence to enter into His presence.

Isn't it interesting that this passage doesn't present this as something you and I can do in and of ourselves? Did you notice? Over and over it shows us our elder brother. Over and over it reminds us of what our Father has done. He is there, He isn't here, our elder brother's not here but He's coming back. You see it there in verse 28. When He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame and in His coming. He's coming back, but the best part is He's already done everything for us. Look at what it says. “If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.” Do you know the righteousness of God has been accounted to you? Do you know that when God sees you He doesn't see you in your daily struggles with sin, in your daily failings, He sees your Savior's perfection? That will give you confidence, will it not?

Notice verse 29. “If you know that He is righteous you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness” — oh I just did that one! Sorry, you got it twice! Look at verse 1 of chapter 3. “The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.” Y'all, one of the hardest things in the world that we have to deal with is the fact that the world ignores us and doesn't listen to us and doesn't pay attention to us, but it didn't our Savior either. If it's not listening to you, if it's ignoring you, if it's working against you, rejoice because you are His child! Look at verse 2 of chapter 3. “Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.” You believe that God is, you believe that Jesus is a real person, that He really came, that He dealt with sin, your sin, because you believe that, one day you're going to be like Him.

And then notice verse 5 of chapter 3. “You know that He appeared in order to take away sin and in Him there is no sin.” Your Savior didn't mess up at all! He pleased His Father perfectly! And His perfect perfection is accounted to you who trusts in Jesus. Why shouldn't you have confidence? Why shouldn't you and I boldly come before His throne of grace? We have no imperfections in God's sight. Wow! Man! And Marian's sitting over there and she's going, “Oh yeah,” because she knows me. But in God's sight He doesn't see me the same way that my poor wife has to see me, He sees me perfect and righteous.

This passage ends with these words: “By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil.” When I was a child, a teenager, this was my memory of Sunday lunch — all of us teenagers would be over at one corner and we’d be laughing and talking telling teenage jokes, and my grandmother, my stately grandmother, would say, “It’s time for lunch.” And we’d all keep talking and we’d start laughing. And finally she would say, “Obviously, children!” Did you notice the children down here today as they came forward? Do you think children are obvious? Yeah! Sometimes they’re obvious in their disorder but sometimes they’re obvious in their confidence and in their boldness. But they are obvious! Is it obvious that we at First Presbyterian Church are children of God?

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, thank You that You have made us to be children, Your children, that we're not Your children because we ask You to be or we came to You and we sought You out, we are Your children because Your Spirit changed our hearts and made us to have hearts of flesh, hearts that desire You. O Lord God, may the reality that we are Your children be open and obvious to the world around us, even though they will not know us, will it be open and obvious as we deal with each other, and may it be open and obvious as we worship You with every fiber of our being that we might enter into Your presence with confidence and that we may not shrink or be ashamed at Your coming, Lord Jesus. We ask because You love us and died for us and bought us. We pray these things in Your name, amen.*

Let's stand for the benediction, and as you're standing let me remind you that the Peru report will be immediately following in Hutton Chapel, okay, so take that opportunity to go and see what so many of our folks have participated in this summer.

Receive now God's benediction. And now may grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, be and abide with each one of you both now and forever. Amen.

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